

# **Comprehensively Reformed Christianity**

**Sixth Edition**  
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## **In Loving Remembrance**

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### **Alice Marceleene Smith:**

*My faithful wife of 50 years who passed on before me into the presence of our Lord in June of 2006. Her loving cooperation and her clerical skills in proofreading the early manuscripts of this book were invaluable.*

# Comprehensively Reformed Christianity

## **Book I**



**Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith**

**Arthur J. Smith**

*”Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ...”*

Ephesians 4:13–15

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## **Author's Foreword**

In the year 1979, the Lord in his amazing grace and infinite mercy reached down to save another wretch from the wrath to come. It was only after God had saved me that Holy Scripture made any sense; it was as if someone had turned on a bright light in a totally dark room. In the first year of my Christian walk while as yet disassociated with any formal religious framework such as a denomination, local church or other religious affiliation, I began the painstaking effort of studying and learning directly from the Scriptures, all the while praying that the Holy Spirit Himself would be my instructor.

My initial approach was a topical study of God's Word, not chapter-by-chapter or verse-by-verse. I soon discovered, however, that individual topics needed to be placed in the context of all of Scripture. That discovery drove me to a simultaneous study of the entire Bible cover-to-cover. I soon began to expand my notes into an essay format in an effort to express the truths in my own words as they had been revealed to me by the Holy Spirit from the pages of Holy Scripture.

As the number of essays mounted, I soon realized that those miscellaneous essays could possibly be organized to create a complete study of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. I began to think that my writings could benefit other new believers who found themselves in the same swamp of religion where I had begun lest they continued to sink into the quicksand of popular opinion and church tradition. It was then that I began to arrange those essays into sections and began to link them together for easier reading by others. Over the years, I diligently compared and honed my own analysis of Scripture against the views of many theologians of the past as well as the present.

Having encountered great difficulty in seeking out a local church that interpreted all theological doctrines in a way that was remotely similar to my own view, I became interested in discovering how the wide diversity and divisiveness of modern-day churches had come into being. I found that divisiveness and diversity in thought quite strange considering that all of them claimed Jesus Christ as the source and life-blood of their very existence. In Christ, we should all

find unity, not divisiveness. All that we know objectively about Jesus Christ is found in the Holy Scriptures that are universally available to all churches. Yet, there is wide disagreement among them regarding many Christian doctrines and practices about many of which the Bible is quite clear. That perplexity drove me into a broad study of church history from the church's inception on the day of Pentecost to the present day. While doing so, I recorded my findings in my own words, interpreted through the essential doctrines and Christian practices that I had earlier examined, and appended it to my earlier endeavors.

By that time, my work had unfortunately expanded into a large unwieldy tome. In recent years, my efforts have been directed toward combining, editing, and reorganizing this work into three more concise volumes deemed necessary for publication. This first book of the trilogy (Book I) discusses the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith. Those are the core doctrines that define true Christianity. Book II discusses individual Christian living, privilege and practice, about which the Lord has granted much liberty, and also fully defines the Church within that context. Book III discusses the history of the Church on earth from its early beginnings on the day of Pentecost to the present. Moving past the present day, the study then extends onward in time to events of the last days as it is revealed in prophetic Scripture texts and finalized in the book of Revelation.

### *About the Reformed View Taken*

There is an unequivocally reformed approach taken in this work throughout as opposed to the corrupted pre-Reformation dogma that characterized the darkness of the Middle Ages. C. H. Spurgeon stated that Reformed Theology is nothing but another name for biblical Christianity, and so it is. Every effort has been made to incorporate the great truths of Christianity from Scripture that were restored during the Reformation Movement as the foundation of this work.

It must be understood however that most of the early reformers' efforts were directed toward the correction of more egregious errors then present in the existing Roman church not replace the church with another. Since most of the early reformers themselves

came from within the same established church structure, reformation often fell short of the ideal because of personal religious bias and tradition that had become deeply established in their own lives from their youth.

It is further evident that reform began to diverge shortly after it had begun. That is, it did not follow a straight line, but branched into various paths that often resulted in dead-ends to continued reform. Much of the reform that had begun so well soon became stagnant thus failing to root out much of the error and corruption still existing in many contemporary church teachings. As a result, the Reformation Movement eventually became polarized, bigoted, and stalled. In some instances, the reform was even reversed out of an excessive desire for religious harmony, and peace.

Still later, in attempts to restore what was perceived to be a first-century church faith, reformation in some quarters was actually cast back into the error from which it came. Excessive, even dogmatic, emphasis placed upon various minor doctrines and traditions resulted in unfortunate division and schisms that is the basis for the separation exemplified in many of our Protestant denominations and churches yet today. That conflict is discussed historically in Book III of this work.

That brings us to consider the overall title of this work, *Comprehensively Reformed Christianity*. The term “reformed Christianity” or “reformed theology” is commonly applied exclusively to the body of Truth as it first came out of the early Reformation Movement without considering the deeply entrenched traditions that had kept the reform from continuing on to its necessary culmination. The word “comprehensively” in the title does not refer to this work’s exhaustive study of all topics, but to its overall objective to continue the reform effort beyond that of the early reformers. To prevent compounding existing errors or falling into the snare of progressive liberalism while doing so, it is imperative that we, as did the early reformers, continue to consult Holy Scripture as the *only* valid criteria for judging commonly held doctrines.

For that reason, this work at times transcends the idea of the “reformed view” that many may hold today. With true regard for the efforts of the early reformers, and in the same spirit, the reform effort

must continue until biblical Truth stands clear and bright on its own unstained by faulty tradition and error. Unfortunately, religious orthodoxy (unlike Scripture) is not fixed; it varies as decades and centuries pass since it is always based on a currently accepted system of theology. Today's orthodoxy is based upon past doctrine, past tradition, and modern experience. Past doctrine, especially as it was often taught in many of our churches, was often incomplete or faulty, tradition has been infiltrated by superstition and paganism, and modern experience is always biased toward a secular worldview. For that reason, this work ignores any supposed infallibility of contemporary popular orthodoxy in favor of the true infallibility of Scriptural evidence alone that does not change.

That does not mean that all existing historical doctrines must automatically be thrown out. We must understand that there is a body of Scriptural historical orthodoxy at the very core of Christian belief that must be preserved. What it does mean is that all teaching must stand the test of Scripture as the absolute authority for all sound doctrine. From time to time, it becomes necessary to critically compare our current sense of orthodoxy with Scripture to assure us that we have not wandered. Sound historic doctrines will only be validated once again by a Scriptural evidential test while the dross of today's "popular orthodoxy" will be drawn off and exposed as invalid, harmful, and even destructive.

### ***Basic Doctrinal Foundation for this work***

This work totally rejects the liberal view that Scripture is only the early dawn of a larger body of religious tradition as man attempts to intuit a divine being and as such can be ignored or altered as needed to meet the requirements of contemporary man. In fact, Scripture is intended to be the sole basis and test for this work. Without the Bible, we have no common, specific, and durable knowledge of God at all — everything about God then becomes pure personal speculation. For that reason, anecdotal evidence cannot be considered reliable in the establishment of Christian doctrine. While God does often provide us as individuals with personal comfort or encouragement through various life experiences, such personal experiences are not a sufficient

basis for establishing sound doctrine that must transcend both the lives of individual believers and centuries of time. Holy Scripture alone must be our only guide for that.

Five basic doctrinal principles, as attested to in Scripture, form the foundation upon which this work rests and they will be echoed throughout its pages. The first of those is that absolute Truth is revealed to us from and through God alone. Secondly, that all doctrinal authority must be based upon God's Word alone. Thirdly, that salvation is received exclusively by grace alone. Fourthly, that our response and appropriation of that grace is through faith alone. Fifth, that the object of that faith is Jesus Christ alone.

1. What we believe to be fundamentally true affects our attitudes and directs our purpose in life. It is apparent that if what we believe is not true, it is of no value whatsoever and in fact will be quite harmful to us since we live a lie. Not only is all Truth a revelation from God, we shall further see in this work that God Himself *is* Truth. Therefore, Truth, as is God, must be absolute in every respect without limitation. To reject Truth is to reject God Himself. God does not want us to be ignorant of Truth and has chosen to reveal it to us. The means that God has chosen to reveal Truth to mankind about Himself and about us as well is through his written Word in the Scriptures of the Holy Bible.

2. By establishing Christian doctrine upon Scripture alone, we are but continuing the work that the great reformers such as Luther and Calvin established as a cure for religious error that had, in their day, infiltrated and overwhelmed the Roman church. The importance of Holy Scripture as the sole basis of true Christian orthodoxy cannot be overstated. Every written work, including this one, must ultimately bow down to the authority of the Bible. Every confession or creed of any church must only echo Scripture as its sole basis at every turn in order to have any validity at all. For that reason such documents, though often valuable to our understanding of Scriptural truths, are always inferior and subordinate to Scripture itself. Unlike Scripture, they cannot ever be considered inerrant or infallible.

3. Salvation is a work of God, not an effort of man. Salvation is bestowed upon each man or woman by the grace of God alone. That

doctrine of an absolutely gracious salvation is central to the teaching of the Apostle Paul, but echoed by the other apostles as well. That one truth sparked the Reformation long ago, and it must continue to be the key element of any attempt to conserve and advance that effort. As soon as mankind forgets grace and resorts to any kind of works to gain salvation, all real hope of receiving it is gone. All of church history is filled with conflicts arising from disputes over this one major doctrine. This work places an emphasis upon that singular truth at every turn. It is woven into each chapter.

4. The appropriation of God's grace is also not of human effort. Faith is the only means we have of receiving God's grace and making it our own. Faith is not something that man achieves by effort; it is not works. Through the exercise of human effort, we cannot make ourselves have total confidence in something that we do not fundamentally believe is true. Faith is a gift from God that we receive freely and without effort through the indwelling Holy Spirit in order that we may respond to God's grace. Our personal response by means of that God-given faith is how we appropriate salvation by grace. This work makes every effort to encourage the exercise of faith to that end.

5. There must be one and only one object of our faith. That object is not a denomination, a church, a ritual, a ceremony, a doctrine, or even the entire body of Christian religion itself. It is a person, and that person is Jesus Christ. The object of our faith is Jesus — acknowledging who He is, and what He has done on our behalf. Faith in any other person or thing, no matter how noble or religious it may seem to be is not saving faith. Christianity is Christ and nothing else. Our eternal salvation rests solely on the merits of Jesus' blood and righteousness. This work seeks to make sure that the reader understands that.

Because many of the topics and doctrines discussed in this work are often related, there is some repetition of certain teachings as they relate to other topics. Be assured that topics have not been intentionally repeated in some attempt to overwhelm the reader with pet notions or merely in order to be tedious, but certain fundamental doctrines do merit repeating in a different light or context so that we may see the various facets of them. Also by doing so, the precise

interweaving of individual doctrines into the total fabric of the Christian faith will be recognized. No single Christian doctrine stands alone and separate of all others. Each doctrine is supported by other doctrines such that our faith is strengthened in the completed structure of Truth.

### ***About the Interpretative Method Utilized***

All Scripture quotations used in this work are from the *King James Authorized Version* (KJV) of 1611 (as revised) without apology. It was also the underlying text utilized in the preparation of this work along with occasional insight gleaned from other translations and various lexicons to clarify the meaning of its sometimes-nebulous archaic language. It was felt that this particular translation had soundly proven its reliability inasmuch as it had withstood the long test of time.

The interpretative approach taken to Scripture in this work was intended to be cautious as well as conservative. A purely allegorical interpretation of the Bible has been avoided in exchange for taking a literal sense of all Scripture passages considering both their context and style. Care was taken not to go beyond what Scripture states, or to fall short of it regarding any particular doctrine, as reverence for the Word of God demands of us.

Nevertheless, concerning topics where Scripture is silent, some small amount of cautious sanctified speculation was often necessary, as I have attempted to extract the sense of various passages. In fact, the basis of establishing all doctrine requires interpretation and careful speculation based on that interpretation to clarify a body of Truth that is derived from Scripture. The doctrine of the Trinity, for example, is not expressed directly in Scripture, but by interpretation and careful speculation of many passages of Scripture, it is now well established as a major doctrine of Biblical Theology. Furthermore, every effort has been made to critically reexamine doctrines that are based only upon tradition or general acceptance alone. In doing so, many have been exposed as being false or at best unreliable.

*Eschatological Perspective*

Uncertain passages of Scripture have been treated carefully in an attempt to ensure that my own personal opinion did not ever overrule clear precepts or principles that are found elsewhere in Scripture. Because it is precisely in the area of speculation that many have gone over into useless sensationalism, every effort has been made to avoid over-speculation. That tendency toward under-speculation is the very reason some will say that the whole truth has not been told — especially in Book III where we discuss the doctrines of the last days, which is more formally referred to as Eschatology. Others will argue that even my very cautious speculation concerning prophetic Scripture at times violates the direct teachings of certain Scripture passages. Perhaps, that controversy cannot be avoided in attempting a work of this nature and scope in the face of the eschatological pluralism that is so evident in today's churches. Some readers may find the eschatological approach undertaken in this work too unique and even radical to be considered reasonable. That is generally because most churches are already so firmly locked into various philosophical paradigms concerning the last days that they do not allow for an objective reanalysis of the last days based exclusively upon Holy Scripture.

It is sincerely hoped that the effort to take a glimpse into the future in this work will not create further division among believers who may differ with my personal analysis of prophetic Scripture. We must not ever allow Eschatology to divide us into warring camps, always remembering that those who look to Jesus alone for their salvation are redeemed regardless of any personal view of the last days they may hold. After all, salvation is through faith alone not through one's precise mental acuity concerning complex future matters. The important thing is that we whole-heartedly believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ to raise the dead, claim his redeemed, and judge the earth as a future event of monumental significance. Nevertheless, as moral wickedness and corrupt political conditions continue to worsen throughout the world, we increasingly find stark parallels between the warnings found in prophetic Scripture texts and

the times in which we are now living. If so, the fulfillment of future prophecy leading up to and including the second advent of Christ to Earth could be very close at hand. Accordingly, Book III of this work unabashedly attempts to bridge the gap between the past, present, and future such that no Christian believer need find himself or herself caught totally unaware of the vast sea changes that are already underway. It is indeed imperative that all believers find themselves increasingly united eschatologically as well as doctrinally as the time comes nearer for the return of our Lord to judge the Earth and establish his Everlasting Kingdom — beginning on Earth and finally extending into the vast reaches of Heaven itself.

### *Necessary Refutation of Unscriptural Teaching*

At times, it has been necessary in this work to expose blatantly unsound and erroneous doctrines and practices as well as make known sound doctrines and practices of the Christian faith. Various discussions within chapters and even full chapters refuting such errors have been included where it is obvious that those unbiblical teachings are prevalent among the body of believers or that those errors have become deeply entrenched in our contemporary churches as established doctrine. Some will say that I have been intolerant and unkind in doing so. However, it is the doctrines themselves that I have sought to address, not those persons who unfortunately hold to those erroneous beliefs. To ignore such error would be as disastrous as failing to teach the sound doctrine that those errors undermine.

We have also had occasion to refer to various religious organizations as cults throughout this work. In its simplest definition, a cult is a religious organization that has a strict religious ritual or system of worship that is devoted to a single narrow principle. That principle commonly lies outside the bounds of any acceptable Christian doctrine based upon apostolic biblical authority, or it is a severe distortion of one or more widely accepted Christian principles. All too often, that cultic principle is actually devotion to and elevation of a human person who is the sole founder of a particular religious group. Many cults masquerade as mainstream Christianity and for that reason are often referred to as “Christian cults.” When that term is

used, it does not intend to imply that such cults are actually sound in the Christian faith of course.

As a consequence of human frailties of mind caused by the sin nature inherited by us all from the fall of Adam, there is considerable variation in the interpretation of various Scripture texts of significance to their effect upon essential doctrine. Much of that variance is only evident in Christian practice that has resulted in the division of Christendom into various denominations. Though satanic intent is undoubtedly at the root of that discord, we find that there is more held in common between those groups regarding essential doctrine than differences. For that reason those disparate subdivisions of Christian believers are properly referred to as sects that should not be confused with cults.

### *Concluding Remarks*

The language in this work was intentionally kept as simple as possible consistent with the need to accurately inform. Where it was necessary to use formal terms in order to be precise, the text is written to explain the meaning of each term as it is encountered.

In the course of this work, the word “man” or “men” has been repeatedly used in the generic sense. That is, the masculine word has been used to represent both men and women. That generic usage implies the entire genesis of mankind that, of course, includes women as well as men. In doing so, that merely follows the example set by Scripture. In addition, it should be clear that this generic usage does not always exclude boys and girls who have not yet reached the age of physical or mental maturity. When a specific rather than generic usage is intended, that exclusivity has been made very clear by its context. It should be assumed that any rational person would understand that generic approach as reasonable and not take unintended offence based upon a perceived sexual bias that implies that women are inferior to men.

A careful distinction has been made between the Church, which is the body of Christ, both invisible and visible on earth, and temporal institutional churches that have been organized by men on earth yet purport to emulate the true Church. Though I risk

considerable criticism from some quarters in doing so, the necessity of making that distinction is explained in Book II in considerable detail as we define the Church. Accordingly, the convention used throughout this work is to capitalize the first letter of the word “church” when referring to the entire body of true believers and to use the lower-case letter when referring to a temporal church or churches, except where the word “church” is found within a title for a particular organization as is dictated by convention.

Finally, it must be made quite clear that no claim is made that this work is inspired. That is, God did not recite nor dictate each word to me. No angel revealed some great “truth” to me. When the Apostle John penned the last word of the Revelation, God had said all that he had to say to a lost world. All other works can but echo what has already been said in God’s Word. There is no revelation in the pages of this writing that is not already contained in Holy Scripture; this work has only sought to bring them out into the open. Yet, I would deny the power of the Holy Spirit if I did not say that I have felt His leading into Truth, and His encouragement and strength as well during times when I despaired of the effort and grew weary.

Since God has used this unusual means over the last quarter century to open my eyes to his wondrous glory, it is my prayer that He will also use this work to awaken a people who now sleep within the ignorance of dead Churchianity, that they may delve deeply into God’s Word for themselves and come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ while there is still time. Nevertheless, I do not put this work into the hands of Christ with great confidence that He will do great things with it. Rather, I lay it at His feet. It is His to do with, as He will.

*Arthur J. Smith, 2008 – 2009*

## **Introduction to Book I**

Every major doctrine that is essential to the Christian faith is discussed at some length in this first book. A shocking ignorance of the core doctrines of the Christian faith prevails throughout most of the evangelical congregations of today's churches. That is true even in many of our so-called Bible churches where an overriding emphasis is often placed upon a surface application of Scriptures to the modern lifestyles of individuals rather than sound contextual interpretation. Rank religiosity has mostly replaced an in-depth study of systematic theology.

For instance, some may complain that baptism and the Lord's Supper are absent from this book. (Both are discussed in detail in Book II). That is because those rituals are not core doctrines upon which the Christian faith stands or falls. Nonetheless, many churches spend considerable time presenting those rituals as essential doctrines since they are something in which the congregation can become fully engaged whereas they feel that systematic theology is not. Those ritual practices are in fact most often construed as works that a Christian must perform without fail in obedience to Christ, or in order to receive and maintain his redemption. While none of that is true, contemplation of those rituals has largely replaced the study of God and his great work in the redemption of mankind upon which our faith rests.

Those sincere believers who desire to receive and understand sound doctrine are also kept ignorant largely because no minister dares teach serious doctrine from the pulpit lest the majority of the congregation complain or go elsewhere. Some have sought to rectify that by discussing doctrine in a special class apart from the regular service. Unfortunately, when major doctrines are taught they are often taught in a cryptic way by clerics that is cloaked in intellectual and theological language that the average layman cannot understand. It is sincerely hoped that this first book can be of assistance by presenting the essential doctrines in as plain a manner as possible.

According to many ministers, the average persons in the pews are just not up to listening to such weighty theological matters. As

Paul wrote to Timothy, "...the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned to fables" (2Ti.4:3,4). Preachers seeking the approval of their audiences avoid the teaching of sound doctrine lest their congregations become bored with their efforts. That failure to teach sound doctrine leaves a vacuum into which all forms of religiosity, speculation, error, and fables are pulled in as replacements.

The fact is that a large majority of churchgoers and members are not only ignorant, but blissfully hope to remain so lest their own faulty pet notions of God and salvation crumble under the heavy weight of Truth. They wish to have Christianity, but they want it only as they define it and on their own terms. Many sitting in church pews wish only to be entertained from the pulpit, not informed of Truth. Many see Theology as a mere intellectual exercise that has no practical benefits, and in fact inhibits experiencing Christianity on a practical level. They see any serious discussion of Truth as inhibiting Christian love; better to let believers believe whatever they wish and revel in love and fellowship with them in a state of blissful ignorance. That opinion characterizes most of what we call Christendom today.

However, an in-depth study of God and his ways actually provides the basis for all true Christian living and is extremely practical. In the absence of sound theological doctrine, the church moves increasingly away from Christ toward experientialism, emotionalism, and various blind forms of ritualism as an authentication of their nebulous "faith." In doing so, they drift away from true Christianity toward deadly Churchianity (the worship of the temporal church and its ordinances instead of Christ and his Word).

It is only through the teaching of sound theological doctrine that we learn to live day-to-day in the light of God's Truth within a hostile world and avoid being drawn into superstition and error through purely emotional experiences. It is through the study of God that we learn to love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind and through that love for God come to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mt.22:37-39). We cannot love God if we do not even know who He

is, and we cannot truly love our neighbor if we cannot see him in the same light as God sees him.

# Book Name Abbreviations

## Old Testament

Genesis...Ge.  
Exodus...Ex.  
Leviticus...Le.  
Numbers...Nu.  
Deuteronomy...De.  
Joshua...Jos.  
Judges...Jud.  
Ruth...Ru.  
1<sup>st</sup> Samuel...1Sa.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel...2Sa.  
1<sup>st</sup> Kings...1Ki.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Kings...2Ki.  
1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles...1Chr.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles...2Chr.  
Ezra...Ezr.  
Nehemiah...Ne.  
Esther...Est.  
Job...Jb.  
Psalms...Ps.  
Proverbs...Pr.  
Ecclesiastes...Ec.  
Song of Solomon...Song.  
Isaiah...Is.  
Jeremiah...Je.  
Lamentations...Lam.  
Ezekiel...Eze.  
Daniel...Da.  
Hosea...Ho.  
Joel...Jl.  
Amos...Am.  
Obadiah...Obad.  
Jonah...Jona.  
Micah...Mi.  
Nahum...Na.  
Habakkuk...Hab.  
Zephaniah...Zep.  
Haggai...Hag.  
Zechariah...Zec.  
Malachi...Mal.

## New Testament

Matthew...Mt.  
Mark...Mk.  
Luke...Lu.  
John...Jn.  
Acts...Ac.  
Romans...Ro.  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians...1Co.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians...2Co.  
Galatians...Ga.  
Ephesians...Ep.  
Philippians...Ph.  
Colossians...Col.  
1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians...1Th.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians...2Th.  
1<sup>st</sup> Timothy...1Ti.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy...2Ti.  
Titus...Tit.  
Philemon...Phm.  
Hebrews...He.  
James...Ja.  
1<sup>st</sup> Peter...1Pe.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Peter...2Pe.  
1<sup>st</sup> John...1Jn.  
2<sup>nd</sup> John...2Jn.  
3<sup>rd</sup> John...3Jn.  
Jude...Jude.  
Revelation...Re.

These abbreviations are used throughout this work followed by the chapter number, and a colon, followed by a verse number. (i.e. Jn.7:13 refers to the book of John, Chapter 7, verse 13). If multiple verses are being referred to, a comma is placed between non-consecutive verses while a dash is placed between the first and last verse of a continuous text. (i.e. Jn.7:13,15 would refer to verses 13 and 15, but not 14). (Jn.7:13–18 would refer to verses 13 through 18). If the notation includes more than one reference, a semicolon is used to separate references. (i.e. Jn.7:13; Mt.2:1 refers to John, Chapter 7, verse 13 and Matthew, Chapter 2, verse 1). In addition, one may occasionally find the abbreviation *cf.* that means to confer or compare the verses that this abbreviation separates.

At various places throughout this work, one will find a word or short text within quotations of Scripture or other quoted text that is enclosed in brackets []. It should be clearly understood that this text is not a part of the original text that is being quoted, but is an annotation that was added by the author to amplify or clarify the meaning of the quoted text.

# **Section 1, The Holy Bible**

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**Origin of the Bible**

**The Integrity of the Bible**

**Old Testament Introduction and History**

**Old Testament Significance**

**The New Testament**

## Chapter 1.1 Origin of the Bible

Man has an “inner bias” toward believing in God. However, man’s corrupt nature does not always allow a proper attitude toward that bias, but instead he often goes to flights of fancy and invention. That results in the worship of false gods or incorrect concepts of God. Conversely, man’s worldly knowledge often causes him to consider that inner bias as merely retained superstition from a bygone age and not worthy of serious thought. Therefore, it is not enough that we depend upon that inner bias alone; we must also consider in a more tangible way “how we know what we know” about God.

While we can clearly see the existence of God in the things that He created (Ps.19:1), the specifics of all that his creation implies depend upon one source that is referred to as Holy Scripture or the Holy Bible. All that we know with certainty, all that we can understand about God’s character and purpose is to be found in it alone. Thus, the only way that we can properly describe God — what He is like in his being is to be found exclusively in the Holy Scriptures. That is the topic of Chapter 2.1 The Eternal God, page 80 of this work.

Christianity stands or falls on the integrity of this one Book. For that reason, it is well that we determine for ourselves the origin of the Bible and the extent with which we can judge the book’s reliability, accuracy and authority.

### *Human Origins of the Bible*

Though the Bible itself makes clear that the primary author of Scripture is God, his words were nonetheless written down by human agents over a period of about 1600 years. The word “Bible” comes from the Greek word *biblion*, which means “a little book.” The Holy Bible is actually made up of many “little books.” There are 39 Old Testament books, and 27 New Testament books for a total of 66 in all. The first books of the Old Testament beginning with Genesis and continuing through Deuteronomy were written by Moses<sup>1</sup>, and the last

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<sup>1</sup> The first five books of the Bible are collectively referred to as the Pentateuch.

writing is that of the Revelation written down by the Apostle John in about A.D. 90. Yet, by tradition, Job is considered the oldest book in the Bible. Jewish tradition holds that Job was a close descendent of Abraham. Abraham was born about 2000 BC and Moses lived in about 1350 BC. It is not known whether Moses had any written records available to him concerning the creation and the times of Noah or whether that knowledge was handed down through oral tradition or if it was revealed to him totally through divine inspiration.

It is important to note that we cannot be dogmatic about many of the historical dates of events referred to in the Old Testament text and cannot be specific about the date of the writing of various texts. Nevertheless, we certainly know that the dates of the writing of all the books in the New Testament must have occurred in the first century during the lifespan of the apostles.

The Old Testament writings in Hebrew and Aramaic were all in existence at the time of Christ, kept in trust by the Jewish nation. Upon the death of the apostles, their own writings remained behind, and they were subsequently combined with those of other apostles and their close representatives to form the larger body of the New Testament text.

Originally, the word “Scriptures” (sacred writings) was applied only to the Hebrew Manuscripts. Therefore, in most instances where this word is found in the New Testament, the Old Testament text is being referred to. Inasmuch as a collection of the writings of the apostles and other first-hand records of the words of Jesus were available later in the first century, those were collated and used along side the Old Testament Scriptures and were themselves over time considered Holy Scripture as well.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the Apostle Peter in his day referred to the epistles<sup>3</sup> of the Apostle Paul as Scripture on a par with Old Testament Scriptures (2Pe.3:15,16).

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<sup>2</sup> The word "Scripture" has been used in this work to apply to both the Old and New Testament since all are sacred writings. If the Old Testament is specifically referred to, the term "Old Testament Scriptures" or "Hebrew Scriptures" has been used.

<sup>3</sup> The word “epistle” is another word for a long formal letter written from one individual to another individual or sometimes written to a group of individuals.

*Divine Authorship of Scripture*

The human writers, by recording events and deeds that have been woven by God into the history of man, have revealed the will and purpose of the divine author Himself. God has determined all that was to be written to a wandering and sinful mankind that had suppressed and lost all personal knowledge of Him from the times of the spiritual bankruptcy<sup>4</sup> of the first man, Adam.

The means by which God has transported his Word into the physical world is commonly referred to as inspiration. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...” (2Ti.3:16). That is, God did not provide us with a book that was physically produced and printed in Heaven and then transported it to earth in order that it would be discovered in a cave somewhere by mankind. Rather, He enlivened the minds of various chosen men to write his Words after his own thoughts onto a human physical medium such as stone or papyrus over a long period of time.

Though the writers of Scripture were human beings no different from us, their writings have a message to bring to all men just as if God, Himself, had written down every single word with pen and ink. Therefore, when we read Scripture, we are actually reading the thoughts and mind of God. Not only are we able to glimpse heavenly things, we are also allowed to see earthly things from a heavenly perspective.

*Divine Purpose of Scripture*

“All scripture...is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Ti.3:16,17). Therefore, we find that God’s purpose for Scripture is to provide mankind instruction regarding Himself and our own purpose in life. Scripture is the means by which God chastens man and provides him with the means to correct his path in order to comply with God’s will. Though fallen man fails to respond to God’s Word in any perfect way,

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<sup>4</sup> The fall of man is discussed in Chapter 2.3 of this book.

it nonetheless tends to guide him toward that goal. It leads him in the paths of righteousness that he may become a mature believer that is properly equipped to perform good works that are both pleasing to God and beneficial to himself as well.

### ***Aramaic and Hebrew Languages***

Aramaic is not a single language but is a name given to a larger group of Semitic languages, including Hebrew, that had its origin in the Aramaeans who began to occupy the lands of modern day Syria, Iraq, and Turkey in the twelfth century B.C. At the time that Judah was taken captive by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, Aramaic was the language of their Babylonian captors that differed in dialect from the Hebrew language. During the seventy years of the Babylonian Captivity, the Hebrew language of the Jews slowly became altered until they mostly spoke in the Aramaic dialect of their captors.

The prophet Daniel had been taken captive as a young man and was educated in Babylon to serve the King. For that reason, we find that large portions of the book of Daniel are written in this language. After Cyrus of Persia allowed the Israelites to return to rebuild Jerusalem, many such as Ezra took the adopted dialect back with them. Accordingly, we find that large sections of the book of Ezra were written in Aramaic as well. Aramaic was often considered a language of worship and is still considered to be so among modern-day Jews, whose Talmud is mainly written in this language. The most common language among Jews at the time of Christ was Aramaic and that was almost certainly Jesus' native tongue as well.

### ***Autographic Texts***

The original writing by the hand of the authors or their immediate assistants are referred to as autographs today since they carry their personal mark. Each book of both the Old and New Testament was first written down on small scrolls made of papyrus, parchment, or vellum that was made from the skin of animals. All were handwritten with brushes, quills, or reeds. Most certainly, writing was a tedious chore in ancient days requiring considerable skill and for

that reason some authors made use of assistants to write the text down for them as they dictated the contents.

For instance, we know that Peter wrote his first epistle through an assistant named Silvanus (1Pe.5:12). We note that the Apostle Paul most often wrote down his own epistles (Ga.6:11), but at other times, he also utilized writing assistants because of his poor eyesight. Even then, he carefully wrote down the salutations with his own hand to authenticate the writing (Co.4:18; 2Th.3:17).

Because of the fragile materials on which the first books of the Old and New Testament were written, none of the autographs exist today.

### *Manuscripts*

It was not until the second century A.D. that books began to be put together in “codex” (leaf or page) form, as we know them today. That allowed ready access to any part of the book by the use of numbered pages. Scrolls that were in use before that time needed to be wound and unwound to find the proper column of writing, which took much longer to access. Early books were made of papyrus that becomes brittle and were subject to rot. By the fourth century, vellum was being used because it was much more durable. Even so, none of the Bibles could withstand the ravages of time and the elements such that more needed to be produced to replace them. Before the Gutenberg printing press in 1440, that was a laborious job and in the early days required hand copying.

Early on, handwritten copies of autographs were being inscribed for posterity and to aid in circulation of the text. Those copies are referred to as manuscripts. Those early manuscripts were subsequently copied repeatedly by other scribes over many centuries creating a trail of manuscripts back through time. Individual manuscripts were often copied in mass by a group of scribes all sitting in one room who listened to a single reader of the current manuscript. They wrote down what they heard as it was dictated. We can see that the possibility of error existed here, but not as much as one may think. Each word was written down and then read back aloud to verify its accuracy one by one. Even the smallest error made by a scribe while

transcribing rendered the entire document in error and it was therefore immediately destroyed. Those “copiers” were necessarily meticulous in their efforts because of the sacred reverence they attached to the text.

There are at least four thousand known manuscripts of the Bible that were written from earlier copies between the years A.D. 200 and 1400. Many of those manuscripts are mere fragments of the Bible; some are nearly complete copies of various books. There are, as one would expect slight variations between various manuscripts. That is not so much the result of intentional error as it is from purely human errors resulting from the meticulous copying process. The natures of those errors are errors in spelling, incorrect word usage or sentence structure, and omissions or repetitions of various sentences or words. Occasionally, a reader may have made comment during the dictation that was mistakenly written down in a copy, though that is quite rare.

In as much as we do not have any of the original autographs with which to compare the manuscripts, we must conclude that the older age of a particular manuscript does not necessarily mean that it is more accurate. Errors are just as likely to have occurred in earlier manuscripts as later ones. Later manuscripts in fact may be more accurate if they were copied from a better “original” and/or copied by more skillful scribes. Therefore, only by comparing many manuscripts and determining the preponderance of evidence for one rendition by its multiplicity over another can a final determination of the text be made.

### **Old Testament Manuscripts**

We have older manuscripts of Old Testament books than those of the New Testament because of their more extreme antiquity. Those are written in Hebrew along with some Aramaic text. Various Hebrew manuscripts still exist, and as a consequence of finding the *Dead Sea Scrolls* in 1947, we now have Old Testament texts written in Hebrew that date back to 200 BC. Those, of course, are but copies since the last book of the Old Testament (Malachi) was written about 450 BC.

**New Testament Manuscripts**

The much revered *King James Authorized Bible* was translated from what is referred to as the *Textus Receptus* or *Received Text* that was the best Greek text available in those days. It was also the foundational text that Martin Luther had earlier used to translate the New Testament into German as well as the text used by most all of the other reformers of his day.

Most modern translations of the New Testament are translated from a later derived text that has been compiled from the text of many older manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts that are placed together and carefully compared in their original language. They incorporate the later discoveries of more ancient manuscripts than does the *Received Text*. Two relatively contemporary Greek texts of the New Testament books that were derived by that means are that of Eberhard Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece* first published in 1898, and another Greek text compiled by Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort commonly referred to as the *Westcott and Hort Greek Text* first published in 1881.

***Determining the Authority of Bible Books***

That brings us to the subject of canonization; that is, determining which writings are truly Holy Spirit-inspired and have the full measure of God's authority. Today, the English Bible is fixed into 66 books that begin with Genesis and end with Revelation. Many different men wrote the books of the Bible over many centuries. How do we know there are no other books that have been erroneously excluded or that we do not have books included in the canon that should not have been accepted? While there is no simple and direct human answer to that question, except to say that those books have stood the test of centuries of time, their selection was far from being accidental, haphazard, or as a result of some sinister plot by the Roman church as some would suppose.

**The Canonicity of the Hebrew Scriptures**

Jesus Himself recognized the Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God. Surely, any book from which He quoted can be considered authoritative. In addition, any Old Testament book that was quoted by the apostles and New Testament authors as God's Word can be automatically considered canonical as well. Nonetheless, the Hebrew people believed them to be the Word of God long before the coming of Christ.

Just when each individual text first became recognized as having God's authority is not known. The Hebrew Scriptures were written over a period of a millennium or more. They were written, at first, as separate documents and were not bound together in one volume. Many of the individual manuscripts were copied and circulated among the Jewish people as individual scrolls for many years. The scrolls of the Pentateuch (first five books) were surely kept together from the Bible's beginning.

It is believed that Ezra, author of the book of Ezra, assembled together many of the scrolls of the Hebrew Scriptures in about 530 B.C. To those were added other writings until the scroll of Malachi was added in about 400 B.C. The early Christian Church declared the 39 Old Testament books canonical in the year A.D. 90, thus affirming that which was considered common knowledge: the assembled Hebrew writings had measurable attributes identifying them as the Word of God.

**The Canonicity of New Testament Books**

How was the authority of New Testament writings recognized? How were they weeded out of the many spurious writings that prevailed at that time? Jesus wrote no books Himself. He had chosen twelve apostles to carry the Word of Truth to the entire world as the Holy Spirit inspired them. For that reason, any book that was written by one of the apostles could be considered canonical. However, not all of the books of the New Testament were written by apostles, some were instead written by close associates of the apostles or other disciples of Christ who had firsthand knowledge. Their writings were

also considered acceptable because it is believed that their text was derived from the apostles' direct teaching. That apostolic association was the primary consideration given as to which books were to be judged as canonical.

A second consideration was that of the spiritual integrity of the writings. Since God is a Spirit, God wishes to impart to us those things of spiritual significance in his Word. He is not concerned with teaching us about English, Mathematics, Science or other purely temporal subjects. He is interested in teaching us about Himself and our relationship with Him. Obviously, a writing (even by an apostle) that did not address spiritual matters could not be considered canonical. For instance, the Apostle Paul could have written a book on the art of tent making, but it would not have been an inspired work no matter how accurately and well it was written. In addition, the contents of writings under consideration must be consistent with other core canonical writings. Any writing that blatantly contradicts another writing or writings known to be canonical beyond question could not be inspired since that would be paramount to the Holy Spirit contradicting Himself. God does not lie, nor does He change his mind.

A third consideration was whether the writing was universally accepted by the congregations of that day and in the early Church as being of spiritual value. God said, "So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Is.55:11). God has a specific purpose in giving us his Word. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2Ti.3:16). Therefore, if a writing had no impact upon believer's lives (was not profitable) in matters of doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in what is right, it was not considered inspired Scripture and, therefore, not canonical.

Some Bible books such as Hebrews, James and Jude as well as 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> John were not immediately considered canonical, but were later accepted. There was likely some concern about the authorship of Hebrews, James and Jude. Furthermore, the epistle of James if misunderstood could seem to contradict the Pauline

epistles regarding works and grace.<sup>5</sup> Even the Gospel of John was not at first accepted by some because of its later authorship and its lack of harmony with the other three Gospels. The Apostle John's Revelation was also added cautiously because of its difficult prophetic style. Nevertheless, over the years, the Holy Spirit, Himself, guided believers in the slow process of sorting out the erroneous books leaving our present 27 books. We can be confident that this is all that God has to say to a lost world with nothing added and nothing omitted.

The books of the New Testament were finally approved by men, after having before received the approval of the Holy Spirit and acceptance by the early Church for nearly four centuries, in the year A.D. 398 by the Council of Carthage. While it cannot be said that the *selection process* is infallible, we can be certain today that the canon consists only of infallible books and that none were omitted. The church cannot claim infallible authority in all matters just because they were able to recognize the infallibility of the canonical books. The church did not write the books! The Scriptures alone carry their own stamp of authority on them because of God's primary authorship.

### ***Translations of the Bible***

Early manuscripts were only being meticulously copied in order to maintain God's Word in the original language in which it was written. However, it was soon seen as necessary to transcribe those same manuscripts in other languages as well. Those were the first translations. Inherent in the very process of moving from one language to another, translations lack the purity of the original autographs and even the copied manuscripts since some interpretation is often required to produce a readable text. While many acceptable translations exist today, they vary considerably in quality. Furthermore, some have been purposefully distorted to suit various agendas, as we shall discuss later in this work. We shall also discuss the basics of sound interpretation in the next chapter of this section.

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<sup>5</sup>The epistle of James actually reinforces Paul's teaching by showing how true faith produces works of faith. If a believer does not act upon his faith, then it is shallow intellectual ascent, not true saving faith.

**The Septuagint**

In the middle of the third century B.C., Greek-speaking Jews in Alexandria made a translation of the Old Testament Scriptures in Koine Greek. That translation was necessary, since the Hebrew tongue had all but died out because of the dispersion of the Jews when the kingdom of Judah was taken captive by Babylon and still later as Alexander the Great injected Greek language and thought into the population.

This Greek translation was known as the *Septuagint* because of the 72 Jewish scholars, which, it is said, translated it. Inasmuch as Greek was in common use as a commercial language in the days of Christ, Jesus often quoted from the text of the Greek Septuagint, rather than directly from the Hebrew Scriptures.

**The Latin Vulgate**

One of the more accurate translations (other than in Greek) was the Latin version known as the “*Vulgate*” or “Common Edition.” Jerome from Dalmatia translated this edition between the years A.D. 382 to 405. Jerome first translated the New Testament from the Greek and Latin documents that were available to him at that time. Then, the Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew with reference being made to the *Septuagint*. That Bible stood for nearly one thousand years, and was the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. The availability of the *Gutenberg Bible* in 1456 spurred the Reformation Movement.<sup>6</sup> What we need to recognize is that this was also the first widely printed version of the *Vulgate*.

***Early English Translations***

By the year 1300, the Bible was found to be locked into Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. It was not possible for the common man to read a Bible even if he could obtain one, which was highly unlikely because of the high cost of copying and Roman church prohibition.

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<sup>6</sup> The Reformation movement will be discussed historically in Book III of this work.

For that reason, a man named John Wycliffe who was an instructor at Oxford, England made the first English translation from the *Latin Vulgate* in 1384. This translation was followed by many other translations by still other men whom we shall only mention here: *Tyndale Bible* 1526, *Coverdale Bible* 1535, *Matthews Bible* (Rogers) 1537, *Great Bible* 1539, *Geneva Bible* 1560, and the *Bishops Bible* in 1568.

Many of those later Bibles contained marginal notes that were critical of the Roman Catholic Church, by pointing out variation in church doctrine and practices as well as out and out corruption when compared to the Scriptures. Many of those translators were branded as heretics and they died as Christian martyrs at the hands of executioners employed by the Roman church. It may well be said that “the Word of God” actually began the Reformation Movement.

### **Rheims Douay Bible**

In 1610, the *Douay (Rheims-Douay)* Bible was translated at the University of Douay in northern France. This was an English version that was approved by the Roman Catholic Church in order to uphold various traditions over and against Protestant reformation efforts. Eleven other writings of the *Apocrypha* (discussed below) were added to this version. The *Apocrypha* is the source of many of the dogmas and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church. Protestants have always rejected those eleven books as being part of the Bible. The *Douay* translation was made totally from the *Latin Vulgate*.

### **KJV Authorized Bible**

In 1611, King James Stuart of England (before 1603, the King of Scotland) authorized the translation of the Bible into English at the suggestion of a Puritan named John Reynolds. That resolution of Reynolds took place at a conference, which was supposed to reconcile differences between the bishops of the Church of England and the Puritans, though it failed to do so. Although not all members of the conference approved of the idea of a new translation, King James put his seal of approval on it. The best scholars of Oxford and Cambridge University made the translation, which today is the mainstay of many

Protestant churches. So unique is that translation that it has stood for nearly four hundred years as “The Bible” of the English-speaking world. The translation is based upon what is known as the *Received Text* that were the best Hebrew and Greek texts available in that day. In addition, reference was made to nearly all of the earlier English translations and even the *Vulgate*. The English language of that day was very poetic. It seems that the Hebrew and Greek were just waiting for this translation. Certainly the *King James* or *Authorized version* is the most beautiful version published to date for its ethereal prose seems to speak directly to the heart.

### **Revised Versions of 1881 and 1901**

The Church of England published the *Revised Version* of the Bible in 1881. It did not satisfy the modern idiom since it was only intended to be a more accurate word-to-word translation. A similar committee in America assisted the revision committee in England. When the two committees met, it was discovered that there were too many disagreements in translation to issue a joint text. The *English Revised Version* was published with American suggestions as part of an appendix. By mutual agreement, the American version was not to be published for fourteen years. In 1901, the American version was published as the *American Standard Version (ASV)*. Although the ASV is considered by many to be a more accurate translation, it lacks some of the beauty of the King James English.

### ***Twentieth Century Translations***

Over the years, poor versions and translations have died out causing the better versions to stand out as a result of their longevity. Such is the case with the *King James Version*. But, many find the prose and “old world” English difficult to understand. For those, a modern translation in contemporary English may be most revealing of God’s Word if it is a reasonably accurate translation.

Since 1901, many English versions have been published. There is only room to name some of them here: *Revised Standard Version* 1952, *Berkeley Bible* 1959, *Amplified Bible* 1965, *Jerusalem Bible* (Roman Catholic) 1966, *New English Bible* 1970, *New American*

*Standard Bible* 1971, *The Living Bible* (a paraphrase) 1971, *The Good News Bible* (also a paraphrase) 1976, *The New International Version* 1978, and the *New King James Bible* 1982. We may well ask why there needs to be so many English versions of the Bible. Some of the newer versions are written to bend the reader toward certain denominational bias. Some, such as the *New World Bible* of the Jehovah's Witnesses even go so far as to eliminate or change passages to conform to false concepts of religious zeal. In such a world, it is difficult to choose from the many English versions without divine guidance.

### **New American Standard Bible**

The *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) 1971 was an attempt to retranslate the older *American Standard Version* (ASV) of 1901 into more contemporary English while closely adhering as much as possible to the same scholarly text. However, in doing so it was still necessary to deviate somewhat from the word-to-word literalness of the ASV translation. That aside, the NASB remains a reasonably close translation of the *Received Text* without archaic Elizabethan English word forms such as “thee” and “thou.” Many contemporary Baptist churches still prefer the more literal accuracy of this translation to the more popular NIV that we shall now discuss.

### **The New International Version**

The *New International Version* (NIV) translation of the entire Bible began in 1967, financed by the New York International Bible Society, and it was released in 1978. Over a hundred scholars from all over the world contributed to its text. Thus the name “International.” In an attempt to avoid excessive sectarian bias, those scholars were composed of many Protestant denominations including: Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Brethren, Christian Reformed, Church of Christ, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, and many other churches. Its text is derived from a translation of the best available Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts, including the Old Testament text of the Dead Sea scrolls.

There was a great emphasis placed on maintaining accuracy of contemporary English language usage. Its English style then does not have the poetic sound that has the *King James Version*. For that reason it does not lend itself well to memorization, as does the prose of the *King James Version*. The words “thee”, “thou”, and “thine” are not used. Old verb forms such as “doest”, or “hadst” are also not used. Yet, its style has a clarity and “easy flow” from the tongue in English that makes it both a useful parallel text for study reference with the *King James Version* as well as for use in public speaking in more contemporary surroundings. Unfortunately, that clarity of English style has been obtained by attempting to ascertain the *thoughts* of the authors instead of holding to a more precise “word-to-word” translation as in the *King James Version*.<sup>7</sup> That method allows for a quite broad interpretation of texts that can result in error finding its way into the translation.

Many object to its printed paragraph structure that makes the NIV more difficult to use for finding particular verses. Yet, we must realize that the original autographs did not contain any numbered verses or chapter divisions at all. Those were added much later to provide ease in relating verses of many books with those of parallel and related passages of other books.

The many concordances and other related Bible helps available for the *King James Version* at one time made it a more popular study Bible than the NIV. However, due to wider acceptance of the NIV and the technical ability gained by the use of the modern computer, study helps and concordances are now readily available for the *New International Version* as well.

### **The New King James Bible**

The *New King James* (NKJ) translation is merely an honest attempt to update the language in the translation of the reliable

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<sup>7</sup> Where additional words were added to the KJV to make the text more readable, those words were italicized so that one can still read the non-italicized text in a word to word manner more closely following the early manuscripts from which it was obtained.

*Authorized Version* to make it more easily read by today's readers. It can be seen that no attempt has been made to tinker with the text to promote any particular agenda in doing so. It is also reasonably in accord with the available Greek and Hebrew texts that were used in translating the original *Authorized Version*.

### ***The Apocrypha***

The Greek word *apocrypha* means “hidden (things)” or “secret” writings. The writings of the *Apocrypha* are actually a collection of books, fragments of books, and appendages to Old Testament books that appeared in the four hundred years between the Old and New Testament writings. Those “books” vary in number between eleven and sixteen depending upon the manner in which they are joined together. The Greek Jews considered those writings very important. None of those writings was ever part of the Hebrew Scriptures, although some of the texts themselves were written in Hebrew. They first appeared in the *Septuagint* interspersed with the Hebrew Scriptures in Greek. In general, the books are named as follows:

1. The First Book of Esdras
2. The Second Book of Esdras
3. Tobit
4. Judith
5. Appendages to the Book of Esther
6. The Wisdom of Solomon
7. Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach)
8. Baruch
9. A Letter of Jeremiah
10. The Song of the Three (Holy Children)
11. Daniel and Susanna
12. Daniel, Bel, and the Snake
13. The Prayer of Manasseh
14. The First Book of the Maccabees
15. The Second Book of the Maccabees

These books were at first referred to as “hidden or secret” because they were considered so precious that they were reserved for

the “inner circle” of believers only. However, the later use of the word *apocrypha* implies, rather, questionable, inferior, or spurious writings that do not have sufficient authority to be published as part of the Bible. The Greek and Latin versions of the Bible contain the apocryphal books scattered throughout the Old Testament, placed where they are most in context. The *Apocrypha* has been added to some Protestant Bibles between the Old and New Testament as a separate section even though they are not considered canonical. The *New English Bible*, for instance, is published with an added *Apocrypha*.

Whether the apocryphal books should be added or deleted from the Bible points directly at the verses in Revelation forbidding any tampering with canonical books.<sup>8</sup> That is because it is not just a matter of adding or deleting books. Certain apocryphal writings are fragments that would be added to existing canonical books. The story of “Daniel and Susanna” would be appended to the book of Daniel along with “Bel and the Snake.” “The Song of the Three” would be found in the third chapter of Daniel. Six additions to the book of Esther would be found dispersed throughout the canonical writing (those fragments are almost unintelligible when read as a separated text). Therefore, existing canonical books would be added to or changed.

The apocryphal books have never been considered to have canonical authority by Protestants from the time of the Reformation. In a council called by the Roman Catholic Church (Council of Trent, 1546), eleven of those books were pronounced canonical and, as a result, they still appear in Roman Catholic Bibles as well as some Protestant Bibles as well. There are many reasons why those books should not be included in the canon of Scripture:

- None of them was ever quoted by Jesus Himself.
- None of the apostles referred to them in their

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<sup>8</sup> While Revelation, Chapter 22, verses 18–19, are seen to specifically refer to the Book of the Revelation itself, it has been generally understood that the warning extends to all of Scripture because of its placement at the end of the Bible. Furthermore, the alteration of any Scripture text would adversely affect the interpretation of the Revelation that is the capstone of all Scripture.

writings.<sup>9</sup>

- They did not appear in the ancient Hebrew canon.
- Their inclusion would seriously alter established canonical books.
- They are of inferior literary and spiritual quality compared to other books known to be canonical.
- Their late official adoption in 1546 was more an effort by a corrupt church hierarchy to combat the Protestant Reformation than was it a considered effort by God-fearing men to determine their canonicity.

Therefore, there is no reason to accept the books of the *Apocrypha* as canonical. They were not accepted as such until one thousand years later by a corrupt Roman church in opposition to the Reformation Movement that fully rejected them. How could we accept as canonical such writings after they had been strongly rejected by the early churches who were much closer in time to the events of which they speak?

There is, however, some purely *historical* value in the books of the Maccabees. In addition, all of the writings give some idea of the Greek and Jewish thought that prevailed in the four hundred years about which the canonical books are silent. The reader should be aware of the late origin and the rejected canonicity of those books should he choose to read them. He should decide for himself their relative value in studying the canonical Scriptures, which remains solely God's Word.

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<sup>9</sup> They, however, were alluded to by the writer of Jude in the Bible (Jude 14) as well as being quoted by many of the early Church leaders in the second century. Even so, they were only considered to be edifying much as we would quote from the writings of Martin Luther, John Calvin, or a pastor's sermon today. There is little evidence that they were considered inspired or authoritative to establish doctrine and therefore worthy to be judged on a par with Scripture itself. By the end of the fourth century, they were generally being denounced by many in the church when it became obvious that too much weight was being given to them.

*God's Preservation of His Word*

The great question becomes, “what version of the Bible should I use in my private study?” For many, that has already been decided for them by the home church they attend. If the church is sound in the faith, one could assume that the version would also be a sound one. For the novice, any version that is not a paraphrase would provide a good start into the study of God’s Word. All modern innovation aside, the KJV is still a sound translation and its prose should not provide an insurmountable obstacle for the serious student. For the less adventurous, the NKJ provides much of same text in a more readable form. It must be understood that no version can ever be perfect due to human frailty that is involved in translation derived from the autographs. For that reason, it is often necessary to deeply explore each translation to mine the Truth from the words of the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts that underlie them.

Will the KJV, NKJ, the NIV, or any other modern Bible translation stand the test of time? Only God knows for certain. Yet, we can be sure that He will honor his Word by providing its richness to many generations of men so that they may read and understand it in their own language. Even though written by God-fearing men throughout time, God Himself had a firm hand in both the content and its preservation.

We are not talking about ordinary literature of men when we refer to the Bible. As a result, even the most contorted and bent translations still have a gleam of God’s Truth breaking through its text. Even after more than 273 translations in more than 1100 dialects, even after faulty and poor translations and outright attempts by men to bend the Scriptures to their own inventions, the Word of God prevails. This one book, the Bible, has weathered unbelievable criticism and attempts at outright destruction.

That the Bible exists at all is a miracle; that it exists in the form and accuracy that it does today attests to divine control. Surely, only the Word of God could have come through the terrible turmoil of the dark ages unscathed. Moreover, only the Word of God could have such significance in the personal lives of men and women that this

book provides. Today, more than ever before, we need to turn to the Word of God through the Scriptures that we may not follow false teachers — who, by telling us what we want to hear, deceive us and lead us away from the Truth.

## Chapter 1.2 The Integrity of the Bible

There are six terms that we must understand in establishing the integrity of Scripture that we shall now briefly discuss. Those are plenary inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, authority, coherence and perspicuity.

### Plenary Inspiration

The word “plenary” means total, all, or complete. Inspiration means “God-breathed.” The implication is that God breathed into the minds of men not only the general text but also each word. God directed the events about which the human authors have written. God, Himself, chose the writers, as his spokesmen (i.e. the prophets, apostles and scribes) over many centuries. The writers’ intellect was directed by God’s as certain specific revelation was made to the minds of those men by the Holy Spirit through spiritual insight, visions, dreams, and by guided natural observation. Therefore, every word in the original autographs was Holy Spirit-inspired.

It must be understood that plenary inspiration can apply directly only to the autographs as written down by the authors. Various translations vary in the contemporary words chosen to represent the words contained in the autographs. The specific words chosen by translators can and often do contain some error if only because of the inadequacy of the words of one language to fully express the words of another. Fortunately, such error is usually of minor significance when Scripture is studied fully and carefully with the knowledge that the translations themselves are not directly inspired. When there is some question about a particular translation, we must carefully seek out the original meaning behind words used in the translated text through various Greek and Hebrew Lexicons.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Similar to dictionaries, a lexicon is a list of words with information given about their meaning and usage.

## **Inerrancy of Scripture**

It follows that since God has inspired all Scripture, there can be no mistakes made in what it says on any particular point. That leads to the term “inerrancy of Scripture.” For that reason, there can be no contradictions found in the Bible as well. Many have found *apparent* errors and contradictions only because they have not studied Scripture texts sufficiently to resolve them through context or because they do not understand the problems with language translation that often give rise to such questions.

Often errors seem to appear with relationship to certain scientific theories because of errors in those theories or just because such questions are beyond the scope of Scripture. The Bible is not primarily a science textbook and therefore does not go into great scientific detail. Moreover, apparent errors relating to historic events and individuals mentioned in Scripture keep melting away with every turn of the archeologist’s blade. Over the years, unbelievers have, of course, searched for every supposed contradiction or perceived error and have thoroughly exploited them in an attempt to discredit the Bible, but the diligent Bible student will soon find the basis of such stunts completely unfounded.

## **Infallibility of Scripture**

The term infallibility goes beyond the inerrancy of Scripture as related to any statement of fact, and further says that the Bible is incapable of making any mistake regarding Christian faith or practice. That means that Scripture is trustworthy in all that we think or do. God Himself has told us that His Word will not return to Him void (Is.55:11). For that reason, Scripture cannot fail in its purpose. Scripture has the ability to reach into the heart and mind of man such that it arrests him and draws him toward faith in Jesus Christ. Having done that, Scripture through the teaching of the Holy Spirit is also able to keep him in the will of God throughout his lifetime.

Moreover, those writings have been preserved by God’s grace for our reading to convey God’s message to mankind down to the present day. It is in that sense that we must realize that the Bible *is the*

*Word of God* in every respect just as if He had physically written down every word and phrase. The words of Scripture are alive both in real historic people and in actual historic events. In addition, God's Words live within the hearts of God's people as their lives are transformed by them.

### **The Authority of Scripture**

The Old Testament begins with: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"(Ge.1:1). There is no philosophical discussion about who God is, nor is there any rise given to the question of his existence. From the very beginning, we are given a "take it or leave it" situation: Either believe that God is, and accept the Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God, or reject both; there is no middle ground. It is hard to believe that there are so-called Christians today who deny the absolute authority of the Bible. On what truth or foundation do they base their beliefs? They tend to make God in their own image as their own desires and imagination lead them astray. They attempt to bend God's purposes to suit their own ideas of what is right and wrong rather than to submit themselves to God's inflexible rule of life that is clearly established for their benefit in the Holy Scriptures.

### **The Coherence of Scripture**

Surely, true Christians cannot help but advocate the coherence of all of Scripture. The Old Testament without the New Testament is incomplete. The New Testament without the Old Testament hangs in mid-air, because its verity and substance must rest upon the Old Testament. The Old and New Testaments must stand or fall together. Therefore, we must consider the whole Bible as the Word of God, analyzing the Word carefully in terms of total Scriptural context, not dwelling upon some verses to the exclusion of the rest of Scripture. That wondrous story, that holy Truth, and that glorious hope as well, is revealed to us beginning in Genesis and ends only with Chapter 22 of Revelation. May we embrace all of Scripture with the full realization and knowledge that it is the very Word of the Lord our God toward us.

Therefore, we have but two choices regarding the Bible, believe it is the Word of God, or deny God Himself. If, as some would claim, the Bible is not the express Word of God, how do we know anything about God, or how do we even know that He exists. True, the heavens and the earth cry out with his handy-work, and our consciences bias us toward belief in a superior being. Yet, without the written record in the Bible, we have no firm facts upon which to fix our minds; we surely tend toward error. Man is a religious creature, and without comprehending the Truth revealed in the Scriptures, he will theorize his own religion from his own intellect and emotion. Nor is any civilization exempt from that fact; whether in base idolatry, the worship of nature, the worship of man himself, the worship of science, or the worship of time<sup>11</sup> (evolution), man will seek to create a purpose for his own existence and for the source of all creation.

Most would agree that fallen man does unconsciously seek for a superior being of some sort. For that reason, some have hypothesized that the Scriptures are only a record of man's search for God. They would say that the "idea" of "god" evolved as man sought with his mind to apply reason to his desire for the existence of a supreme being. That kind of thinking would relegate belief in God to a mere philosophy of men, and the Scriptures to a record of that "trial-and-error" search to prove a god that exists only in the human mind.

However, the coherence of the Scriptures, themselves, deny that vain idea. The human writers though occupying individual lifetimes within a span of many centuries were consistent and worked in concert with each other to produce the whole of Scripture though most never met or even envisioned the other. The serious student observes no helter-skelter jumping from concept to concept, nor do we see development of theories from a simple to a more diverse concept of God. Rather, throughout the pages of the Old Testament and culminating in the New Testament, we can see God's consistent and absolute purpose to redeem man to Himself. Rather than seeing a story of man's search for God, we clearly see God's relentless search for the

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<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 3.1 of this book for a study of time and its purpose.

souls of men that finds its climax in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ (Ge.3:9).

Not only could man not have contrived the Holy God of the Bible, he would not even if he could because of the Bible's exposition and condemnation of his ignoble and sinful nature. Man's natural tendency is to create a god in his own image that is more to his liking. Therefore, we must consider the Bible as God sent.

### **Perspicuity of Scripture**

Though the Bible is a complete and clear revelation of God and his purposes for mankind, it is effectively so only when man himself receives it in Truth as such. Luther and other reformers considered Scripture clear enough that anyone should be able to understand its basic message such that it would lead them to salvation. This is referred to as the "perspicuity" of Scripture. It indeed would be incredible to think that God had provided Scripture only to be understood by the wise and prudent, and denied that understanding to other less intellectual believers in Christ (cf. Mt.11:25).

### ***Basics of Sound Interpretation***

Most often, the authors of Scripture wrote in a straightforward and factual way, but at other times, they used figurative or symbolic language for emphasis. For instance, Jesus at times spoke in parables that were allegorical to illustrate a spiritual truth. The poetic books, especially the Psalms, were written in a figurative way and were often set to music. The Old Testament prophets often wrote in symbolic language to drive home their message of repentance or judgment. The book of Revelation is almost entirely written in symbolic language. It is important to understand, however, that figurative language, when it is used, always points to a literal reality so that we cannot merely discard figurative language as unimportant.

### **Literal Sense**

Bible text should always be interpreted in the "literal sense" in which it was written. The best approach is to make every attempt to interpret text in an absolute and straightforward way unless it is made

clear by the sense of the text itself that symbolic language is being used. We simply find that some phrases or passages make no *sense* if interpreted in an absolute literal fashion. Since no part of God's Word can be considered nonsense, it requires us to adjust our interpretation from literal to figurative in order to understand certain texts. Difficulty in interpretation more often occurs when the writer has used both factual and symbolic language mixed within the same passage. That often creates a serious conflict between Bible scholars that can lead to different and divergent interpretations depending upon which parts of the text are assumed literal and which are symbolic. Unfortunately, diverse interpretations of such passages can often lead to divisive sectarian bias even among sincere believers.

### **Personal Bias and Limitations**

How an individual believer interprets the Bible is dependent upon various things such as one's intellectual capacity, prior secular education, family upbringing, and social background as well as one's established religious affiliation if any. Many persons are already locked into a paradigm of secular, traditional, and extra-biblical religious thought and practice that acts as a narrow and blurred lens between them and accurate Bible interpretation. That is, their minds are already largely made up on what the Bible should say to the extent that the Bible must be made to conform to that view. In order to interpret the Bible accurately, it is necessary to discard such excess baggage in order to have a mind that is clear of any misconceptions and is open to the Truth regardless of where it will carry us. That is not always so easily done.

### **Weighing Context**

When interpreting Scripture, it is important to keep each passage in its proper context within its chapter and then that chapter in context with the subject of the entire book. Then, that book must be placed in context with the other 65 books of the Bible. For that larger context, we must read and study the entire Bible from cover-to-cover in order to be familiar with its total contents. If our understanding of an individual passage contradicts large portions of Scripture elsewhere

that seem to be quite clear in meaning, we can assume that we are either misinterpreting the text at hand, or we must finally realize that we do not have a clear understanding of the major thrust of the subject matter. Scripture is always in harmony with itself since God is not a God of confusion. Interpreting the entire Bible in full context has led to two systematic interpretative methods that are commonly in use today. These are known as Covenantalism and Dispensationalism. Both shall be discussed in some detail in Chapter 11.2 of Book II of this work.

While all of Scripture is set down for our reading and profit, we must understand that not all Scripture is *directed* to us. For example, words that were spoken to Israel as a theocratic nation must be understood to our benefit, but we must not think that God is speaking those very words directly to us or to the church today. We must determine to whom each book and passage is addressed and then the exact subject at hand. We must consider the context of time and place as well as substance. That is, we must determine whether the passage addresses an eternal *principle* that is applicable today or only addresses a situation or practice that existed at that time and place to those addressed and is no longer applicable because it has no relevance to today's world. We must also ask ourselves whether the passage universally commends or condemns certain thoughts and practices as an eternal *precept* from God that is applicable in every place and time.

Verses must never be taken in isolation in an attempt to extract a greater meaning, and isolated verses or fragments of verses must never be strung together to derive a meaning that was never intended by the book's author. Perhaps that faulty approach to interpretation has been perpetuated by the format of the *King James Version* and other Bibles that have the text separated into neat little verses that are isolated by verse numbers. We tend to see individual verses rather than the entire text. The memorization of individual verses rather than complete passages in full context probably helps maintain verse isolation as well. Individual verse divisions are helpful for study and cross-reference, but should not be allowed to affect our interpretation of the text itself. Though it may seem apparent to say so, each verse is most often related to the one found before and after it in the text.

**Bible Text Notations**

Verse cross-references, organized in a list of center references, margin references, or sometimes placed at the end of each verse are useful for searching out topics in the Bible. By using them, we can find various passages in the Bible that have similar subject matter. That often helps us to get a larger view of a topic, and it helps us put verses and passages in a larger biblical context. It can also help clarify the meaning of an individual verse. However, we must remember that those references are not a part of the inspired text and are subject to human error. We must not develop any doctrine based on those Scripture references as proof in themselves.

Finally, we must also understand that chapter divisions were added as aids for reference purposes only and do not represent any divisions to be found in the original text. Quite often, a passage topic can be seen to bridge chapter divisions. Finally, we must understand that section headings and various notes found in many Bibles are not inspired text and should not be treated as such.

**Study Guides**

There are also many aids available today for the study of Scripture. In addition to a good study Bible, a student should have at hand a “Topical Bible.” Many study Bibles have a topical reference in the back, but those are usually limited in scope. The *Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*, currently available in various translations has a thorough topical reference and is of great value in the absence of a separate Topical Bible. You should also have a comprehensive concordance of Bible words matching your own Bible version and a good Bible dictionary.

While commentaries can be useful for the mature student to hone his own thoughts, they often keep a new Christian from reading, studying, and reaching an understanding of the Truth for themselves. Unfortunately, even the work that you are presently reading falls into that general category. Never trust what anyone says about the Bible more than the words of the Bible itself. As someone has said, “it is amazing how much light the Bible throws on commentaries.”

*Application of Scripture*

Application of Scripture must always be based upon an accurate interpretation. (As we have just seen, accurate interpretation is not always so easily accomplished). Considerable error comes about when attempting to take portions of Scripture, especially isolated verses, and apply them directly to the life of the individual in today's world. When that is done, the verse is usually pulled out of its original context and distorted to fit some modern concept for which the verse was never intended. Well-meaning preachers often do that from the church pulpit in the form of a sermon that is intended to exhort the congregation to live godly lives or to further some goals of the local church.

Unfortunately, application is usually seen as more relevant than accurate interpretation in today's churches. The result is that the difference between interpretation and application is blurred. The modern application suddenly becomes the interpretation of the text in the minds of many. Over the years, those applications can erroneously become a part of church doctrine. While we must always allow the Holy Bible to influence our lives based upon the precepts and principles found in Scripture, we must never allow a popular application to override clear interpretation of the Scripture text lest the true message of the Bible be lost. We must first seek to accurately interpret Scripture in context. Only then can we make an application of that interpretation to our lives today.

## **Chapter 1.3 Old Testament Introduction and History**

A study of the Bible should properly begin with the Old Testament. Quite often, we attempt to tell others the story of salvation by beginning with the New Testament and expounding the virtues of Jesus. Yet, in a larger sense, the natural man, who has no inclination toward the Eternal God, no idea of man's relationship with Him, no concept of man's fall, can not fully understand the significance of that central event in time. That Jesus was born a child to a woman who was a virgin, grew to be 30 years old, ministered for three years in such a manner as to bring the wrath of the Jews upon him, was nailed to a cross for his insurrection, died, and was buried. After that, He arose from the dead, ascended to be with his Father in heaven, is the spiritual head of the "Church," can forgive man his "sins" by virtue of his death on the cross and his resurrection, and is coming again, is more than the uninformed can understand. It is no wonder that this is so. To fully understand this central event and central figure of time, man must be able to answer one important question: "Who is God?" In addition, as well, "Who or what is man, and what is his relationship with God? What is "sin" that it can separate us from God?"

Those are the very questions that will be fully addressed in the second section of this book. More significantly, those are the very questions that the Old Testament answers in detail. It is important that we look into the events of the books of the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures, before we can hope to come to a full knowledge of the New Testament. While we must readily concede that the most important single events in the Bible are Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection, lack of knowledge of the Old Testament events may very well leave one in bewilderment of many things discussed in the New Testament. The Bible is not (as some have supposed) two separate Bibles authored by two separate "Gods;" nor was it authored by a "God" who has changed his attitude toward man in the mainstream of time. A full study of the Bible reveals that God has been consistent with man from the beginning, and that God's plan for the salvation of

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man is revealed throughout Scripture beginning in the very first book of the Old Testament. As Augustine, a fourth century theologian said, "The New is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New revealed."

### *Old Testament Outline*

Because many may not be familiar with the themes of the 39 books of the Old Testament, a brief outline of the Old Testament is included here both for present scanning and for future reference. The English versions of the Old Testament are divided into five *logical* categories (not necessarily chronological categories) as are described below:

#### **1. The Pentateuch ("five books"):**

**Genesis:** The book of the origin of the universe and of man; God's chosen family (the family of Abraham).

**Exodus:** The story of Israel — God's chosen nation. The Law was given to Israel.

**Leviticus:** God's requirements for man — the ceremonial laws; the necessity for sacrifice to restore communion with God. Christ pictured in the ritual sacrifices.

**Numbers:** The wanderings of Israel in the wilderness. A picture of man's wanderings on the earth.

**Deuteronomy:** The second giving of the Law relating to its every-day application in the lives of the people of Israel.

#### **2. The Historical Record of the Chosen Nation:**

**Joshua:** The conquest of Canaan by the Israelites. Entering the Promised Land.

**Judges:** The rule and deliverance of Israel as a theocracy (under God, the King). God's temporal judgments carried out by human judges.

**Ruth:** The story of an Israelite family that went to a far country. The redemption of Ruth by the Kinsman-redeemer of Israel. A picture of Christ's love for and the redemption of his Church. Ruth and Boaz, the human ancestors of Jesus Christ.

**I & II Samuel:** the history of Samuel. Israel rejects God as

King; wants a human king as the heathen nations around them. Story of the transition of Israel from a theocracy to a political kingdom. The reign of King David.

**I & II Kings:** The early history of the kingdom of Israel.

Frailty of human leaders as kings is seen. The division of the kingdom into ten northern and two southern tribes of Judah & Benjamin.

**I & II Chronicles:** Historic record of the Davidic line, the kingdom of Judah. Record ends with the captivity of Judah by Babylon.

**Ezra:** A record of the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. The rebuilding of the Temple.

**Nehemiah:** A record of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The re-establishment of Temple worship.

**Esther:** The deliverance of the Jews while out of their land and under Persian rule. The story of queen Esther.

### ***3. Books of Poetry:***

**Job:** The vanity of man; the wisdom of God. Satan's evil design; repentance; Job's ultimate deliverance.

**Psalms:** 150 songs of God's people. They run the full range of human emotion from deep dejection to the highest exaltation. Speaks to the heart of man.

**Proverbs:** A textbook of instruction to man regarding morals, ethics, and wisdom. A practical handbook for correct living. Speaks to the mind of man.

**Ecclesiastes.** A humanistic view of life. The futility of human effort. The meaninglessness of life apart from God's purpose for us.

**Song of Solomon:** the love of Christ for his elect (the Church) and the love of the Chosen for Christ. Expressed in a human example of mutual love between a man and a woman.

### ***4. The Major Prophets:***

**Isaiah:** the corruptness of Israel; Impending judgment; prophecies of the Messiah; the hope of redemption.

**Jeremiah:** prophecies of moral degeneration; bondage; hope

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of future restoration.

**Lamentations:** Jeremiah laments Israel's afflictions.

**Ezekiel:** the terrible condition of God's people in captivity. Yet, a hope for a bright and wondrous future.

**Daniel:** Mysterious visions of Daniel regarding future events, both near and far. The key book to understanding prophecy.

### 5. The *Minor Prophets*:<sup>12</sup>

**Hosea:** God's faithfulness to an unfaithful nation. God's judgment of Israel does not mean that He has given her up: present judgment, future salvation.

**Joel:** The "Day of the Lord" and coming judgments predicted in the light of an immediate plague of locusts upon Israel.

**Amos:** God is the king and passes judgment on all nations of the world. Judgment against Judah and Israel. Future predictions.

**Obadiah:** The prophecy of judgment upon Edom by God. "The kingdom is the LORD's."

**Jonah:** Jehovah is God of the Gentiles as well as the Jew. God's overruling of man's faithlessness. Salvation is of the LORD.

**Micah:** God's intense hatred of sin, but his great love for the souls of sinners is revealed.

**Nahum:** God's judgment upon the city of Nineveh.

**Habakkuk:** Why God permits evil. How God uses the evil of this world to accomplish his judgments.

**Zephaniah:** God's love expressed through his wrath and judgment. True love must often be harsh.

**Haggai:** Encouragement for the rebuilding of the Temple in the face of opposition and discouragement.

**Zechariah:** Apocalyptic visions regarding the first and second coming of Christ.

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<sup>12</sup>It is important to note that the messages of the Minor Prophets are just as important as that of the Major Prophets. They are referred to as "minor" prophets only because of the brevity of their writings in comparison to that of the "major" prophets.

**Malachi:** Israel rebuked for their sins. The prediction of the coming of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ. Predictions concerning the “Day of the Lord.”

We can see that the entire history of man is given to us in the Old Testament. The Old Testament describes man’s journey through time from his creation (Ge.1:27) through the time of the restoration of Jerusalem (approx. 400 B.C.). If we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, we no longer have questions about man’s origin, or how he managed to become the creature that he is today. We are told that we are a creation of God; therefore, we are also told of man’s primary purpose, which is to please God, our Creator.

### *Historic Summary*

The Old Testament has both a spiritual significance and a purely historical significance. (We shall discuss the spiritual significance in the next chapter). The historical aspect must not be ignored lest we come to think of the Old Testament as a purely philosophical exposition with no basis in reality. The Old Testament is a group of documents relating real events in real times. It is beyond the scope of this writing to go into detail regarding Old Testament events. However, this brief historical summary may prove beneficial to those who are, yet, unfamiliar with Old Testament happenings.

Old Testament history is most revealing in showing both the nature of God, man, and man’s relationship to God. First, we read of the beginning of the human race in the persons of Adam and Eve (and their disastrous fall). From their offspring, a large population came upon the earth. However, the people were very evil and did not seek God’s guidance. For that reason, God destroyed the earth with a great flood, saving only Noah and his family. After that new beginning with the best of the human race, man again became evil. God dispersed them into various tribes by confounding their speech (Ge.11:8). From one of those tribes, God called out one man, Abraham. From then on, biblical history will be traced through the line of Abraham, the father of nations. History follows Abraham’s son, Isaac, and then Jacob (Isaac’s son). Then Joseph, the son of Jacob, is followed. Through Joseph, the tribe of Jacob (Israel) entered Egypt.

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The Israelites grew from a small tribe to a multitude in Egypt. Nevertheless, they were an oppressed people for four hundred years under an Egyptian Pharaoh. Moses was then called by God to deliver Israel from Egypt. God showed his power to the Israelites in delivering them from bondage. Even after experiencing those miracles, they rebelled against God and refused to enter Canaan, the land God had promised them. Therefore, God refused them entry into Canaan and caused them to wander in the Sinai desert for forty years. At the end of forty years, Joshua led the Israelite nation into Canaan where God gave them victory after victory. Under the leadership of Joshua, Israel possessed the land.

Israel grew into a mighty nation; a nation ruled by God, that is, a theocracy. The dispensation of God's judgments were given by judges that God called forth to serve Him. Even so, religious apostasy set into the population to the extent that they eventually demanded a king as the other nations around them. The nation, once having only God as their king, was given Saul as their first human king. Saul was not a good king, and was later replaced by David. David was "a man after God's own heart." Nevertheless, David was also human and fell into sin. David's Son, Solomon, replaced him on the throne. Solomon built the Temple that David had planned. Solomon was a wise king, and fearing God, he began well. However, after the Temple was completed, Solomon and the nation gave in to apostasy.

Upon the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel split into the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah). For two hundred years, Israel had nothing but bad kings eventually resulting in their captivity by Assyria; the population was dispersed. Judah fared little better, but had some good kings along with some very bad kings. Judah lasted only another hundred years until its people were taken captive by Babylon; its population also dispersed.

Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon, and allowed the Jews (Judah) to return to their homeland. About fifty thousand Israelites returned, and settled at Jerusalem. The Temple was rebuilt, and the walls of the city restored. That ends the Old Testament historical account.

Secular history has recorded that Judah (Judea) remained under Persian rule for two hundred years. They were then brought under Greek rule by the conquests of Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. After the death of Alexander, his kingdom was divided into four separate kingdoms. The Jews first came under Egyptian and later Syrian rule. During the Syrian rule, the Jews were persecuted in many ways, and their religious way of life was threatened. Idolatry was established, and the Temple was defiled. A Jewish revolt eventually overthrew the Syrians and Judea became an independent province.<sup>13</sup> By treaty, Judea came under Roman rule as the Roman Empire grew in strength. Roman governors ruled the province. That was the political condition of Judea at the time of Jesus' birth.

The Old Testament is truly a history book extending backward far beyond any other written history. The events of the Old Testament are not mere stories or fables. They are factual events that are rich with spiritual example. We can observe the "hand of prophecy" moving inside the "glove of history," guiding and directing man's past toward the central event, the cross of Christ. The fulfilled prophecy of the Old Testament helps us to understand the fulfilled prophecy of the first advent of Christ in the New Testament. It should leave us little doubt that the future events of the Revelation will also conform fully to God's will as well. The future is as certain as the past.

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<sup>13</sup>See I Maccabees in the apocrypha and the writings of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus for more historical information concerning this time.

## Chapter 1.4 Old Testament Significance

The simple historical survey given in the previous chapter is useful for a study of man's origin and past. It is important that a man knows God as his creator and is aware of both man's past and his present position in the stream of history. Yet, that is not the total thrust of the Old Testament account. If we read the Bible purely as an historical account, we shall miss the point completely. The Old Testament is not merely a history, but is intended as an instructor of spiritual things as well. Its message is designed to reveal the personality of God, the nature of man, God's attitude toward man, man's attitude toward God, and God's attitude and judgments toward sin. In the events of the Old Testament, we learn much about God; God's mighty power is seen as well as God's mercy.

### *God's Mercy Seen in the Old Testament*

Many do not see God's mercy in the Old Testament because of the many harsh judgments that are in evidence. For that reason, they cannot equate the God of the Old Testament with the God of the New Testament, which they see as more lenient. That is, they feel much more comfortable with Jesus of the New Testament than they do with Jehovah of the Old Testament.<sup>14</sup> However, God's mercy is seen in the beginning when He "stayed his hand" against Adam and Eve. Surely, Adam and Eve deserved death; and not just physical death, but eternal separation from God without any hope of redemption. Nevertheless, God, in his mercy had provided a way. Even then, the way to salvation was Jesus Christ, who was "...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"(Re.13:8). Long before Jesus was born to Mary in Bethlehem, God promised that Christ (the Messiah) would come. God, Himself, would pay the price for man's sins, but the sacrifice itself

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<sup>14</sup>We are told in the Book of Hebrews that Jesus is "the express image of God's person" (He.1:3). In seeing Jesus we have also seen Jehovah (Jn.14:8,9). Jesus of the New Testament is the same God as Jehovah of the Old Testament (Jn.10:30).

would be a man in whom God's justice and holiness would be satisfied. God clearly demonstrated that to man when He sacrificed animals and shed their blood that Adam and Eve could receive a covering for their shame (i.e. their sin) (Ge.3:21).

If man deserved eternal death, can God be considered to have dealt harshly with men in the Old Testament? Rather, we witness God purging, cleansing, prodding, demonstrating his will, and instructing man. Since man was so rebellious, God's judgment was often quite severe in order that the human race could continue. Because of the hopeless state of mankind at the time of Noah, all were destroyed with a flood except Noah and his family. That terrible event did three things: It revealed God's holy attitude toward sin, and it demonstrated God's power to deal with sin. It also demonstrated God's mercy in dealing with Noah.

### ***God Built a Special Nation for His Purposes***

The people again became evil within their individual tribes though they lacked the unity with other tribes to seriously oppose God because of their diverse languages. The differences in language held the rebellion of man in check. The tribes of man opposed and warred with each other instead of uniting to "shake their fists" against God. God then called forth an individual named Abraham. Through Abraham, God slowly began the building of a nation for Himself that He set aside from the rest of the world. That nation grew up in bondage so that God could demonstrate his power (both to Israel and to Gentile nations) in bringing them forth out of Egypt as an independent nation under his direct rule.

Israel suffered much at God's hand. Rather than receiving preferential treatment, Israel was judged more rigidly than the other nations around them. Why should that be so? It was precisely because the nation Israel was God's own people, a people called out for a specific purpose, which was to bring forth the Messiah. God allowed other nations to be given over to their lusts and evil ways, for they

were not in His purpose.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, when Israel rebelled and did evil, God punished them. When they repented and turned to God, God delivered them.

The harsh treatment of Israel was a holy God's response to the seriousness of their sins. Israel was intended as both a witness and an example to other peoples and nations.<sup>16</sup> When his people persisted in idolatry, He caused Assyria and Babylon to come against them, take them into captivity, and disperse them. In mercy, God delivered thousands of them from bondage back to Jerusalem by means of Cyrus of Persia after the predicted seventy years of captivity was completed.

It is as if the words of the Prophet summed up Israel's dullness: "Hear Oh Israel thy LORD is one LORD." However, after Israel's remnant returned to Jerusalem, they no longer served idols; God had broken them of this sin. Even so, Israel did not always seek God thereafter. The Greek civilization brought many deprived thoughts and activities into their own culture. The exaltation of men in elaborate sporting events, and the denying of their Hebrew heritage again brought them into bondage. Israel was never again an independent nation after its destruction in 586 B.C. at the hands of Babylon. One nation or another kept it in servitude until A.D. 70 when it was destroyed. The Jews were scattered throughout many Gentile nations.<sup>17</sup>

### ***God's Promise for the Deliverance of Mankind***

Throughout the Old-Testament account is God's promise for man's deliverance. The reality of his promise was brought about

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<sup>15</sup>This is not to say that God did not care for the Gentile nations, but that His means of salvation for all mankind was to come through a nation that was specifically prepared by Him for that purpose.

<sup>16</sup>The example given to us regarding the judgment of sin in the history of Israel is something that we should well give heed to in this nation today.

<sup>17</sup>Although Israel exists as a political reality today, it is not the theocracy that God created. Nor have all the Jews returned to the land to serve God. In the future God will yet return his people to the land to serve Him at which time Israel shall truly exist and live again.

through Jesus the Messiah, which God's own chosen nation brought forth.

God had promised Adam and Eve eternal life (the tree of life was not forbidden them), but they sinned (God's first covenant with man was broken). Then, came the promise of the savior to be brought forth by the grace of God. "And I will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman [Eve], and between thy seed and her seed; it [Christ] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Ge.3:15). Perhaps Eve thought the deliverer had come when she gave birth to Cain. Yet, her hopes were surely dashed when Cain slew Abel. In remembrance of that covenant, Abel offered a blood sacrifice of his flock. Cain offered the fruit of the ground, thus of his own labors, and it was rejected by God (Ge.4:3,5). No doubt, Cain worked hard for that which he offered, but Abel sacrificed that which he had raised and loved. That showing early in the Old Testament that salvation is not of man's works, but by the grace of God through the shedding of blood.

### **God's Further Promise to Noah**

Then, another promise was made to Noah as the covenant of grace first made with Adam was renewed after the flood. After his deliverance from the flood that destroyed mankind, God promised that He would never again destroy all flesh from the face of the earth as He had done with a flood. This God stated to Noah after Noah had remembered the promise of the Messiah by building an altar and offering blood sacrifice to God (Ge.8:20,21). Afterward, God remembered his promise to Noah at the tower on the plain of Shinar (Ge.11:7,8). Instead of destroying man again, He scattered them by confounding their language so that they were separated into many tribes each of which spoke a different language. Even today, language is a barrier to communication and understanding such that it tends to divide nations from each other.

### **God's Promise to Abraham**

Nevertheless, God had not forgotten the promise of the Messiah. God called forth Abraham (Ge.12:1-3). At Bethel, Abraham remembered the promise of the covenant (Ge.12:8). God further

promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation, and that he should be a blessing, and through him all the families of the earth would be blessed (Ge.12:3). God told Abraham that through his offspring, the Messiah would come. Abraham remembered and believed even though he became old and he and his wife, Sarah, had no children. The covenant promise was sealed with Abraham through the ritual act of circumcision: that is, the cutting off of the flesh of man, and the shedding of blood (Ge.17:11). Again, the remembrance of the covenant promise made to Adam and Eve of the coming Messiah was demonstrated by that act. The people in whom the sign of circumcision was made manifest would bring forth the “lamb of God.”

When Abraham was about one hundred years old, Sarah bore him a son who was named Isaac. Abraham was made to know that the promise was to be made through Isaac, and not Ishmael. Ishmael was born of sin (of man’s desire) and not of the promise, as was Isaac. Then in the Old Testament is a series of births showing that the inheritance is not to the first born (Adam), but to the second born (the Messiah). Therefore, Abraham was made to know that the promise of the Messiah was in his second born, Isaac.

When God ordered Abraham to offer his only son Isaac (Ge.22:2) on an altar in sacrifice to God, that promise surely was in Abraham’s mind. Was Isaac the anointed one of God who would die for all humanity? Even so, Abraham believed God since God had promised many nations a blessing through Isaac. Therefore, Abraham believed that God would honor his promise even if Isaac was offered and burned upon the altar. Abraham must have believed that Isaac would be delivered of God or, perhaps, even resurrected from the dead because Abraham had promised that he and his son would return (Ge.22:5). That is what James later referred to as the “works” of Abraham: that Abraham so believed God that he acted upon that belief fully. Of course, God stayed Abraham’s hand against Isaac, because Isaac was but a foreshadow of the Messiah who was yet to come. Yet, in the faith of Abraham the promise of God is again fully seen.

**The Law of Moses a Means to God's Promise**

While we shall not cover the subject in detail here, some mention must be made of the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses.<sup>18</sup> Even after the Hebrew's deliverance from Egypt, they were a stubborn people and did not cease to transgress against God. What did God require of them? That they may perfectly be God's people, God set down for them his requirements that they may walk perfectly before Him in the Ten Commandments given to Moses. Through the giving of God's Law, God's covenant with Adam, Noah, and Abraham was restated once again.

The Ten Commandments were given because of the Hebrews continual transgressions. It was necessary that some restraint be placed upon them against run-away sin. The Hebrew people were, in many ways, an unusual group that God had chosen; they were certainly not chosen because of their perfection. Even as the Ten Commandments were being given to Moses on the mountain, the Hebrew populace was transgressing against God! God punished that transgression severely. Nevertheless, the Hebrews were never made perfect by the Law, nor was that the purpose of the Law, as will be fully explained later. Salvation was, even then, of faith through the promise of God, not by works of the Law.

**The Kingdom Promised to David's Line**

The promise of deliverance is seen throughout the Old Testament: to Jacob, to Moses, to Joshua, and to the nation of Israel which came from the seed of Abraham. God was King over Israel, but due to the worldliness of the people, first Saul then David sat on the throne of God's Kingdom. God promised that through David's seed, would come an everlasting kingdom, and David's offspring would rule it forever. The savior, the Messiah, the anointed of God, the King of Kings would come through the line of David. Again, we see the promise of the covenant that God had first made with Adam.

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<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 2.5

**God's Promise Forgotten by Israel**

Then came the years of the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah. The promise was barely remembered by Israel, though it had been clearly demonstrated in the Temple and in its rituals. Due to the terrible decadence of Israel, the nation suffered God's wrath time after time. The promise was lost in ceremonial observances that no longer had meaning to them, and was degraded to the level of the ceremonies of the surrounding nations, to Baal worship and to the sacrifice of infants to appease the god of darkness. God took no pleasure in the sacrifices of Israel, no pleasure in their ceremonial petitions; they forgot the purpose of those things. The promise of deliverance was hidden, though the prophets warned and admonished the people.

The divided nation of Israel and Judah was destroyed, and God's chosen people were taken captive and dispersed. The Temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt by a more humble remnant of Israel when many returned from the Babylonian exile seventy years later. Still the people of Israel were oppressed by Syria, Egypt, Greece, and later by the Roman Empire. To God's people, "deliverance" came to mean deliverance from the physical oppression of occupying nations. The Kingdom of God was forgotten, and political nationalism replaced it in their thoughts. Israel was blinded when the Messiah did come to them. Looking for deliverance from the Romans and not recognizing the oppression of their own sins, they looked for a ruler who would restore Israel's national sovereignty.

**God's Promise to be Fulfilled in Jesus**

Therefore, Israel did not heed the herald of God's prophets. God had called forth those whom He chose to speak in his name. Then, the message regarding the Messiah (Christ) became louder and clearer. God chose to make specific disclosures about Christ's coming. The prophet Isaiah gives vivid predictions that can only be concerning Jesus the Christ. Malachi blew the last trumpet. The message regarding the promise became clear "The Messiah is coming", and then the Old Testament closed, and four hundred years passed in silence from Heaven. However, during that time, God was still at

work. The Roman Empire was born, and it became the dominant force in the known world. With that empire came roads, a common commercial language (Greek), safety of travel under Roman protection — yes, even civil order through Roman law and government.

Time had become complete for the most astonishing work of God since the creation itself — the focal point of time had come. The reality of the promise made to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, to David: the fulfillment of the voice of the prophets. God did not tarry as Jesus was born to a virgin in the city of David — the ultimate fulfillment of prophecy had begun. The promise of God in heaven had arrived on earth as a baby in a manger. The Son of God was born as the son of man. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...” (Jn.1:14).

## Chapter 1.5 The New Testament

The New Testament really needs little introduction inasmuch as the Old Testament has provided its own introduction for it.<sup>19</sup> The New Testament is the detailed story of God's Messiah, his life upon the earth, and the story of the redemption, which Jesus purchased by the shedding of his own blood (1Co.11:25; Ex.24:8). So significant are the events of the New Testament, that almost all of the remainder of this work is devoted to its contents. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to keep the survey of its contents brief here.

### *The Old Covenant Replaced with the New*

Interwoven into the old covenant delivered through Moses to the nation Israel was the unmistakable promise of a new covenant that would be made between God and all of mankind at a later date (cf. Je.31:31; He.8:8). That promise was primarily made evident in the ceremonial law that required the blood sacrifice of animals to atone for sin. That agreement was foretold in the old Hebrew Scriptures; the agreement became a reality in the New Testament records.

The New Testament books, then, demonstrate how God kept that promise over many centuries. For unto man came "tidings of great joy" (Lu.2:10)! God was instituting a new agreement with man whereby man could truly know peace with Him. The blood of the Savior would seal that new covenant. The "Light of the world" had come, and the world would never again be as dark as it once was. The old covenant would be replaced with the new as it had been foretold: The promise of the Messiah and his new covenant with God's people had finally come!

### *The Focal Point of Time*

Here is the turning point in time, the focus of all human history. Before the coming of Jesus, the world awaited the Messiah.

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<sup>19</sup>The word "testament" should more accurately be rendered "covenant." The New Covenant is a new agreement between God and man that also brings forth a new relationship as well.

Whether in worship, prayers, or ceremony, man's hope was in a coming Messiah to deliver him from the bonds of sin and the power of Satan. Upon the birth of Jesus, the hopes of mankind focused into a single point in time. The mediator of the new covenant had arrived on earth. Therefore, as man before looked forward to the coming of the Messiah for his salvation, man now looks back to that wondrous event wherein Jesus, the Messiah, purchased our redemption on the cross.<sup>20</sup> No time in history has such significance, both for us now, and for the man of the Old Testament times as well. The awaited redeemer from God had finally come!

### *New Testament Sections*

The New Testament books are arranged into five sections or categories. These are: The Gospels, History, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, and Prophecy. The first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are often referred to as synoptic Gospels since they have many parallel events and verses. The Gospel of John is uniquely different in its scope and content, yet it is not in conflict with the synoptic Gospels. Each book was written as a separate document. Each category has its own significance as does each book contained within them so that none are diminished in importance by their placement in our English Bibles. The books within each category are not specifically arranged in chronological order. They are rather arranged in a logical order, as were those of the Old Testament and is the common order that we now find in our English Bibles. All of the 27 "books" are actually letters (epistles). Each had a writer; each had a recipient. Often, an individual was the object of a letter; sometimes, a group of believers was in the mind of the writer. Regardless of whom the original receiver of each letter was, all were written and preserved for our reading and benefit today.

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<sup>20</sup>It should be noted that both the Hebrew words "Messiah" and the Greek word "Christos" mean "anointed one." The New Testament use of the word "Christ" refers to the promised Jewish Messiah, which is the same Jesus.

### *Authorship and Dates*

As in the Old Testament, there is some question about the exact identity of some of the writers. Let us realize that the identity of the writer does not affect the content or the authority of those books which are God's Word to man. It should be noted that the book of Hebrews has been classified below as being of Pauline (of Paul) authorship whereas others have listed it as a general epistle.<sup>21</sup> Let us not see so much the human author as the divine author (the Holy Spirit) who guided the writer's hand and filled their minds. In addition, the dates that are assigned to the writings are rather subjective and are based on deduction rather than upon any certain knowledge. Yet, those dates can be useful if we realize that, although they are not exact, they are reasonable estimates that establish a general chronological order.

### *New Testament Outline*

#### *1. The Gospels:*

**Matthew**— c. A.D. 50 — written by Levi one of the 12 apostles. The story of Jesus written for Jewish readers. Emphasis is upon the fulfilling of Old Testament prophecies. Jesus is the rightful king of Israel. The kingdom of David has become the Kingdom of Heaven in Jesus Christ. The Messiah has come!

**Mark**— c. A.D. 64–68 — written by John Mark (Ac.12:25). Written to Gentiles. Jesus is seen as a man of action, which appealed to the Roman mind. Contains very few references to Old Testament fulfillment. The benevolent deeds of Jesus are expounded to non-Jews.

**Luke**— c. A.D. 58 — written by Luke the physician (Col.4:14). Written to an individual: Theophilus (Lu.1:3) — an unknown person, believed to be a Gentile. Jesus seen as the perfect man, which appealed to the Greek mind. Jewish customs are

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<sup>21</sup>While there is considerable internal and external evidence that Hebrews was written by the Apostle Paul, Paul is not specifically mentioned by name in the epistle. This has given rise to speculation by many that it was written by someone else.

explained in detail for the non-Jew. Here we have recorded an eyewitness account (Lu.1:2) of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection for those not present in Jerusalem during those wondrous events.

**John**— c. A.D. 85–90 — written by the Apostle John. Written at large to a group of believers. Written to correct erroneous doctrines of the day — sets forth the deity of Christ — shows that Jesus is both fully God, and fully man. The last days of Jesus on earth described in detail, including his crucifixion. Written to promote belief in Christ and eternal life through faith in his name (Jn.20:30,31).

### *2. Historical:*

**The Acts of the Apostles**— c. A.D. 63 — written by Luke to the same Theophilus (Ac.1:1) as was the Gospel of Luke; written as a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Contains Christian history from the ascension of Christ and the giving of the great commission — the birth of the new covenant Church on the day of Pentecost — a detailed narrative of church development through the activities of the apostles and the working of the Holy Spirit — to the first imprisonment of the Apostle Paul in Rome. Accounts of Paul's journeys are related and evangelism of others both near and far are carefully presented. The spread of the Gospel of Truth to the Gentiles is seen.

### *3. Pauline Epistles:*

**Romans**— c. A.D. 57 — written by Paul to Roman Christians. Probably written from Corinth. A masterful dissertation showing God's plan for the redemption of man. Shows that man is a fallen creature. That justification of man is by the grace of God through responsive faith and not by works of law or by human effort. Man is sanctified by the Holy Spirit to do the will of God. The doctrine of divine election is presented (Ro.8:28-31).

**The first Epistle to the Corinthians**— c. A.D. 55 — written by the Apostle Paul. The admonition of the Corinthians regarding false thoughts and practices. The resurrection of the

dead at the time of Christ's return explained. The evil of various disorders in the Corinthian assemblies that were rising from their personal pride and social failings.

**The second Epistle to the Corinthians**— c. A.D. 56 — written by the Apostle Paul about two years after I Corinthians. Paul defends his apostleship. The significance of evangelism and a free Gospel stated. Other miscellaneous matters concerning church activities and Christian living are covered.

**Galatians**— c. A.D. 58 — written to the churches in Galatia. Written by Paul. A superb writing defending the Pauline message: Justification by faith alone. Written against those that would have the Christian Jews return to Judaism or legalism. A clarion call to be free from the bondage of the Law. The fruits of the spirit listed. Christian duty is not to offend, but to help the weaker brother in matters of Christian doctrine.

**Ephesians**— c. A.D. 61–62 — written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus. The plan of salvation is summarized. Salvation through grace again is expounded. Obligations of believers are discussed. The unity of believers as one body in the Church: one Lord, one faith, and one identity. One God, our Father, who is above all believers, who works through them, and dwells within them.

**Philippians**— c. A.D. 62 — written by Paul to the church at Philippi. Paul expresses his appreciation and love for those people. Paul exhorts the church to love one another; esteem one another more highly than oneself. In humble unity, become one as in the mind of Christ.

**Colossians**— c. A.D. 61–62 — written by the Apostle Paul. Eternal hope springing from the Gospel. The preexistence of Christ as the creator: the Eternal God. Beware of meaningless philosophy. Warning against formalism, mysticism, and ceremonialism. Duties of Christians to their superiors, subordinates, and to each other: a bond of spiritual love. The peace of God rules in the believer's hearts.

**1 Thessalonians**— c. A.D. 52 — written by the Apostle Paul to the believers in Thessalonica from Corinth. The power of the

Word of God; Christians are stewards of the Gospel. The resurrection and second coming of Jesus Christ. Keeping on the spiritual “light” so that we will be awake when Jesus suddenly returns.

**2 Thessalonians**— c. A.D. 52–53 — written by the Apostle Paul from Corinth. Future judgment on them who do not know God and fail to hear the Gospel. The second coming of Christ; wait in patience and in prayer. Exhortation to separate ourselves from the unruly and disorderly. Christians not to be lazy or grow weary of doing what is right.

**1 Timothy**— c. A.D. 64 — Paul writes to a young overseer regarding his ministry and the conduct of personal affairs. Qualifications given for bishops and deacons. Predictions of future apostasy in the church. Duties of God’s ministers; exhortation of the man of God to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. Christian leaders not to place their trust in riches.

**2 Timothy**— c. A.D. 67 — Paul exhorts Timothy to be of a sound mind and not be ashamed of the Gospel. Be consistent in the faith and persevere. Marks of the latter days: men will love themselves; will not have natural affections; lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Today, preach the Truth; a time will come when men will turn from Truth and embrace fables.

**Titus**— c. A.D. 64–66 — written to Titus, a Gentile minister. Qualifications of bishops given. Silence false teachers with the Word of Truth. Deny ungodliness and lusts; live soberly; righteously, and godly in this fallen world. The eternal hope of the reappearing of Jesus. Duties of citizens to their governors. Justification by grace does not exclude good works that we may be fruitful in the Lord.

**Philemon**— c. A.D. 61–62 — a personal letter to Philemon; appealing to Philemon to receive again Onesimus, his slave. Onesimus, having received Truth, should be received again by Philemon as a brother. Where before he was considered an unprofitable slave, he is now of benefit as a brother in Christ.

We all owe a spiritual debt to God that exceeds all human debt. Therefore, the believer must forgive and receive those who come to Christ regardless of our earlier relationships with them.

**Hebrews**— c. A.D. 68–69 — believed to be written by the Apostle Paul. A letter to Hebrew Christians by the Apostle to the Gentiles. Emphasis placed on the person and preeminence of Christ. Jesus is the Messiah; Israel did not believe. The Christians' rest is in Christ by faith in the finished work of Jesus. Jesus is our high priest. The new covenant is much better than the old. The new was foretold in the old. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice; the old sacrificial ceremonies now abolished. Fruits of faith seen in the Old Testament heroes. Christ is an example under the Law to bring us forth by faith.

#### 4. *General Epistles:*

**James**— c. A.D. 45 — written by James, likely the human brother of Jesus, to Hebrew Christians. James exhorts to a solid faith. Against the belief that faith is passive, and does not manifest itself in good works. The evil of unkind and unthinking speech. Contentions with others brought about by our lusts. Believers should not live selfishly, but patiently wait for our Lord, not begrudging one another. The need to pray for the sick.

**1 Peter**— c. A.D. 65–66 — written by Peter the Apostle. Written to dispersed and suffering Christians. Hope found in trials and joys. Soberly bind our minds to the hope of Jesus' return. God has foreordained our redemption, has paid the terrible price, and shall prevail. The spiritual temple of God's chosen described. Christian duties and customs. The power of the spirit in subduing the flesh. Resist temptation; feed the flock; suffering all for the name of Jesus.

**2 Peter**— c. A.D. 66–67 — written by Peter. The sureness of God's Word in the Scriptures. False teachers will come, seducing many. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. We are to ignore scoffers; watch for his coming.

**1 John**— c. A.D. 85–90 — written by the Apostle John. A warning against worldliness. God’s love to believers. Behave as sons of God, both toward our heavenly Father as sons, and to one another as brothers. By the Holy Spirit, through the new birth, we are taught all things that we may know with certainty that we have eternal life in Jesus Christ.

**2 John**— c. A.D. 85–90 — written by the Apostle John. Exhortation to persevere in Truth, both knowing and obeying. A warning to beware of false teachers.

**3 John**— c. A.D. 91–96 — written by the Apostle John. Written to Gaius. An exhortation to be sincere in Truth with hospitality toward others, not built up with worldly ambition. Follow that which is good, not evil.

**Jude**— c. A.D. 68 — written by Judas: either the human brother of Jesus, or the Apostle Judas (brother of James) to Hebrew Christians. A warning to be consistent in the faith. Warnings of coming apostasy. Predictions of judgments against the ungodly. Exhortation to build ourselves up in the faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.

### ***5. Prophetic***

**Revelation**— c. A.D. 90–96 — written by the Apostle John. A vision received by John while imprisoned on the island of Patmos. The actual writing probably while in Ephesus shortly after his release. The glory of Christ seen. Seven letters to seven churches. The prophetic section seen by John in Heaven while “in the spirit.” Underlying spiritual happenings described by John in more human terms. Prophetic events described were all future events in A.D. 95. Some have been fulfilled, while others await their appointed time. A new heaven and a new Earth; paradise restored. The coming judgment. The victory of Christ (the lamb). Warnings against tampering with the content of the Prophecy. A final invitation to come to the living water, and a final assurance that our Lord Jesus Christ will come quickly. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

The New Testament is the revelation of God's Christ, the Messiah. Without it, we would still be in the dark regarding the specific fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning his coming. Yet, to read the New Testament without first reading the Old Testament is much like reading the last chapter of a story without any knowledge about what went on before. We are likely to be not a little bewildered by references to previous characters and events. The New Testament is full of such references to Old Testament people, events, ceremonies, and customs. Therefore, we can see that the New Testament must rest upon the old if we are to truly comprehend its truths.

The New Testament must be understood and interpreted in the light of the Old Testament. To interpret it in any other way is to invite misunderstanding and error. The importance of studying all 66 books of the Bible cannot be overemphasized. The Bible is not two books joined together, but one book that must be studied as a whole. The new believer often starts with the New Testament because it tells him of his salvation in Christ. We often encourage new converts to start with the gospel of Luke or John because they vividly reveal the person of Jesus Christ. It is quite appropriate that they begin with the "milk of the Word." Yet, while a new Christian often needs the immediate confidence and assurance found in the New Testament, he can never truly mature in the faith until he has studied and fit together the new with the old. We must reach an understanding of all of God's Word — the totality of Scripture.

## **Section 2, God and Man**

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**The Eternal God**

**Man Created in God's Image**

**The Fall of Man**

**The Son of the Morning**

**Sin Revealed by God's Law**

## Chapter 2.1 The Eternal God

It must be stated at the very outset that this brief study of the Eternal God can hardly be exhaustive. Entire books have been written on that subject alone, and entire lifetimes have been spent in studying the attributes of God. This study, then, can only serve as an introduction to that discipline of Theology that is devoted entirely to the direct study of God Himself.

The knowledge of God is essential knowledge. We find that the knowledge of God is the hub of Scripture around which all else revolves. We must come to knowledge of the true reality of God, or else any religious notions we may have are meaningless and false. Secondly, we must come to knowledge of God in order to truly know ourselves. Any assumptions we may make regarding our own being apart from first recognizing that God is our creator is highly distorted at best. Having said that, there is a sense in which we are unable to accurately define God in any strict awareness of his being because of our highly limited mortal capacity to comprehend Him. That is because his traits are so radically different from our own. We are therefore totally dependent upon God to reveal Himself to us as He chooses.

### *God Is*

We read in Hebrews 11:6, that "...he that cometh to God must believe that *he is*..." (emphasis added). When we say that *God is*, we do not merely mean that God exists, but that He subsists. That is, He is *self-sustaining*. Nothing created Him, and nothing prolongs or maintains Him. God is completely *self-sufficient*. Any being or any thing that exists is contingent upon someone or something else for its existence. If we merely say that God exists we also imply that it is possible for Him through time to be in a state of nonexistence or that He at one time did not exist. God is not a temporal being. When Moses asked God to give him his name, God replied, "I AM that I AM" inasmuch as a unique being does not need a name to differentiate Himself from other beings that do not subsist (Ex.3:14). The eternal being of God does not allow for a state of nonexistence. He depends

upon no one or nothing else for his continuity. God does not eat to sustain Himself, nor does He need to sleep. Therefore, we must realize that God actually subsists or that He is in a state of perpetual being eternally.

### **God is the Necessary Being**

Theologians therefore refer to God as the “necessary being” or the “elemental being.” He is the “uncreated One” or the “uncaused One.” His being is in Himself. All other beings exist through and by Him (Jn.1:3). Without the express action of God in speaking everything else into existence, nothing would or could exist at all. He is the essential creator. We are accustomed to think that every thing or being has a cause. Ultimately, however, all causes must lead back to God as the primary source. All beings other than God are contingent beings. That is, they do not need to exist in order for anything else to exist. While all other beings or things of necessity must have a cause in order to exist at all, God does not. He is the elemental cause. There never was a time in which God did not have his being. For that reason, we also refer to God as the “Supreme Being” having nothing before Him upon which He owes his existence or continued being.

### **God is the Elemental Being**

We must also realize that God is a simple being. When we say that God is a simple being, we mean only that God is pure and not made up of elemental parts. He is all of one exceptional element that exceeds human understanding. That is especially important to realize as we begin to discuss the many attributes<sup>22</sup> of God in this chapter. We cannot assume from his many attributes that God is only part Spirit, or part good, or part powerful. One attribute cannot be accepted to the exclusion of all the others. We must realize that his many attributes are not parts of his character combined in some way to make up a whole being who is God. Each attribute expresses the being of God in his entirety. We as men can only study the many facets or views of his

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22 The word “attribute” means quality or characteristic. Since we cannot see God, we study Him by studying the various ways He has chosen to reveal Himself to us — through his many attributes.

single unique being through which we must see his absolute unity. While man is a complex being of body, soul, and spirit and is made up of many body parts, God is totally one in his being (De.6:4). Therefore, while we may say that God is a simple being, it does not mean that the exact being of God is easily understood. God's unique purity of being veils Him from our mortal minds.

### ***God Revealed Through His Works***

However, God has chosen to reveal Himself to us mortals through two basic means: through the works of his visible creation and through his express Word found in the Holy Scriptures. Theologians refer to the way in which God reveals Himself through nature as "General Revelation" or "Natural Revelation." Let us first see how God has revealed and continues to reveal his being through his mighty works apart from the Bible.

**"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard"** (Psalm 19:1–3).

The heavens declare his glory and speak to men in every language. The beauty of the earth also tells of the God who created all things. While we cannot see God Himself, we can sense a little of what God is like by observing that which He created.

### **A God of Law and Order**

God's creation is a very orderly thing, put together and operating under very strict physical laws. Thus, we may conclude that God is a very orderly being, and that all of his creation is required to conform to his laws. The study of those physical laws is the basis for Chemistry and Science. While nature gives no specifics to that effect, it can be easily supposed that there are laws that also govern the lives of living creatures including man himself. Apart from biblical evidence, man's search for those laws or principles is the basis for human philosophy and even astrology.

## **A God of Beauty and Light**

We also perceive that God loves beauty by observing the beautiful things that He has created. We often marvel at things from majestic mountain peaks to the smallest flower. We gaze at the heavens full of stars with awe and wonder. Our spirits are lifted when we see colorful butterflies and birds. Even the fact that we, as men, can see those creations at all tells of another of God's works: that of light. All of God's creation can be seen only by that fantastic energy source that we call light, which God created for that purpose (Ge.1:3).

## **God's Reflection Seen in Man**

When we observe man himself, we are also allowed to get a glimpse of what God is like. We are told in Scripture that man was created in the image of God (Ge.1:26). Unfortunately, man is a fallen creature that badly distorts God's image. (We shall discuss this fully in the chapters to follow). Even so, man affords us an occasional glimpse of God's intellect, his creativeness, and his love of beauty. While it is true that mankind is a poor reflection of God's glory, we are told that *one* man was the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person (He.1:3). This is the One who gives purpose to this writing, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **God's Hand Seen in His Providence**

We also witness God in the many works of his providence. God has always supplied the temporal necessities of this life. If that were not true, man would have perished from the earth long ago. He supplies the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the materials from which we create clothing and shelter. God "...left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Ac.14:17). God also delivers us from the adversities of this life. True, we are often called upon to suffer the consequences of our iniquities, but God provides a way through adversities and out the other side. "The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me" (Ps.116:6). Upon many, God has sent prosperity. Woe to the man who does not see the hand of God in his prosperity! God has also punished

evil, though men may be too blind to see it. Although there are times when it seems that the world is overcome with evil, God has not allowed evil to run over his people unheeded. Finally, death and judgment must come to all (He.9:27).

### ***God Revealed in His Word***

The existence of the Bible itself is another visible evidence of God. More than that, God has also provided express evidence of his being and nature in the written Word of the Bible. Theologians refer to God's revelation of Himself in the written Word as "Specific Revelation" inasmuch as God goes beyond the general statements that we can see in nature. God makes specific statements regarding not only his own being, but also his relationship and dealings with mankind.

### **What Scripture Tells Us about God**

The first thing Scripture makes clear is that God is a person — that is, He is a self-conscious thinking being. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Ge.1:1). The beginning referred to here is the beginning of creation, for God already existed. From this one verse, we comprehend that God is capable of conscious thought. In the following verses of Genesis Chapter 1, we read the phrase "and God said" repeatedly as God systematically spoke creation into existence. The heavens and the earth were in the mind of God as action was taken to create them.

We also see that God is not merely a mind separate from any ability to act. God both thought and acted in the physical creation of the heavens and the earth. Therefore, God is a "self-conscious being" or a "person." That is to say, God is not merely a mental presence; nor is God an impersonal force or physical action without conscious thought. Obviously, God is not merely nature working through evolution, nor is He a "universal mind" merely encompassing and existing within nature. God is a unique being or person acting in a conscious manner outside and apart from that which He created.

### *God's Attributes*

It is important that we have knowledge of God in four ways. First, we need knowledge of the essential being of God. That is, what is God like in his elemental being? Does He have a body as we do? Is God “contained” in a limited sphere? Does God age with time? Secondly, we need to know the implications arising from the essential being of God. Those we refer to as his extended attributes. Thirdly, we need to know what God’s communicable attributes are. That is, how does He relate to and interact with his creation, what is his attitude toward us, and toward our activities? What are God’s intentions toward us personally, and toward our world? Fourthly, we should have knowledge of God’s activities, the many things that God has already done in this physical world, is doing, and yet intends to do. The first three are discussed in this chapter. The last is discussed throughout this work and in Scripture itself. All of those questions have no answer in nature; biblical revelation is required.

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, that is based upon Scripture, gives a useful definition, which correctly describes the essential being of God. “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.” Of course, all human definitions of God will fall short in some respects because we are trying to use natural and common words to describe a supernatural and unique God.

In the following discussion, an attempt has been made to separate the attributes brought out in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, and still others as found in Scripture itself, into three general categories. The first category seeks to describe the essential being of God’s person (essential or primary attributes), while the second category seeks to describe the many ensuing attributes that emanate from or extend outward beyond God’s unique person (extended attributes). Together these first two categories are often referred to as God’s “incommunicable attributes” inasmuch as God does not communicate them to his creation. They are unique to his being alone.

The last category that we label “communicable attributes” describes how God communicates and interacts with his creation to the extent that God even imparts those attributes in a limited way to mankind. It is important to understand that God’s extended and communicable attributes are not separable from his essential being. Further, God’s integrity is such that his Word and his works are not separable. We always must keep that in mind as we proceed with the following categorical analysis of his attributes.

### **God’s Essential Attributes**

Because of our limited mental capacity in grasping God’s actual being or substance in any direct way, we must study Him indirectly through various properties or attributes that He has chosen to reveal to us in his Word. For the sake of this study, we shall first explore four of God’s attributes which seem uniquely essential to his being or actual substance. These are: that God is a Spirit, that He is infinite, that He is eternal, and that He is Holy.

#### *God is a Spirit*

We are told in Scripture that God is a Spirit. That is very important though not easy for us to grasp. Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Jn.4:24). By spirit, we do not mean that God is some over-riding thought or attitude such as we mean when we say, “the spirit of the age” or when we talk about “getting into the spirit of a thing.” When we speak of God being a Spirit we speak of that unique supernatural substance that is God. It is not a material substance in such a way that we could make a model or image to represent what God looks like. Since God is not of material substance, He also is not of corporeal substance. That is, He does not have a body of flesh or bone.<sup>23</sup> God has no physical form or shape. Theologically speaking He has no “body, parts, or passions.” “We ought not to think that the Godhead is

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<sup>23</sup> We shall later see that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. While the incarnation of God was essential to our salvation, it does not change the fact that God, Himself, is spirit in his essential elemental being. See Chapter 6.1 Emmanuel, page 332.

like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Ac.17:29). That is why God's law expressly forbids any images to represent his person (Ex.20:3-5). Such material images are gross distortions of God's real substance.

The Apostle Paul said that men "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (Ro.1:22,23). God cannot be represented by a human image or by the image of any other living creature. Nor can we learn anything more about his spiritual substance by doing so. If we attempt to visualize God in that way, we surely become fools because of our supposed wisdom.

Therefore, to our physical eyes, God is invisible: "No man hath seen God at any time..."(Jn.1:18; 1Jn.4:12). God said to Moses, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Ex.33:20). God is of spiritual substance, which we cannot see or feel. Because we live in a physical world, it is difficult for us to envision any substance that we cannot experience by means of our physical senses. When God spoke directly to Moses, He spoke from a burning bush. God was not in the bush that was not consumed, nor was He in the fire itself. God chose that way to reveal Himself to Moses, because Moses would not have been able to directly see his person. Had he looked directly into the face of God his mortal life would necessarily have ended.

### *God is Infinite*

God is infinite in his being. This is another essential attribute of God that we find difficult to grasp. Man is a finite being. That is, man is contained within a body of flesh that occupies a specific amount of space. Though man has devised ways to extend his influence (both mentally and physically) beyond his finite presence, he still exists only in the finite sphere of the space his body occupies. God is different in two respects. First, God does not consist of a physical body, being Spirit as we have seen. Secondly, God does not occupy space or take up room. God is infinite, and He has no physical limitations to his being. "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” (Je.23:24).

Because God is infinite, He knows no material boundaries. He requires no physical house or home in which to sit, lie down, work, or live. Solomon knew that when he built the Temple and said, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded” (1Ki.8:27). Therefore, God does not exist in physical space, but in some spiritual dimension totally apart from space. In that way, He can project his presence in the smallest atom, in this world, in the largest galaxy, in the entire universe, and even beyond all creation as He was when He first created all things. “God is at once transcendent and imminent, beyond us and yet ‘closer than hands or feet’”<sup>24</sup>

### *God is Eternal*

This is the third essential attribute that we wish to discuss. Many may confuse “eternal” with “infinite,” but the two words are quite different in meaning. As we have seen the “infinite attribute” pertains to God not occupying any dimension in space. The “eternal attribute” pertains to time; we should more correctly say absence of time. What we need to know about God’s eternal nature is that it means He exists apart from or outside of the continuum of time such that it places no constraint on Him. Again, in contrast, man is locked into time: he knows a past and present, and he perceives a future. Yet, he is constantly locked into the illusive present. Man’s instantaneous present shifts through time to an unknown future leaving behind an unchangeable past. God is not locked into or even influenced in any way by time. Time only serves to regulate the temporal physical universe, not eternity. In fact, as we shall discuss later God specifically created time for man’s needs that resulted from the fall of Adam.<sup>25</sup>

Because God is eternal, He has full knowledge of all past and future events. God is involved in all of the ages of man, as well as

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<sup>24</sup> *The God Who Is*, page 14, Fredrick Evans Jr.

<sup>25</sup> A detailed discussion of time as a created dimension can be found in Chapter 3.1 of this work.

existing in eternity, which is outside the continuum of time. God is not bound by an age, nor does He experience the passing of time, as does mortal man. God is able to see the entire “ribbon” of time from its beginning to its end. All that has occurred in time is visible to Him: our past, present, and future. He is in full control of it, and can, has, and does exert his influence over it at any point.

### *God is Holy*

This is the last essential attribute we wish to discuss as being intrinsic to God’s person. Certainly, we already know that God is an unusual being. We have nothing with which to compare Him. We are already stretching our poor minds to try to understand the person of God. But, since God subsists infinitely and eternally as we have seen, is it possible for there to be another being with the same attributes? In other words, could there be more than one God? Scripture is very specific in saying no! Our God is a holy God. We usually think of something that is holy as something that is not to be touched or something that is sacred or fearsome. That is true enough, but God is also holy in the sense that He is perfect, complete, and *unique*. God is “set aside” from all other beings. He deserves our awe, worship, and reverence.

For that reason God does not need a unique name. Names are used among men to distinguish one man from another. However, with God, there is no other! That is the reason for God’s answer to Moses when Moses asked what he was to tell the Israelites when they asked him for God’s personal name. “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Ex.3:14). God was saying that He needs no unique name, for there is but *one God!* Why should He distinguish Himself from the false gods? Although we use words like “Jehovah” which is derived from the Hebrew Tetragrammaton “YHWH” or “JHWH,” which when translated means “I AM THAT I AM,” we should realize that God is a unique God, a Holy God. When we say “God,” we say his name.

Because God is Holy, we value the unique glory of his being. “Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all

the earth” (Ps.57:5,11). Here is one, who by the unique nature of his being deserves all praise and honor. “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?” (i.e. the false gods) “who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders” (Ex.15:11)? Who or what can compare to Him? “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory” (Ps.24:9,10)! Because God is Holy and unique, He alone is righteous. There is none to challenge his authority, neither is there any to correct his ways, nor will any judge Him; God is right! “And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself” (Ps.50:6). Here is our God; a being that establishes the standard of what is right, because He alone has the inherent right to judge all things.

### **God’s Extended Attributes**

We shall now discuss those incommunicable attributes that are the consequence of and extend out of the essential attributes of God. They include God’s immutability, his omnipresence, his omniscience, and his omnipotence. We shall take each in turn.

#### *The Immutability of God*

God is immutable. That merely means that God does not change. This attribute extends out of God’s eternal attribute. Because time passes, we age and grow old. We also acquire additional knowledge in our lives as time passes. We experience many things that change us physically, mentally and emotionally. Sometimes those changes are for the better, often for the worse because of our fallen nature. Nevertheless, we need not worry that God will change as earth’s time passes by, because our time does not affect God’s eternity. God is incapable of change. Not only is He not waiting to see how his creation will turn out, He also will not change his mind about what He will do with it. God is consistently reliable: his judgments do not change, and his plans are not subject to revision.

In God there is “...no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Ja.1:17). God’s purpose never changes as we read in Job, “...he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that

he doeth” (Jb.23:13). What God has before proposed, He now proposes, and shall yet propose. “The council of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Ps.33:11). God is also immutable in his faithfulness to his creation. “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth” (Ps.119:89,90). Each morning the sun rises, and each year the seasons pass as a sign of God’s faithfulness.

God is also immutable in his mercy. God, in speaking to Israel said, “...I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal.3:6; cf. Ro.11:29). God has not left us “out here alone in the stars.” “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear...”(Is.59:1). God is immutable in his purpose, in his faithfulness to us, as well as in his infinite mercy toward us.

### *The Omnipresence of God*

God is omnipresent. That means that God is everywhere present. This attribute extends out of God’s infinite attribute. We have seen that God is transcendent. That is, He does not exist merely as nature, or in nature, but lives beyond and out side of his creation. Therefore, we are not speaking as a pantheist when we say that God is revealed or seen in the works of his creation.<sup>26</sup> “Because, that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Ro.1:19,20).

Since God is eternal, He exists in all ages as well, and not merely in some “sweet by and by” as some today would like to confine Him. God’s presence in this world is as great and real now as in any other age, past or future. Finally, we can see that the presence of

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<sup>26</sup> The pantheist believes that God and the universe are one and the same. He believes that the material universe and even man himself is a manifestation of God himself, not God’s creation.

God is to be found in men and women that have received the gift of the Spirit of God. There is nowhere we can go where his presence will leave us. God is present everywhere: “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in [the grave], behold, thou art there” (Ps.139:7,8).

### *The Omniscience of God*

God is omniscient. This attribute extends out of both God’s eternal and infinite attribute. That is, God has complete and infinite knowledge, full awareness, and complete understanding of all things. Not even a sparrow can fall without his knowledge (Mt.10:29). God not only has knowledge of his creation in general, He also has full knowledge of every man’s fallen state and condition. The very hairs of our head are numbered by him (Mt.10:30). He also knows what is in every man’s heart (Lu.16:15). “Great is our LORD, and of great power: his understanding is infinite” (Ps.147:5). Therefore, God not only has full knowledge, He also has complete wisdom to use that knowledge. Man’s search for knowledge keeps carrying him to greater and greater heights, but there is one thing that is apparent: as man’s knowledge increases, his wisdom to correctly use that knowledge is woefully lacking. Be joyful that this is not so with our God. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Ro.11:33)! Because God is omniscient, and we have finite minds, we should not be surprised or dismayed because we do not understand what God is doing at all times. “...how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the LORD” (Ro.11:33,34)?

### *The Omnipotence of God*

God is omnipotent. This attribute extends out of God’s unique Holiness as well as his infinite attribute. We surely realize that God, who had the power to create all things out of nothing (Ge.1:1), also has infinite power and control over them as well. God is all-powerful and, as a result, is fully sovereign. God’s will governs all things in heaven and on earth as well. God will decide when, what, and how. Not only

that, God will use his power to see that all things happen as He has planned them. It is foolish for a man to attempt to withstand God, for God cannot be withstood. Rather, God is to be feared by the likes of us. Look at his power and tremble! Truly, “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...” (Ps.111:10; cf. Jb.28:28). Therefore, nothing is impossible with God that any can withstand Him.

Yet, we also need to know that nothing is impossible with God that He cannot save us from the necessary judgment that is to come. Look at the power of God exerted in the redemption of mankind and rejoice! God’s omnipotence is fully seen in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Know this that “God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power” (1Co.6:14). Does that sound impossible? It is most certainly *possible* with God!

### **God’s Communicable Attributes**

From the attributes of God that we have discussed so far, we understand that God is transcendent. He appears to be “totally other” and beyond our comprehension. There would be no way that we could ever know Him in a personal way. To our finite minds, He could seem to be like a perfect computer that consumes no power, has no inputs, and produces no discernible output. Its infinite memory banks could contain all knowledge, and it could operate with infinite speed and have infinite capability, but we would never know about any of it. Having no output with which we could be on familiar terms, it could not communicate with us. We may not even know that it exists. Lacking input capability, we could not communicate our needs, and it could not feel our predicament. What that imaginary computer lacks is personality and a means to communicate through that personality to human beings. Be assured that God is *not* a super computer. While God is transcendent in his primary attributes, He is not so “totally other” that He lacks a personality through which He can be known.

That brings us to the last group of attributes through which we can perceive God through human experience. Unlike God’s essential and extended attributes, those attributes in varying degrees can be found in man himself. It is through those attributes that we can observe that man was created in the image of God. We often refer to those as

the “communicable attributes” of God. That is because God communes with man through those attributes and has willingly imparted those attributes to mankind in order that they may know Him. Having those attributes in common with God, we have a common means of communication with Him. Since the fall of man into sin, those attributes are not nearly as prevalent in man as they should be or as God purposed when He created Adam. Without being once again reconciled to God, mankind has been cut off from the fountainhead of those attributes. What remains is a corrupted distortion of those communicable attributes that only occasionally exhibit some of the vibrancy that God intended.

### *Life*

God is not only the source of all life, He is life itself. We indicated earlier that God is Spirit, the first essential attribute of God. It is also from this attribute that God has continual life within Himself as the self-sustaining One. In fact, life and Spirit are so intertwined that we can often equate one with the other. Physically, man is but dust — his body created from the same elements as the dust of the earth. It is only when God breathed the gift of life into Adam that he became a living soul (Ge.2:7). In some way, that we cannot fully understand, God communicated a god-like spirit into Adam causing him to have life. Adam was in that way created in God’s image (Ge.1:27).

However, being made in God’s image does not make man equal with God since man’s spirit was and is contingent upon God’s sovereign will. Man can only reflect God’s glory, not share in it. Satan lied to Eve saying that the attribute of spiritual life in mankind made her an equal with God. Unlike God who is pure Spirit, man was created a physical being with only a spiritual component. After the fall of Adam, man’s fallen spirit ceased to have the power to sustain life in man, and in the course of time, Adam’s body died.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, so powerful is the spiritual life-force that created man’s soul that the soul continues to exist in the presence of God long after physical death

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<sup>27</sup> We shall discuss the fall of man in more detail in Chapter 2.3.

takes place to be joined to a new immortal body at the time of the resurrection of the dead.

### *Intellect*

As we discussed previously, God is a person. He has intellect with which He directs his actions and is not merely some sort of mindless force running rampant in the universe. God also communicated this attribute to man so that he would have self-awareness as a person, and the mental intelligence to deal with his surroundings, which he perceives with his physical senses. Man, like God, is capable of independent action through making mental choices. This attribute prevents man from being merely an automaton or some sort of genetic robot. Along with intellect, however, God instilled in man a moral sense to regulate his choices and actions.

### *Moral Righteousness*

Moral righteousness comes from God's holiness, Truth, goodness, and justice. God is, therefore the moral standard for what is right and what is wrong. God alone can determine what is good and evil. It is the responsibility of all of God's creation to live according to his moral standards.

From the beginning, a moral imperative was also instilled in man's will so that he would mirror God's righteous standard. The second half of the Ten Commandments summarizes this imperative that is the standard for how men should live with fellow men (Ex.20:8–17). Before the fall, Adam was the image of God in this attribute as in others. The fall was essentially Adam's failure to live up to God's standards. He fell into sin by violating what we read in the first half of the Ten Commandments (Ex.20:2–7), which is that part of the Law that pertains to man's relationship with God. Through the enticement of Satan, man challenged God's moral righteousness with his own sense of self-righteousness. Since Adam's fall, man still has a general moral sense that is now seen only in his conscience. Because man's will to carry out the moral imperative has been corrupted by the fall, the remaining moral imperative found in the conscience only condemns man when he does what is immoral; it does not prevent him

from considering and carrying out the act itself. When men heed the condemnation of their conscience they often attempt to avoid repeating the same offense. Nevertheless, because they lack the will, they most often fail in that attempt bringing only more condemnation upon them.

### *Creative Propensity*

God is also referred to as the Great Creator inasmuch as everything that exists both visible and invisible was created by and through Him. We know only that God created all things for his own pleasure. God also instilled this creative inclination in mankind as well. Man creates to provide for his necessities as well as his pleasure. Whereas God can create by merely speaking things into being, man must work intellectually and physically with the materials that God has provided for him. Man's creative ability extends beyond the mere inventing of physical devices to creating less tangible things such as poetry, music, and various works of art. In addition, man has organizational skills that he applies to his works much as did God when He organized the functioning of the universe and the biosphere of this earth. Unfortunately, fallen man most often uses that propensity to create in various evil ways.

### *Truth*

Unarguably, after life itself, the first of those God-imparted attributes in man to suffer was Truth as the source of all truth, God Himself, was denied. It is no wonder that Pontus Pilate sarcastically asked Jesus, "What is truth" (Jn.18:38). Truth has to do with that which exists and is verified in fact, but more than that it is defined by God Himself. In the pluralistic Roman state their panoply of gods denied the uniqueness of truth and redefined it as opinion. If we misrepresent any thing, concept, principle, sense, being, or even ourselves before God, Truth dies and is immediately replaced by falsehood. Only God is Truth in that He never misrepresents Himself but is consistent with his nature and being. That stems from his uniqueness or holiness. Nor can any misrepresentation ever be used to express God's being. That is why idols, pictures, or any other thing

should never be used in an attempt to represent God. They lie about Him.

Truth also has to do with that which is spoken. When we convey information, we speak either truth or falsehood. God has spoken to us through his Word, which is written down for us to read in the Holy Bible. When we say that God is Truth, we say that his Word is also true. While lies have a corrupting consequence, Truth has a cleansing effect upon men. Jesus prayed for his disciples saying, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (Jn.17:17). Because God’s Word is Truth, it never fails. “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Is.55:11). Because God is Truth, God cannot lie (Tit.1:2). We need never fear that God will give us other than Truth and if we heed Truth, eternal life.

### *Goodness*

God is good. Good can be defined as that which is ethically sound, worthy, and valuable. Unfortunately, in today’s world goodness is not properly defined, inasmuch as good is often defined as evil and evil good (cf. Is.5:20). Surely, we must realize that there is nothing truly good except that it first comes from God. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights...” (Ja.1:17). God is in fact the one who declares that which is good and evil; He alone is righteous in doing so. That which He declares morally acceptable is that which is good because God’s intrinsic virtues are singularly and uniquely good. God’s goodness is seen in complete contrast with evil. That which is evil can be properly defined as that which opposes God’s will.

God Himself may not be perceived as good in the eyes of those who hate and struggle against Him, because God’s judgments against their evil intentions condemns them. Nevertheless, God is so very good to those who truly know Him: “Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee...” (Ps.31:19). Just to know God is

enough to know that He is good. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God...”(Ro.8:28).

### *Justice*

God is just. With men, justice is often measured out wrongly because of our internal and external limitations. Men have internal biases and a sinful nature that prevents them from being truly just in their judgments. In addition, men often even lack necessary facts and information to aid them in coming to a correct assessment. Because God is by definition good and knows all things, He is also uniquely just. Certainly, because God is good He must judge evil lest it prevail over goodness. Even in the midst of his most fierce judgments, the angels will cry out, “...Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus” (Re.16:5). No man will sway that judge, and his decisions are final. There is no higher court of appeal. Moreover, God is an impartial judge who will punish sin as it is deserved. God “...will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil... For there is no respect of persons with God” (Ro.2:6–11).

### *Love*

No definition of love apart from seeing it as one of God’s attributes is truly love. Today, when people say that God is love, they attempt to drag Him down to the level of our own corrupted definition of love. The Apostle Paul gave us a true definition of love:

**“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth...”** (1Co.13:4–8).

“Charity,” in this verse is better-translated “love.” True love is not sloppy emotion, but unyielding and true. It is born of a firm resolve to love another because it is true and right to do so. It is not here today and gone tomorrow. Love apart from Truth is not love, but a mushy, unstable counterfeit.

We are told that true love is the fulfilling of the law of God (Ro.13:10). Yet, love did not begin with men, but with God. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1Jn.4:7,8). God and love are inseparable for “herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jn.4:10). Man’s ability to love others is a mere overflowing of God’s love for us.

### *Long-suffering*

God is long-suffering. We need but to take one hard look at this present world to know without any doubt that God is long-suffering. Sin seems to over-run the world, and evil abounds. We may wonder at times, why God doesn’t just put an end to it all. It is because God is long-suffering. God created time for mankind’s benefit; He has given to each of us a lifetime within it. Not that He expects man to pull himself up by his own boot-straps and measure up to God’s perfect standards on his own. God has stayed his hand in order that He might call men to repentance and save them from eternal destruction.

We must understand that God is not indecisive regarding how He will deal with sin. He has already dealt with sin on a cross! Nor will He delay judgment when the cup of wrath is full. “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2Pe.3:8,9).

*Grace*

The grace of God can be defined as God's love in action. It has also been defined as God's unmerited favor toward a corrupted mankind. Love is a state of mind while grace is an activity that makes possible that which love desires. For example, if we see a loved one drowning, our love for them cannot save them. We must take action to pull them from the waters of death that seek to enclose them. In like manner, God extended grace to administer his love to us when He sent Christ to die for us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn.3:16).

God is sovereign, God is just, and God is righteous. We may wonder how He can even consider saving rebellious, unrighteous man. God created man for his own pleasure so that there can be no doubt that God must truly love him. Yet, how can miserable fallen man be reconciled to God? We surely see that God cannot merely declare sinful man to be justified while remaining holy and just Himself. God's love was not enough; an action was required. That is what we refer to as God's grace. Grace is God's love in action. It is revealed and fully seen in the work of Jesus Christ, dying for our sins on the cross.

*Mercy*

To what avail is this marvelous work of redemption if man in his sinfulness is too corrupt and too blind to lay claim to it? For that reason, God sent his Spirit to indwell men and to regenerate them, changing them into a creature that can see and claim God's provision. This regeneration is also referred to as "the new birth" since man is literally recreated in the spirit.<sup>28</sup> God's mercy toward us is possible only because of his act of grace that satisfied his own sense of justice and his personal holiness. God's mercy is the means by which God applies his grace to the salvation of mankind.

The indwelling Holy Spirit teaches and comforts those whom He indwells bringing joy and peace to the soul. He also changes the

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<sup>28</sup> The subject of the new birth of man is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.4.

course of our lives. We have so many examples of men that have made a complete turn-about from a life of flagrant and habitual sin to a life of ethical integrity that we surely know that a work has been done in them. Of course, some are still rough characters even after their conversions; but we must compare their lives before and after. We are not talking about instant perfection, but a *direction* away from sin and toward God. Old habits still taunt us, old mannerisms still spring to the surface to embarrass us. Yet in so many, the works of God within them is so much in evidence in their outward ways and attitudes that there can be no doubt that a real transaction has taken place.

Therefore, we have seen that God reveals Himself to mankind in two ways: through his works, and through his Word (i.e. “General Revelation” and “Specific Revelation”). From this study, we have seen the many attributes of God including those intrinsic and extended attributes that are his essential being, and those communicable attributes that are visible to us from God’s interaction with man. God’s Word is complete today. He has said all that He has to say to us through his Son, Jesus (He.1:2). God’s works continue in this world both in acts of judgment and in acts of salvation.

**“Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD’s name is to be praised. The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high...”(Ps.113:1–5).**

## Chapter 2.2 Man Created in God's Image

“God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him...”(Ge 1:27). We should not think that God is in appearance as a man with arms, legs, and hands. While Scripture states that things have occurred by God's “...right hand, and his holy arm...” (Ps.98:1), we should not think that that occurred in the literal sense of God as a huge man-like being having reached down upon the earth.

God is a spirit (Jn.4:24), and it is in his spiritual likeness that man was created. For “there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Jb.32:8). God breathed the breath of life in man, and man became a living soul (Ge.2:7). Uniquely, man is an image of God, not in his outward appearance in the flesh, but inwardly in the spirit that dwells within him. The “spirit of man is the candle of the LORD...” (Pr.20:27). With that lamp, God illuminates us to the innermost core of our being and provides light and purpose for the path of life (Ps.16:11).

### *Atheism*

Even so, fallen man denies that he is a reflection of God in whose image he was created seeing in himself the purpose for his own existence. An atheist is a person who emphatically denies the existence of God altogether. The word atheist means “no God.” The position of the atheist is logically irrational inasmuch as to emphatically state that there is no God requires proving a universal negative which is impossible to do. That is, even the most exhaustive search for God could not ever prove that He does *not* exist. For that reason, the Scriptures say, “the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps.14:1; 53:1). The word “fool” in these verses implies a recklessness of mind that is a form of insanity.

Other unbelievers attempt to avoid the illogic of stating a universal negative by merely saying that the existence of God is unproven. Those persons are referred to as “agnostics,” which merely means that they “don't know” though all of God's creation affirm his existence. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament

sheweth his handiwork” (Ps.19:1). All men who have eyes to see can observe this undeniable evidence. Therefore, we must conclude that both the atheist and the agnostic must merely be *suppressing* the knowledge of God’s existence to serve their own purposes.

**“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools”** (Ro.1:19–22).

While there is a logical distinction to be made between the atheist and the agnostic, both live their lives as if there were no God that they may take pleasure in sin.

### ***What is Man without God?***

Does a life of sin and rebellion against God truly benefit the unbeliever? Surely, he enjoys the pleasures of sin for a time (He.11:25). However, if a man celebrates and enjoys the sinful pleasures of this life is he really gaining any benefit over the Christian believer who has God as his helper and companion in this life and has the hope of eternal life with his Creator? The Apostle Paul considered all of the things of this life as garbage or, as the *King James Version* so graphically states it, “dung” when compared with the glory that is ours in Jesus Christ (Ph.3:8). ***This is the most important thing in life: our relationship with Christ!*** Yet, the atheist forgoes it all in exchange for temporary worldly pleasures that can never satisfy his deepest need.

### **Man Lives in a Fragile Body**

We may ask why God should even concern Himself with such as those who would deny Him and his offer of salvation in order to continue their pleasure binge, yet He strives with them daily. For that matter, why would God, who is infinite, be concerned about finite man

at all? Physically man is a fragile and insignificant creature. “What is man that thou art mindful of him...” (Ps.8:4; cf. Jb.7:17; He.2:6)?

For, we live in our bodies as one who lives in a clay hut (Ge.2:7): the rains and storms of life battering at its fragile surface and the ravages of time taking its toll in our strength and will. Who can prolong the existence of those “houses of clay” (Jb.4:19) that we live in when time has prevailed to the last moment? What adorning will we accomplish of this clay that will cause it to glory? We cannot even add a few inches to our height (Mt.6:27). “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away” (1Pe.1:24; cf. Ps.49:17)

### **Fallen Man's Search for the Purpose of Life**

Can the atheist answer the basic questions of man's existence? What is a man that walks on the earth for a short time, and then is seen no more? Can man's wisdom save him or can his knowledge ultimately prevent the day of his death? “For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” (Ec.1:18). Man seeks after knowledge in the disciplines of science or of commerce in order to become wise or wealthy in the ways of this world. Yet, for all his learning and with all his wealth, he cannot find the ultimate purpose for his existence nor can he glimpse his ultimate destination. Only the grave looms ahead. In vain, he attempts to impact the world with his efforts, but “...there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.” (Ec.2:16).

Nor can man find any lasting benefit in the pleasures of this life, for as Solomon said, “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” (Ec.2:11). Pleasure, which is a fleeting sensation, can never bring about true happiness, which is an absolute state of joyful being. Man searches for a purpose in the pleasures of this life in vain only to awaken one day and find that such pursuit only results in

continuous circles of madness with nothing of true value to show for it.

### **A Time Granted for Everything**

Time “marches on” leaving in its wake our past — a past that becomes longer and longer until no time remains for our future. Surely, when time runs out for us, we can see that we have had a full life; indeed, there will have been a time for every thing in its season.

**“A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace” (Ec.3:2–8).**

Therefore, as is often said of the dead, “he (or she) certainly lived a complete and full life,” as if that alone can justify the fact that he or she is, in fact, dead! Do the dead continue to value the things of the living? Of what lasting value are those times of life when they are past and we no longer know them. The value of those times is in our present, not our future. What about when spring no longer comes, but winter sets in and stays? What about when the sun no longer rises, but darkness remains over us? Today, we may choose our way and find a time for every purpose, but what when death comes to call for us? Yes, what about after time runs out? When those times are all in our past, can we live them over again? Will memories of what we once knew and enjoyed in life sustain us in the silence of the grave? Let none think they will!

### **Man’s Proudful Efforts Are Meaningless**

What of man’s best efforts in this life; don’t they all stem from worthless pride to provoke envy in others? “Again, I considered all

travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour.” (Ec.4:4). Moreover, if by his own efforts, a man makes himself rich, and his neighbor remains poor, will he still not desire even more? Will he ever be satisfied in his quest? Furthermore, will he be able to take his riches, for which he has so diligently labored, out of this world? “As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.” (Ec.5:15).

Therefore, we find that man's treasures are only borrowed for a time. Since man often realizes that he cannot take his riches with him, he attempts to use them up in this world for his immediate gratification. He becomes part of the “now generation” where one only lives for the present since the future is only a fearful unknown darkness lying ahead. Man strives to prolong his meaningless life on this earth by any means at his disposal even at the expense of his integrity, for the man of the world would surely agree that “...a living dog is better than a dead lion.” (Ec.9:4).

### **All Noble Effort is Worthless**

All of those thoughts are truly those of the secular minded man who only sees reality in this life.<sup>29</sup> To him death is to be grimly accepted as his “fate”: both natural and unavoidable. Those are the driving thoughts of the humanists that feel that they must help their fellow man “live” in this life, for “we shall not pass this way again!” “Clothe the poor; feed the hungry,” for, that is all there is to life. A full belly is a full life! They even wish to help future generations that they have not even seen “enjoy life” because they perceive that it is “noble” for man to do so. Man, they feel, must make the most of his brief and meaningless life for his own present enjoyment, yet leave a legacy for future generations that they may not think too harshly of him and will remember his deeds with fondness. Indeed, it is a sad and vain hope.

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<sup>29</sup> Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. This book has often been the favorite of atheists because of its philosophical approach to life.

**Man Is Not Even Long Remembered**

God willing, others will live in our stead after our death. In the space where we have stood, and in the paths where we have walked, others will stand and walk. Nevertheless, they will not remember that we have been there before. Moreover, what of the ground on which we have trod, or the air that we have breathed, will those remember us? Will the elements that have made up our body remember our form? The earth itself will little regard our passing footfalls. Will our treasured possessions remember that we cherished them and bewail our passing as they pass into the hands of others? No, the material, does not regard man by nature, nor for that matter, are we regarded even by other men. Even if those who loved us remember us, will they, themselves, live forever to perpetuate our fading image? Truly, little man appears lost in the vastness of the heavens; in the overwhelming number of the stars; in the relentless march of time ending in the abyss of eternity. What then is the significance of our lives if we are so soon forgotten? Generation after generation have come and gone and few are remembered let alone universally regarded. *All is meaningless.*

***Man's True Worth and Purpose Found in God***

We must awake from such thoughts to the marvelous Truth! The significance of man cannot be found in man himself nor can the value of man be measured in his struggle against the earth and against time. Instead, man has significance beyond any that man can invent for himself. Even though man seems of no value, a being of fragile flesh, yet he is under the watchful care of the Almighty God who created him with an eternal destiny.

Man's whole duty and purpose is found in serving a loving and sustaining God. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ec.12:13). That is the purpose for which man was created. Moreover, in that service, we can find real pleasure and true happiness as we enjoy His presence and glory forever. Not just a purpose for this life, but for all of eternity. God has not given us these bodies of flesh that

we may somehow find glory and permanence in them. The purpose of the physical is to serve and benefit the spiritual. Death is a harsh teacher of that reality. Though man's body must die, his soul and spirit is eternal.

It is the fact that God created man in his own image that gives significance to a man's life. For that reason, man should not live to his own glory but to the glory of God (Is.43:7). The fact that we walk, breathe, move, think, and even exist at all attests to the glory of God (cf. Ac.17:28). For we did not bring ourselves into this world, nor did we bring anything into this world with us except that which God has bestowed upon us (1Co.4:7). We are the product of God's workmanship. We are truly "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps.139:14) in his own image for his glorification.

### **The Price of Man's Redemption**

Tragically, man fell from the glory that God gave him. No longer does fallen man truly reflect the glory of God. Man, as God's image, has been tarnished, distorted and corrupted. Fallen man is in a worthless and hopeless state because he cannot fulfill his true purpose in life. That subject will be discussed in the next chapter, but it is important to realize that man has fallen from God's purpose for him and deserves death, and yet God stays his hand. Not only that, but "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn.3:16). ***The true worth of man is found in the price that God has paid for him!*** "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1Co.6:20). God has redeemed us from a horrible pit at a tremendous price. God alone has established the true value of man.

We must further understand that the great price has been ***paid in full!*** When man attempts to elevate his importance through his own pride (Pr.16:18) and sense of self-importance, he denies the true value and purpose placed on him by God. Man going about in an effort to invent his own significance (i.e. his own righteousness) spurns God's gift of glory and attempts to set himself up in the place of God (Ro.10:3). That should not be so, but such is man's fallen nature. He

vainly attempts to purchase his own salvation though he many not even realize that he is making that vain attempt. Man's efforts become man-centered, not God-centered, and man flaunts the distorted and corrupt image as if it were genuine. It is not God that is being glorified in the works of fallen man, but a corrupted and gross misrepresentation of God.

### **Man Created for God's Glory**

Man has been given dominion over all of nature by God who created him (Ge.1:26). All of the works of God in which we have contact are put under our feet (Ps.8:6). We are, therefore, to go forth and subdue the earth not to our own glory, but to the glory of God (Ge.1:28). God designed man to do physical work in a physical universe. Only when we work to magnify *his* glory are our efforts of any value; otherwise, the creation malfunctions and fails to reach its full purpose in life. All which we subdue, all which we learn, all, which we accomplish, was given us to do by the power of God, for we were created exclusively for His glory and pleasure.

### **Man's True Glory Found in Knowing God**

Therefore, man is not an insignificant creation of nature that must somehow justify his own existence. Nor must he seek to elevate his true worth through his works. Though fallen and corrupted, God has placed an immense value on him. Oh man, look at the cross and see your true worth. You owed the great debt that He paid in full on your behalf. Worth is not found in yourself, but in Jesus Christ who paid everything. Your true value is found in Him, the Son of God, who died to redeem you. Through Him, we have been saved from Hell: from eternal separation from God's mercy and from eternal worthlessness. Here then is man's true glory. Here is man's wondrous sought-after prize: knowing God in Christ and finding true worth in his service.

## Chapter 2.3 The Fall of Man

How did man come to that miserable condition so that he no longer chooses to trust in the God who created him but instead rejects God and fights against his sovereign will? When God created man, man was not subject to death, but was allowed to partake freely of eternal life. The “tree of life” was not forbidden to man; only the other tree in the “midst of the garden” (Ge.2:9), the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” was off limits (Ge.2:16,17). In the beginning, man knew God and walked with Him. Further, man was given dominion over the earth and every living creature. Adam lived in the glory of God and had great worth and freedom in that glory.

### *Satan’s Deception of Eve*

Nevertheless, not all would remain tranquil in the garden in which man served God. For Satan taking occasion of God’s only prohibition deceived the woman, Eve. One of the beings that God had created was the serpent; he was a crafty being and very cunning. The serpent’s nature attracted the woman, and Eve began to envy the serpent’s cunning. Thereupon Satan through the serpent approached Eve saying, “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden” (Ge.3:1)? Eve, reasoned with herself *in her own understanding* that that was so, but then God also had said that if she ate of the forbidden fruit from a certain tree she would surely die (Ge.2:17). The serpent said, “Ye shall not surely die” (Ge.3:4). Eve reasoned with herself that surely God would not really suffer his creation to die. The fruit looked good to eat and Eve saw that if she ate of it she would be made *wise* like the serpent (Ge.3:6). Therefore, woman yielded to the deception (1Ti.2:14; Ge.3:13) and distrusted the Word of God, which had expressly warned them “that they would surely die.”

### *Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*

We do not know what the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden was like in any physical sense. There is no reason to believe that it was an apple. In the land of Ur where the garden is believed by

many to have existed, it would have more likely been a citrus fruit than an apple. However, we need not care what the fruit itself was like. The real significance of Adam and Eve eating the fruit was not in the fruit or the tree itself, but in their act of ignoring God's Word, his command and warning, and determining for themselves what was good and evil. We see that the forbidden tree was that of self-knowledge, and that eating the fruit was actually the act of usurping God's authority regarding that which is good and that which is evil. Only God can have that authority.

That act constituted disbelief in God's goodness; that was distrust in God's righteousness and integrity. Man in effect had told God that in the future he would decide what was good and evil, and would stand on his own intrinsic worth apart from that which God had placed on him. However, as we have seen, man has no worth apart from God. Moreover, man's notion of what is good or evil is not absolute, but is influenced by his desires, and lusts. Each man will go astray in his own way (cf. Is.53:6). Man, without God's guidance will surely error; his ignorance and pride will blind him. He is lost.

It is also important to understand that the fruit that God prohibited was not some good thing that God had jealously refused to share with man (as Satan suggested in Genesis 3:5). God's prohibition was made to *protect* man, not to deny him some wonderful experience. A child looks longingly at a medicine chest or cleaning closet because the child perceives that it must contain real treats since its contents have been so carefully guarded, and he or she has been commanded not to eat anything in them. In the same way, God sought to protect man against the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man could not digest it — it was poison to him — it would destroy him, and he would surely die if he partook of it. Satan sought to destroy mankind by having Eve partake of that venomous fruit in direct violation of the command of a loving and caring God.

### ***Adam Tempted by Eve, But Not Deceived***

Adam was not deceived by the serpent, but instead was tempted by Eve (1Ti.2:14; Ge.3:17). Since Eve had been made wise in her own understanding, perhaps Adam also began to doubt that God

knew what was best for them, or that they would die as He had told him. Adam also partook, exercising self-knowledge that elevated him to be forever burdened with the knowledge of good and evil.

Adam loved Eve. It was precisely because of that love he had for her that Eve was able to tempt him. Seeing Eve separated from him may have been more than Adam could bear. Nonetheless, *Adam was not deceived*; he knew that what he was doing was wrong. That is why we speak of Adam's sin and not Eve's. Adam had to choose between serving God or Eve, and he chose to give in to Eve. Adam's fault was not that he loved Eve, but that he did not love and trust God more. Adam did not call upon God for help when he was tempted, but took matters in his own hands. In accepting Eve's offer to be enlightened, he rejected God. Therefore, man, who in the beginning knew only God who alone is good, now knew evil that was found in the elevation of his own self-worth apart from God.

### ***The Result of Man's Disobedience***

The immediate result of "their eyes being opened" was a feeling of deep shame — a feeling that they could never have known if they had continued to believe and trust God (Ge.3:7). Spiritual death, which is the separation of man's spirit from God's loving companionship, had already taken place. (Physical death would follow later). The beings that had before walked with God now hid from his presence (Ge.3:8). "And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou" (Ge.3:9)? Surely God had sensed the falling away of Adam's spirit. God found them, even as He finds any of us today. Though we may be separated from God by sin, God can still see us, find us, and call for an accounting of our deeds. The man, Adam, now sensing his own worth, blamed the act of disobedience on the woman (Ge.3:12). The woman for the same reason blamed the act on the serpent (Ge.3:13).

### **The Curse Pronounced on Man**

Now man, having partaken of the fruit of knowledge, is cursed with physical death; "...cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all of the days of thy life" (Ge.3:17). "...for out of it

wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Ge.3:19). Man, by his very nature, continually partakes of sin, denies God’s Word, and walks in his own council apart from the guidance of Almighty God. That is the real horror of man’s fallen state.

Woman, because she was part of the transgression, is subject to the rule of the man over her (Ge.3:16). Man is to dominate because woman was so easily deceived, not that man is a superior being. Woman was taken from the side of man that they would be companions in life walking side-by-side, each one complementing the other.

The serpent itself, no longer beguiling, eats of the dust of the ground (Ge.3:14). Moreover, Satan, who appeared in the form of the serpent, now feeds upon fallen man. He walks the earth like a hungry lion seeking whom he may devour (1Pe.5:8).

### **The Tree of Life Denied Man**

Because of man’s self-knowledge, he is now forbidden to eat of the “tree of life” and is, therefore, subject to physical death (Ge.3:22,23). Furthermore, because man has elevated himself to the level of “a god” through his own craving and pitiful pride (Ge.3:5), he knows separation from God’s love through *his own choice* (Ro.8:7). Man’s very nature separates him from God. Fallen man consciously makes the choice to hide from God. No longer does man walk with God in the garden, but is barred from the garden by a “flaming sword” (Ge.3:24). (But, we should see that the way to eternal life is not destroyed or closed, but only well guarded)! Could evil man exist in God’s presence? In no way! For God can have no correspondence with evil, as light cannot know darkness but destroys it (cf. 1Jn.1:5; Jn 1:5). Man is separated not only from eternal life, but also from God as well. Eternal separation from God is spiritual death.<sup>30</sup>

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30 Throughout this work when we speak of eternal separation from God, it should be obvious that this does not also include separation from God’s wrath. Eternal death is a perpetual state of the knowledge of God’s extreme displeasure and the resulting punishment for sins that were committed in this life. Eternal separation means that we have no direct communication with God and are separated from his many benefits and love forever.

**The Perpetuation of Adam's Sin into Mankind**

From generation to generation, man continues to eat of that “tree of knowledge”, and he continues to elevate himself in self-importance, denying God, seeking his own glory, and walking in darkness (Ro.1:28). That is the state of the world in which we live. Spiritually blind men leading other blind men in never-ending circles of sin, evil, and war. Man does not know the ways of peace because he does not know God. Our ways are corrupt, our thoughts are evil, and our graveyards are full of the dead. Such is the nature of the curse that Satan precipitated on mankind when he induced man to sin; such is the fall of man; such is the strength of the original sin that “in Adam all die” (1Co.15:22).

Therefore, are *none righteous* (Ro.3:10; 3:23), for in attempting to attain our own self-righteousness we turn from God (Ro.10:3). No works of ours can change the fallen nature we have inherited, because our works come from our own sinful and ill-gotten knowledge. Therefore, man has become a servant to sin (Jn.8:34). He is bound hand and foot by a relentless taskmaster that will not release him. No longer can his choices truly produce what is good, but must constantly result in evil even when he wants to do that which is good. What a miserable creature we are without God; in our gluttonous search for our own knowledge we are drawn directly toward the depths of Hell, and have not the will to resist the pull.

***Man's Hope is Divine Intervention***

Can we do good deeds to work our way to heaven? Believe in God and trust Him from your own corrupt nature? Adam, after his terrible fall, was not capable, nor are we. Good does not come from that which is evil (Mt.7:18). How can that which is fundamentally evil cry out to be good? What, then, is the hope of the hopeless? From what resolve can we cry out for mercy, since we are too blind to even see our hopeless state? Many would ask at this point, since we are blind and helpless to act, why doesn't God do something; doesn't He care? Is He powerless to act? Well friend, open your eyes; God has and is doing something! As we can see, man's only hope is divine

intervention, and that must be a *unilateral intervention*, because man, being a servant to sin, has no will to assist. We must realize that; otherwise, we shall continue to look for our own way out through our own understanding and resist the life that God has given us in Jesus Christ.

Would God condemn his own creation without making the effort to save him? No, but God cannot accept man as he is, full of evil and rebellion. Nor can He merely forgive the unforgivable. To do so would be an affront to God's holiness, and further relegate man to a state of worthlessness forever. You surely realize that God was not taken by surprise by the fall of man, nor did God take delight in the separation of Himself from man. Nor, as some have put it, "was the cross like an ambulance sent to the scene of a wreck." For even while pronouncing the necessary sentence upon man, God predicted Satan's defeat, predicted Christ's sufferings, and promised the coming Messiah. "And I will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman [Mary], and between thy seed and her seed; it [Christ] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Ge.3:15). Even as woman (Eve) was a part of the transgression by tempting Adam, so a woman (Mary) would have a part in the salvation of man (1Ti.2:14,15; Mt.1:21).

### **God's Answer to Man's Need is the Cross**

God, Himself, has intervened in the history of man and glorified one man, the man Jesus Christ, that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1Co.15:22). If death came upon all men because of the sin of Adam and because they are Adam's descendants, could not the righteousness of a perfect man be imparted to those who accept him and walk in his ways? However, a perfect man could never be found from all the generations of Adam. Because of their inherited nature, all had sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God. It was necessary for God to send his own Son to take on the likeness of sinful flesh, to die in the place of those upon whom judgment should rightly fall. Moreover, in raising Him from the dead God would justify all those who would accept Him as their savior and head. Those who would believe in God's Son would be translated (born) into his kingdom. In Jesus, the second Adam, is the hope of all

mankind. Here is true knowledge and wisdom. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Jn.3:36).

So marvelous and overwhelming is God’s act of bringing man back into fellowship with Him by lifting man from the pit of sin and death, that we must examine it in detail in the many chapters of this book, which follows this necessary beginning. We must see sin as a terrible degradation of man’s worth resulting in the actual corruption of “God’s image” and an affront to God’s holiness.

## Chapter 2.4 The Son of the Morning

In the previous chapter, we discussed mankind's disastrous fall. As we did so, we primarily focused on the roles of Adam and Eve. However, we also saw the role of Satan in that terrible event as the instigator who initiated the process. In this chapter, we shall examine this creature referred to as the serpent, or Satan, more closely. Scripture does not give us detailed information regarding the origin of Satan nor does it indicate God's specific purpose in creating him. However, from many verses of Scripture, we can determine that he is both a spirit being and a created being. In the prophecy of Ezekiel, we read:

**“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, til iniquity was found in thee”** (Eze.28:14,15).

Satan is not a supreme being. That is, Satan is not an “evil god” that opposes a “good god.” Satan was created by God as we observe in Eze.28:15 in the words: “thou wast created.” Since God alone is the creator of all things and all beings, we surely see that God must have created Satan as well. We may well wonder why God would create an evil being. The obvious answer is that God did *not* create Satan as an evil being. We just read that God speaking of Satan said, “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, til iniquity was found in thee” (Eze 28:15). God created Satan a perfect creature. Inasmuch as God is a Spirit, we can further conclude that God created Satan out of a spiritual substance in much the same way that all of the angels were created. Beyond that, we are left with conjecture as to the specific purpose or origin of Satan, because the Scriptures do not go into any further detail in this matter. Yet, God does not do anything without purpose.

### *The Rebellion of Satan*

A close reading of I Timothy 3:6 tells us that Satan was once good, but fell into condemnation through personal pride; he is now, in

fact, the personification of all that is evil. From the various verses of Scripture that we do have regarding Satan, many have theorized that Satan existed long before man was created. It is thought that in the time before God created man, Satan had led a rebellion in heaven against God and had taken a large portion of God's angels with him. Many also see in the Genesis account the possibility that Satan had previously led a rebellion on earth from the words: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep (Ge.1:2)." This is generally known as the "creation gap theory." That is, the condition of the earth ("without form and void") was a result of God's previous judgment rather than God's initial incremental act of creation. If those suppositions are true, Satan was just waiting and ready to strike at Adam and Eve, when God put them in the garden, to further his existing rebellion.

However, that theory still leaves many unanswered questions: Why did God allow Satan in the garden on earth to begin with if Satan's rebellious nature had already been demonstrated? Why was Satan still allowed to run loose anywhere in God's universe for that matter? Surely since God was able to put down his previous rebellion (for which the earth had been judged), He was also able to banish him, bind him or destroy him before Adam was created. Nevertheless, for some reason, Satan was right there in the garden with man. Why didn't God protect man against the wiles of Satan especially since man was created completely innocent of evil?

### ***God's Purpose for Satan***

Though the Scriptures do not give us any direct knowledge regarding God's specific purpose in creating Satan, the Scriptures are full of accounts relating to Satan's evil deeds. It would appear that Satan's sole capacity for launching an offensive against God is through his accusations and assault against mankind. The commonly accepted explanation of Satan's past, which has just been reiterated, does not give us any insight into our own personal relationship with Satan. How have we so easily become Satan's pawn in his rebellion? We need to dig deeper to see if we can lift the cloud covering this subject.

Many could say that the deliberation that follows is mere speculation. Especially so since, it disagrees with the generally accepted orthodoxy regarding Satan and his origin. While one could readily agree that the following explanation is no better than the speculation of many learned men over the centuries, it is not only more beneficial to our understanding, but is more adequately supported by Scripture than is the classical interpretation that is commonly offered. It also gives us some insight into God's original purpose in creating Satan and mankind's relationship to Satan.

### ***Satan's Intimate Relationship with Man***

The spirit of Adam was, in the beginning, fully capable of sustaining Adam's innocence. That spirit was Adam's sole source of life and fellowship with God. God gave Adam's spirit to him as a "covering cherub" (Eze.28:14,16) so that, by sharing a similar spiritual substance with God, he might have life and in innocence walk uprightly.<sup>31</sup> That "angel" or "guardian spirit" was Adam's preserver and intermediary to protect him from falling from fellowship with God. In the Garden of Eden, the man, Adam, was spiritually joined to God and was protected from evil by that spirit, which at that time knew communion with God through his creation (Ge.2:7). How, then, did the fall come about? If man was protected from sinning by that perfect indwelling spirit, how then did man sin?

### ***Man Fell Along with Satan***

Satan is referred to by many titles in Scripture. Among those is the name "Lucifer" implying brightness. This title is found in the account given by Isaiah in Chapter 14. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning" (Is.14:12)! It is nearly impossible to read the account of man's fall in Genesis without also seeing Satan's fall. Adam was also called God's son in the beginning

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<sup>31</sup>The classical interpretation would require Satan to be a covering for God's throne or domain; it is hard to see why a righteous and almighty God would need a covering or protection. It is further obvious that Adam and Eve certainly did need both a covering and protection because they were without knowledge and therefore innocent of evil.

through creation (Lu.3:38; cf. Ge.5:1,2). As we have related, the classical interpretation asserts that Satan fell earlier, led a rebellion in heaven (and perhaps on earth) before man was created, and then later deceived Eve in the garden. That would be, indeed, a comforting thought, since we could easily blame our fall fully upon Satan. We could easily say that the original sin wasn't Adam's fault. It was, in the contemporary idiom, "the devil that made him do it!"

However, if Adam's fault truly was only the result of Satan's sin, why does God yet find fault with us, since we would only be Satan's unwitting victims? Yet, we have seen how it was Eve's *own thoughts* that actually defeated her. Though Satan was the instigator, it was man who carried out the deed and ate the forbidden fruit. Eve, like Adam, was originally created in a state of innocence, and was protected by her spirit. There is only one way she could have fallen — she was deceived by her own covering spirit that ruled and guided her. Moreover, Adam's spirit did not protect him, as he should have either. Rather, their "covering spirit" actually lied to Eve even as he cunningly beguiled her through the serpent, failed to sustain the integrity of Adam, instead tempting him to sin through Eve which resulted in their fall together along with Satan who instigated it.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Fall of Satan*

We surely know that there was a greater presence in the garden than a physical creature called a serpent. Satan is not actually the snake that we encounter today of course, but he is a spirit-being that is, in his nature, much like a serpent. In other accounts, Satan is actually called the "old serpent" (Re.12:9). Since the fall, he roams the earth on his belly, silently sneaking up on his victims, looking wise, but speaking with a forked tongue. He often entices and mesmerizes his prey by his attractive appearance and his cunning countenance. That is why he is known as the deceiver of the world (Re.12:9). Then, he injects his

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<sup>32</sup>It is reasonable to assume that Satan was the covering spirit for both Adam and Eve since Eve was not born, but created out of Adam's side. Adam and Eve were one creation and shared the same guardian spirit. This would not be true of subsequent marriages of course.

poisonous venom as he cunningly strikes his victim, inducing them to commit sin.

Therefore, we observe how that spirit about which God once said, “Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so...” (Eze.28:14), fell from common fellowship with God along with the man whom he was to have protected. We must concede that this is difficult to completely comprehend. What ever would induce man’s “guardian spirit” to fall from his heavenly estate? For, even God said, “thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created till iniquity was found in thee” (Eze.28:15). Satan, who was the “offspring of God’s Spirit” in the beginning (i.e. the son of the morning), fell from favor with God through his rebellion, and took all of mankind right along with him.

### *Pride the Source of the Rebellion*

We can see the reason for the iniquity in Satan by examining the nature of the serpent in which Satan is exemplified: He was crafty, cunning, wise, and beautiful. Again, from Ezekiel: “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou has corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness...” (Eze.28:17). Therefore, we can see that it was personal *pride* in his position, abilities, and appearance that caused the fall both of Satan and of man. Again, we read concerning Satan:

**“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High”** (Is.14:13,14).

It would have been bad enough for Satan to rebel against God, but he also made man an accomplice. In order to be “like God,” Satan needed subjects to worship him. Satan sought to win over man, who was created in the image of God in order to glorify God, to glorify him instead. Therefore, he deceived and compelled man to follow his lead in the rebellion. Satan promised Eve that she and Adam would be “...as gods, knowing good and evil”(Ge.3:5). Man, in his newfound ambition, also dared to become like God (or a god along side God) by

determining for himself what was good and evil; he would become self-sufficient apart from God (Ge.3:5,22) and idolize Satan who had opened his eyes. He could then eat of the tree of knowledge as well as the tree of life and have it all! Actually, of course, natural man's<sup>33</sup> knowledge of good and evil is corrupted by his sin and bars him from ever partaking from the tree of life. He is only partaking of a delusional tree as his own physical death clearly demonstrates.

### *The Separation*

Surely, we realize that that evil spirit, that father of lies, could not have been allowed to remain as man's guardian. Therefore, God prohibited that angel of deception from having access to Adam's personal soul, which he had corrupted (Ge.3:14). It may be difficult for us to understand how the guardian spirit was disassociated from Adam and yet still say that man has a spirit within him. The place where man's guardian spirit once resided is now a nearly empty inner room containing only a shadow, remnant, or vestige of his original spirit that was given him by God. If it were not for that remnant, man would immediately cease to exist in the flesh. That vestigial spirit is somewhat analogous to the spirits of animals in that it only keeps the flesh alive for a time, and it is tainted with evil from its prior association with Satan. Furthermore, it is mute and cannot therefore direct man's soul. Fallen man is now "but dust" (i.e. flesh) with no way to associate with God who is pure Spirit. The "holy place" of man is a room which natural man dare not enter.<sup>34</sup>

When the perverted spirit was disassociated from Adam and Eve, they had lost their covering; they became spiritually naked (Ge.3:7). In response to that sudden realization, they attempted to cover themselves physically with fig leaves. While that may have provided some covering for their bodies, it provided no spiritual covering for them at all. God then made them coverings from the skins

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<sup>33</sup>The "natural man" in these writings refers to man in his fallen spiritual state.

This is the common condition of all men who have not received the Spirit of God and Jesus Christ as their savior.

<sup>34</sup> This topic of man's Holy Place is explored more thoroughly in Chapter 7.4

of animals whose blood had been shed (Ge.3:21). Those skins represented the righteousness of Jesus Christ whose blood would be, in time, shed to atone for their sin as well as the sins of all that would be their descendants. The skins were a symbolic representation of God's promise of the coming Savior and the gift of the Holy Spirit who would indwell the spiritual kinsmen of Christ. That symbolic covering and the promise it represented kept Adam and Eve from being immediately destroyed physically, though they were already dead spiritually. The culmination of their salvation was yet to be found many centuries into the future in the coming Messiah through faith in his sacrificial death for their sins.<sup>35</sup>

Satan also has been separated from any common substance and communion with God and is ultimately condemned to outer darkness where he will one day be banished from God's presence forever. Nevertheless, even as man was not immediately destroyed, so Satan has also not been immediately destroyed. He now roams the earth "...walking up and down in it" (Jb.1:7;2:2). Even after the fall, Satan is still referred to as a son (or offspring) of God (Jb.1:6; 2:1), and he even regularly presents himself before God to report on his activities. Why didn't God immediately destroy Satan and simply excuse man? Here we must reply that if Satan were destroyed for his fall, man would need to be destroyed as well, since God is righteous, holy, and impartial. When Adam followed Satan's lead, he also sinned against God. God's holiness and purity requires Him to judge all sin. All men were made sinners by nature and in deed by virtue of Adam's fall.

How could God destroy Satan for his rebellion without also destroying man whose innocence was ruined by the fall, and who was also an accomplice in Satan's rebellion? While it is true that Adam and Eve were innocent pawns in Satan's rebellion, the personal decision to disobey God was still fully theirs. Adam's original state of innocence cannot change the fact that he put himself above God when he

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<sup>35</sup>It is this author's conviction that both Adam and Eve believed God, and they were saved by their faith in the coming Christ. We can see the grace of God being extended to them in the temporary covering, which God made for them from animal skins, and later in the blood offering of Abel that God accepted.

followed Satan's lead. In spite of Satan's primary role in man's fall, man is fully responsible for his own actions. He is in ruin.

### *The Deceiver and the Deceived*

Yet, God has made an important distinction between the deceiver and the deceived since He has elected to save man at a **tremendous cost to Himself!** God surely had no obligation to save man; we were faulty and guilty as charged. No doubt, God could have started over with another intelligent physical being on earth or even on another world had He chosen to do so. However, this cannot be stated strongly enough: **God unconditionally loves man** (Ge.1:27,31; Jn.3:16). That is what is truly amazing about God's grace. God not only chose to save man, He also provided the means through the suffering and death of his own Son. Though Satan, being the source of evil, must be destroyed, it is not God's purpose for mankind to be destroyed with him, but to be saved apart from him. For the present, Satan does not have free access to Heaven, but he is rather quarantined to the earth. Only when God calls him forth to account for his actions does he report before God (Jb.1:6). The judgment of both man and Satan has been postponed for a time in order that mankind may be redeemed.

### *Satan's Methods*

Because Satan is cast down to the earth, he attacks us through the things of this world. He still wishes to control us. He still wishes to be exalted above the stars of God. He still desires to be worshiped by mankind. The place that once contained fallen man's spirit is all but a vacant shell, and man's soul is no match for the "god of this world" (2Co.4:4). Satan comes to us disguised as "the prince of this world" (Jn.14:30; 16:11) and an "angel of light" (2Co.11:14). The natural man actually sees him as a source of wisdom and beauty. That is not too surprising since we, as fallen men, have inherited similar appetites for evil from Adam. Even if fallen man recognized the fact that he was being enticed to do evil under the guise of it being something good, he may still choose the evil because he has no spiritual appreciation for that which is good. Even without actually invading men, as he once

did Adam, Satan still finds the means to manipulate men externally through their five carnal senses.

### ***Demons, Satan's Legions***

Satan is not alone in his attack against us. What can we understand about the other angels that Satan led in his rebellion against God? Just as Adam is the federal head of fallen man, Satan is the federal head of fallen spirits. Even as all men are descended from Adam (through the flesh); so, Satan has his own spiritual descendants. Satan is the ruler of a spiritual kingdom that is parallel to the physical world and in direct opposition to God (Mt.12:26; Lu.11:18). It has been said, that by one man's fall (Adam) all men have fallen; then, it follows that by Satan's fall, all "guardian spirits" have also fallen. We may well ask ourselves about those spirits which were to be the personal guardians of all of the descendants of Adam.

**“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude vs. 6)**

That is the reason why it has been said that Satan led other angels (spirits and messengers) into rebellion with him (Jude:6; Jb.4:18; Mt.25:41; 2Pe.2:4). Where did those other angels, evil spirits, or demons come from? We can surely see that they are the estranged guardian spirits of the descendants of Adam. They are the "seed of Satan" mentioned in Genesis 3:15. They are, in fact, the spiritual descendants of Satan. We get a very good glimpse of those spirits as Jesus cast them out of the men, whom they attempted to inhabit in the Gospel accounts.

In Mark Chapter 1 and Luke Chapter 4, Jesus healed a person that was possessed with a demon (an unclean spirit). First, we can observe that a demon has a personality that is separate of the person being possessed. Nevertheless, when the demon indwells a man, the soul is overpowered, and it takes on the personality of the demon as the evil spirit-being rules within him. In addition, we observe that this demon immediately recognized Jesus as the "Holy One of God" (Mk.1:24). Demons do have spiritual knowledge of which fallen men

are ignorant.<sup>36</sup> That information was imparted to the mind of the man by the demon, and the demon spoke through the man's own voice.

In the Gospels of Matthew Chapter 8, Mark Chapter 5, and Luke Chapter 8, another instance of demon possession is seen. Again, those demons (for there were many indwelling the man) also recognized Jesus as the "Son of God most high" (Lu.8:28). Then, they begged not to be tormented by Jesus — that is, removed from the body of the demoniac. Demons are spirits that have no bodies of their own, but greatly desire to be "clothed" in human flesh. As we have hypothesized, they were first created for that purpose. That was their "first estate" that they failed to keep because of their fall. Therefore, they still desire to indwell and control the bodies of men and women. However, just as Satan was not allowed to continue in Adam, so demons are forbidden by God to occupy Adam's descendants.

When those demons realized that they could not stay in the body of the demoniac, they pleaded that they would not be commanded to "go out into the deep" (Lu.8:31). The demons along with Satan are destined to be cast into the lake of fire and outer darkness. Therefore, those evil spirits were already condemned to spend eternity in outer darkness, but did not wish to be sent there prematurely. Jesus allowed them to go into the bodies of the swine at their own suggestion. We must see how dear to those demons flesh is, that they would prefer to occupy the bodies of swine than to be "unclothed." However, when the demons entered the swine, they were unable to control their inferior minds as they had the man. The swine became so violent, that they ran headlong down a slope into the lake where they drowned.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>It is interesting to notice that those evil spirits recognized Jesus' deity while men in that day did not. Fallen men have no spiritual discernment at all; they perceive only through their five physical senses. Though demons are evil in their intent, they, being spirits, do have knowledge and understanding of spiritual things. However, unlike God's perfect knowledge, their knowledge is incomplete and often twisted.

<sup>37</sup>Ordinarily swine can swim, at least for a time, but in this instance, the swine were so overcome by the demons that attempted to possess them that they were unable (perhaps unwilling) to swim. The swine were insane.

From those accounts of demons, we get a glimpse of the personality of Satan himself. For, the evil spirits, or demons, are spirits without bodies, just as is Satan himself who was dislodged from Adam. They, like Satan, must roam the earth as hungry lions looking for anyone whom they may devour (1Pe.5:8). They feared that Jesus would "...torment [them] before the time" (Mt.8:29). That is, they also feared that they would be sent into the outer darkness that is to be their destiny at the time of judgment. The time of which they were speaking is the time of the final judgment of the earth before the great white throne (Re:20:11). Only then, will Hell be opened and Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet will be the first occupants along with the demons.

Jesus immediately cast out the demons, because they presumed to hold a position (the inward rule of men) that they had been forbidden by God to retain. Yet, Satan, through his legions, still attempts to control men from within as well as from without. It is an unfortunate fact that many men ignorantly or purposefully invite him in to dwell in the near empty room of their vestigial spirit. That is accomplished by voluntarily engaging in the occult and other forms of "new age" rituals as well as overt devil worship. That opens the door to the parallel spirit world.

As a "foothold" is obtained by one demon, others also can enter to further deceive, torment, and otherwise use and abuse the victim. Fallen man's soul has no defense against them, and the chamber of their insensible spirit is as a house swept clean when they come to invade (Mt.12:44,45). The natural man's inner chamber has no active viable spiritual occupation and is without spiritual defense. Only if the Holy Spirit occupies our spiritual "house" do we have a complete defense against the invasions of Satan.

### ***The Holy Spirit, Our New Guardian***

Men still live on the earth, in the flesh, with their soul ruling them through their physical senses. They are open targets for Satan. The chamber of their spirit is empty, dark, and inviting to demons. By trickery and deception, men are still subject to being possessed by demons because they often invite them into their "most holy place" in

exchange for worldly gain. Only the power of the Gospel can break the chains that bind fallen man to Satan. It is in that one wonderful moment of realization that the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the spiritual chamber of these poor bodies of flesh. We then obtain that Spiritual guidance that Adam had in the beginning — *but with great differences*: We do not have the pride-filled spirit of Adam, but the humble Spirit of Christ! Our guardian spirit is not a created spiritual being, but the Creator Himself. We are no longer in a state of innocence, because we are now painfully aware of evil as well as good. We are no longer condemned by the fall because we are now in the province of God's grace. We have been fully redeemed from original sin that we inherited from Adam. We are now a new race of man under the headship of Jesus Christ with a new indwelling and Holy Spirit.

This indwelling Spirit, which we in Christ know, is not the “angel of the morning” which would lead us to destruction, but the “bright and morning star” (Re.22:16; cf. 2Pe.1:19) whose light will never fail to bring us into that new and perfect day. We have seen the proof of the power of the Holy Spirit in the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Himself. That Comforter, Guardian, and Teacher will likewise keep us from giving in to the temptations of the evil one, for He has been tested and proved to be faithful, for He is also in Him that is true (1Jn.5:20).

We can see that Satan was soundly defeated on the cross. His fate and ours are no longer linked by the need for common destruction in order to satisfy God's holiness. Rather, we who have the indwelling Holy Spirit are linked to eternal life through common substance with Christ who will never desert us or deceive us. He will never mislead us or lie to us, but will guide us to that perfect day that God has ordained for the resurrection of our bodies. We will then be restored to the position and purpose that God has intended for man from the beginning. Satan will be cast into outer darkness along with all those that have followed his ways: for all men who do not have the Spirit of Christ are spiritually dead and still under the condemnation of Adam's sin.

## Chapter 2.5 Sin Revealed by God's Law

We have seen very well that the thing that separates man from God is sin. However, what exactly is sin and in what way does it displease God? Many today consider sin as anything that brings men pleasure. Many things are listed by those people as sinful and are not to be engaged in. Nevertheless, sin is not necessarily found in enjoyable things or in various specific acts in which we do or do not engage. No, the definition of sin is much simpler (and more profound) than that, and it stems from a deeper consideration of God's laws than a mere list of things to do and not to do. Let's examine the subject of sin and determine exactly what it is and why it separates man and God.

### *Sin is Rebellion against God's Will*

In the Garden of Eden, Adam sinned against God (Ge.3:17). That was the first sin ever committed. We have seen that this specific act of sin was the partaking of the knowledge of good and evil. It was also a ***breach of trust***; it was ***disbelief*** that God knew what was best. Further, this act was in ***direct disobedience*** and against the express warning of God. God had ordered Adam not to eat of the tree and had even warned him of his death if he should do so (Ge.2:17). Yet, in direct defiance of God, Adam pitted his own understanding and desires against the wisdom of God. Adam put his own prideful desire to know good and evil above the law of God. Man became rebellious and put himself forth as being morally equal with God (Ge.3:22). Adam's act was directly opposed to the express will of God. That leads us to a very simple statement of fact: ***anything that man thinks or does that is contrary to the will of God is sin***. If man complied fully with God's will, he would be sinless.

We have shown that man's fallen nature does not allow him to place God's will above his own, but rather he seeks to please himself in acts and thoughts that totally ignore the very existence of God. Through those acts and thoughts, man continually sins. Therefore, it is not a simple matter of classifying certain acts or thoughts into those that are and are not sinful. Under certain circumstances, a simple act with no sinful connotation of its own could be in open rebellion

against God and against his express will for us. For instance, when Jonah decided to take a vacation trip by boat west to Tarshish, we can surely see that there was no sin in that act itself, except that God wanted him to go east into Ninevah (Jona.1:1–3)! Jonah's sin was that through that otherwise benign action he opposed God's will.

We then must seek God's will for our lives at every turn, but in what way does the natural man seek it? The natural man goes blindly onward in self gratification perceiving good from evil by observing the effects that such acts have on his own being and those around him. Man establishes his own standards; he does not consider God. Though such a man may desire to be a "good" man, his efforts are worthless before God because he has not sought God's will. Many professed Christians today are more inclined to do the "good" that *they* perceive as being good rather than do God's will that they may find distasteful or uncomfortable. Often we refer to those people as "do-gooders" because of their zeal in establishing conformance to their own set of ethics by which they live (or at least insist that others live), rather than seeking the will of God in all matters.

Yet, there are others, Christians and non-Christians alike, which appear to be good people. They are tolerant, helpful, and kind to others. They are hard workers in their jobs and honest in their dealings with others. Those are certainly good men according to any standards that *men* could set for them. Yet, if they do not regard God, and if they are not doing that which God wills for them they are sinners even as the worst of sinners before God. It is very important that we understand that. Otherwise, we, like they, may seek salvation from God's wrath through our own works that were conceived from our own faulty sense of what is good and evil that stems from original sin.

### ***Sin Revealed in the Decalogue***

Surely, one would say that God could not expect man to know his precise will at every turn. How can we always know what God would have us do in every circumstance? It is true that man was separated from God's immediate presence when he was expelled from the garden, while before, man had walked with God in the garden and heard his voice (Ge.3:23,24). Fallen man is now guided only by his

own intellect in matters of good and evil. It is for that reason that the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) was given to Moses for the people of Israel (Ex 20:1–17). However, the Ten Commandments still do not give man insight into God’s will at every turn of events. Rather, they are a basic requirement that God has set as a guideline for man. They are, in effect, a summary of God’s will for mankind. In Deuteronomy, we find that over 600 sundry laws were formulated out of the basic “Ten Words” to cover specific circumstances in the nation of Israel. Surely the rules for human conduct that are set forth in the Decalogue are superior to those which man sets for himself to perceive good from evil, since they were given by God.

In exchange for Israel’s obedience, God would tabernacle (pitch his tent) among them, and He would guide them on their journeys. It is important to note that the Decalogue was not given to make man righteous or bring salvation to man (Ro.3:20). Rather, (as we shall see later) they were given to reveal to man his sin before God (Ro.3:19,20). The Law is a standard of perfection that man cannot meet even in the most basic sense. Therefore, it further reveals the need of man for a deliverer to save him from the consequences of God’s judgment, and through whom he may again commune with God in all matters to seek his will not only in general matters, but also at every turn in all things as did Adam before the fall (Ro.3:21,22).

### **We Are Not to Worship False Gods, But God Only**

In as much as the Ten Commandments reveal sin, it is well that we examine them here. They are found in Exodus Chapter 20 and repeated again in Deuteronomy Chapter 5. Let’s look at each commandment in turn. First, “Thou shalt have none other gods before me” (Ex.20:3;De.5:7). We are to serve God alone and do his will only, none other. That is basic to God’s purposes for man; that is where Adam stood before the fall. “Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:” (Is.40:21,22). Since God has no equal, how, then, could

man assign worth to any other thing or being as a god set forth before Him? Who or what would man serve as a god, having once seen and recognized the magnitude of God the Almighty?

### **Man is Not Permitted to Create an Image of God**

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them...” (Ex.20:4,5; De.5:8,9). We have seen that God is infinite in his being. We should not think, then, that God can be represented by any material object, whether or not it is engraved to appear as any of his creation. To ascribe to God such an appearance is to do Him great injustice and dishonor. He is far above those images in majesty and glory.

In addition, such representations mislead man into looking for God's presence in such objects or in the nature that they represent. Man has a strong tendency to seek God in the material rather than the spiritual realm. God even forbade that an altar be engraved or hewn from stone (Ex.20:25). Nor should the altar itself be exalted by raised steps lest our own pride is elevated in it and we be found naked (i.e. without covering for sin; Ex.20:26). The cross on which Jesus died was not a dainty or delicate art work hewn out as a thing of beauty. The cross is actually offensive to our pride; our sins were so bad that God Himself had to die for us on that horrible device. We must be cautious today not to exalt the symbol of the cross above the one who gave Himself upon it. The cross itself was a rough and cruel even crude altar and should not itself be elevated as an object of worship. Rather, we should worship Jesus who gave Himself for us upon that cruel tree. God is not figured in such objects (not even a cross) or in nature, for He is that small still voice within that Elijah heard (1K. 19:12,13). “God is a Spirit” (Jn.4:24)!

Nor can we make the excuse that we do not actually worship an idol, but that it is merely an aid to our worship. Those that created idols of stone or wood realized that the idol itself was not God, but saw it as a visual representation of a god of their imagination. As Charles Spurgeon said, “Carnal objects are not helps to spiritual

worship: they are snares to the mind, and lead the heart astray from God. If it is anything to be seen or handled, it is strictly forbidden in the worship of God” (*Sermons on the Book of Revelation* Vol. xx–c)

### **We Are Not to Use God’s Name in a Vain Way**

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain...” (Ex.20:7;De.5:11). Many have understood that to merely mean avoiding the use of God’s name in profanity. Certainly, such flagrant abuse is sin. However, there is more than that to this commandment. It is possible to use God’s name in such a frivolous manner that we dishonor Him. We should not use God’s name when joking or in any form of levity. We should not use God’s name when we are not serious. Nor should we use God’s name in an unconscious manner or in meaningless talk whether religious or commonplace. God’s name must be honored and held in reverence by man at all times. Otherwise, we seek to “dethrone” God and bring Him down to (or even below) our own level. How, then, could we seek his will if we have so little regard for his name? It is only when we can see the magnificence of God, and the lowness of our own station, that we can see purpose in following the will of God for our lives.

### **Man is to Keep God’s Sabbath Rest**

“Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee” (De.5:12; Ex.20:8). This commandment is insightful of that seventh day when God ceased from all his work of creation. If God rested after six days of work, shouldn’t man also enjoy rest after six days? There is a danger here of legalistic observance without true understanding of the Sabbath’s meaning and purpose. That is the difficulty that the Scribes and Pharisees had when observing Jesus’ apparent violation of the Sabbath. Yet, as Jesus said, “the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mk.2:27). That is, we are not to worship any day to serve it; the day was created for our benefit and use. If we carefully read Deuteronomy Chapter 5 verse 13 through 15, we see that this is so. In particular, the laborers need that day of rest: “...that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou...” (De.5:14). The Israelites are

enjoined to remember their own travail in Egypt where they had no rest from their labor (De.5:15).

In our busy lives today, we have little time to stop and contemplate the wonders of God. Therefore, we may well consider the necessity of a day of rest from our ordinary labors to have the time to reflect on all that God is and all that He has created, even we ourselves. Yet, in a far greater sense, Jesus is man's rest (Sabbath) now in the spirit, but also in the future. He is our eternal rest. Jesus is Lord even of the Sabbath (Mk 2:28). Jesus brought in a *Sabbath Age*. We, therefore, must rest with God, and we must rest in Christ, a rest from our corrupt works and a rest in God's grace. We must observe the Sabbath of God in Christ to whom the Old Testament Sabbath clearly pointed.<sup>38</sup>

### **We Are to Honor Our Parents**

“Honor thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee...” (De.5:16; Ex.20:12). If only the younger generation today would hear these words. Moreover, if only we as well as the generations of youth before us had heeded those words. If only the children of Israel had heeded those words: “...that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Ex.20:12). Nevertheless, the pride of each generation is such as to consider itself superior to the older established generation. In so doing, it tosses out the wisdom of experience and age, and errors anew in the very same ways. The years of our youth are shortened both by accident and by ignorance. Their lives are in constant turmoil and they struggle against life and against God because they will not listen to wisdom.

### **Man is Not to Commit Murder**

“Thou shalt not kill” (De.5:17; Ex.20:13). That means that we should not commit murder of another human being, as the specific Hebrew word, *ratsach*, used in this verse and translated “kill” makes

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<sup>38</sup> The Sabbath Day and the Sabbath rest that we have in Jesus Christ are discussed thoroughly in Book II of this work.

quite clear. It must be noted here that the entire Decalogue involves man's relationship with God as well as his relationship with others of mankind who were also created in God's own image. In that sense, each commandment of the entire Decalogue involves man's relationship with God either directly or indirectly through mutual human relationships. It is quite apparent therefore that the commandment prohibiting murder can only apply to the killing of the body of another man (or woman) not to animals or plant life inasmuch as they were not created in God's image.<sup>39</sup>

Man has no inherent rights apart from the inalienable rights that God in his providence has given him. Our civil laws should merely reinforce the fact that God alone has the ultimate authority over life and death: the Lord gives life, and the Lord takes it away (Jb.1:21). If we commit murder, we oppose the will of God for that person whose physical body we have killed and have put our own self-righteous indignation above God's will. In doing so, we have destroyed the mortal physical body of an individual for the satisfaction of our own sinful desires. In so doing, we have sinned against God such that our own life is forfeit as a consequence.<sup>40</sup>

Murder is not an act that can ever be in God's will, for it is a matter of the self-satisfaction of one's own unrighteous pride, greed, and anger. Jesus pointed that out in the Sermon on the Mount discourse (Mt.5:22). Pride-filled and unrighteous anger resulting from the erroneous elevation of self-importance is the source of murderous thoughts. From those murderous thoughts come the acts themselves. To even think of taking God's authority over life in our own hands for the satisfaction of our own desires is sinful.

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<sup>39</sup> Fruit of various trees were provided for Adam and Eve for food as we see in Ge. 2:9. Animals were also sanctioned for food in Ge. 9:3 along with all other edible plant life.

<sup>40</sup> Also see Book II, Chapter 16.3 for a discussion of capital punishment as well as human justice that is executed through warfare. Murder of young children and of the unborn (infanticide and feticide) is discussed in Chapter 16.2 of the same book.

**Adultery Forbidden**

“Neither shalt thou commit adultery” (De.5:18; Ex.20:14). It has always been God’s will that one man and one woman would be joined together as one, even as one flesh (Ge.2:24; 1Co.6:16; Ep.5:31). We discover that fact clearly in the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. The joining of the man and woman forms an entity from which a family unit including their children is formed. Its structure is firm in the faithfulness of the man and woman to each other as one creation (Ge.1:27). To upset that carefully constructed creation of God is to violate God’s will and is sin.

More than that, a man (or woman), by committing adultery, violates his own integrity. He has taken that which was a beautiful and natural union of which he was an intimate part and made a shambles of it! He has violated his own flesh by taking to himself foreign flesh (Jude:7) that is not his own and cannot be beneficial to him, it being outside the bounds of the creation of God. In doing so, he has destroyed not only his own, but a second of God’s creations as well.

Closely associated with the word “adultery” is the word “fornication.” Some have sought to say that the commandment against adultery does not apply to committing fornication, which they see only as sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons. However, the word “fornication” is also used interchangeably with “adultery” inasmuch as it applies equally to those who are unmarried to each other as well as those who have never married. Fornication between unmarried individuals is a violation against the marriage state as much as is adultery since it prevents any possibility of a pure state of sanctified marriage existing in the future. Fornication is also listed first among almost every other conceivable sin by the Apostle Paul as preventing one from having any inheritance in the Kingdom of God (1Co.6:9–10).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Also see Book II, Chapter 16.1 for a further discussion regarding fornication and adultery in the greater context of marriage and divorce.

**Stealing Prohibited**

“Neither shalt thou steal” (De.5:19; Ex 20:15). Theft results in an unnatural transferal of wealth from one individual to another. We should consider that we all receive only that which God has provided us. What we receive as the fruit of our honest labor is also a gift inasmuch as God provided us with the talents and strength to earn wages. If we steal, we underhandedly take that which God has provided another, and keep it for ourselves. Since God has given all things, the thief has actually stolen from God.

Not only is the victim deprived of that provision of God, which was his to use, but the thief is also burdened with that which God had not willed him to have. The natural man does not see that receiving goods by the means of theft harms the thief as well as the victim. In fact, both are victims: the first by the loss of his God-given provision, and the second by the loss of his personal integrity and honesty. As man further degrades himself in sin, he drives deeper the wedge that separates himself from God and his hope of salvation.

**Lying and Gossip Forbidden**

“Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor” (De.5:20; Ex.20:16). To lie is to admit that we are under the power of Satan, the father of lies. God does not lie (Tit 1:2; He.6:18); nor did He create man to lie. To lie about any matter is surely degrading to a man’s character, because the lie says that Truth condemns his actions or thoughts. Furthermore, to lie against ones neighbor is to bring double condemnation upon us. We seek to circumvent God’s will by lies even as we seek to condemn another by false witness.

Furthermore, we seek to mislead others into believing that lie, so that they are unwittingly a party to our deception. Lies feed on lies to create even more falsehoods. The “tangled web” becomes so confused that we may come to believe our own lies that are born of Satan (Jb.8:14). To lie is to do the will of Satan, rather than doing God’s will. False witness harms our neighbor against whom the charges are made, those whom we have caught up in our lies, and ourselves as well as deception replaces the truth.

**Desiring the Property of Others Prohibited**

“Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbor’s wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor’s house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is thy neighbor’s” (De.5:21; Ex.20:17). In the days when the Law was given, even a wife or a servant was considered a possession. This last commandment is most revealing of man’s fallen condition. Covetousness seems to be built-in to the natural man inasmuch as all of life is a striving for more and more wealth and possessions. Desiring the property of others is a cancer that eats at our insides.

Perhaps this is the most difficult commandment of all to comply with since it prohibits a state of mind regarding our neighbor rather than a mere unlawful activity toward him. Furthermore, pride, which is at its root, is the basis for the commission of all other sins. The self-centered desire for what is not ours is the primary motivation for theft and adultery, and it brings forth lies and anger that can lead to murder as well. Even our reverence and worship of God is affected adversely by the elevation of self-worth. The desire to know good from evil, which was the exclusive property of God, was a driving force in Adam’s original sin.

Therefore, if we could keep this one commandment perfectly, we would also succeed in keeping all of the Law. As the Apostle Paul said, “...I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” (Ro.7:7).

***The Law is Good and Perfect***

We must concede that God’s Law is good and perfect. No set of laws that we may invent could possibly improve upon them. Though they are only a summary of God’s total will for men, they tell us enough to know that we are not living up to God’s Law in general, let alone in all the specifics that would be necessary to put ourselves on a par with God’s own righteousness. Moreover, we know that God cannot accept less (Mt.5:48)!

Moses and later Jesus summed up the entire Law as love toward God (De.6:5; Mt.22:37). Jesus was asked for the first and great

commandment (Mt.22:36, 38); then He added, “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mt.22:39). We can surely see that in the Decalogue quite clearly (Mt.22:40). For that reason, we may have great difficulty in making a clear division, as some have attempted to do, between that which involves love toward God and that which involves love toward men.

Rather, if we look closely, we observe that *all* involve love *first* to God and the serving of his will, and that the love of our fellow men is generated from that first love. That is what Jesus meant when He said that the second was “like unto it.” It is God’s will that we love one another, because God loves each of us, and we love only because God first loved us. Too many today seek to serve and love mankind without loving God first. That is not possible since our sense of good or evil toward them would stem from our own corrupt perception of it, not from God’s perfect will. Love apart from God is not truly love, but a counterfeit.

### ***Sin Does Not Benefit Man in Any Way***

We have seen that sin is that which is outside the will of God and that it violates God’s righteousness and reviles his holy name. Man was first created “in the image of God” (Ge.1:27). However, the image of God is now broken almost beyond recognition in fallen man. When we sin and smear ourselves, we deface the image of God, which we were intended to be. Man cannot actually sin against himself or against another man, but must say to God: “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight...” (Ps.51:4).

It is well that we understand that, but in another sense, we should see the terrible way that sin affects the sinner as well. Careful emphasis has been placed on that fact as we considered several of the commandments since all too often we ignore that aspect of sin. Therefore, we must understand that sin is in no way beneficial to the sinner (Ro.6:23). Sin is not something that man benefits from while God fumes and scoffs at us. Sin is highly degrading to man; it lowers his moral character into the depths of the grave. It destroys his hope of reconciliation with his Creator and destroys any hope for eternal life in Heaven. It banishes his soul to the depths of Hell.

That is the very thing that the Ten Commandments reveal to us. Surely, we should see our pitiful state. We wallow in unbelievable filth, and because of false pride, we extol our cleanness! We set ourselves up as gods on a throne of decaying flesh resting on the quicksand of death. We have been given over to the lusts of our minds and the ungodly products of our pride. Surely, we should be ready to cry out for mercy! What wretched creatures we are, and so blinded by the filth of our lives that we think its stench is a thing of beauty.

From the time of man's fall, even until now, man has a desperate need of redemption. That redemption has been *given* us, the undeserving, through the mercy of God in the abundance of his grace. It is not given to us through the Ten Commandments by which our hopes are shattered, but through Jesus Christ our Righteousness. We must wear the robe of *his* perfection. He has taken our filth, our sins, our pride, our wayward wanderings, and suffered God's wrath for all of it once and forever on that altar of the cross. Our transgressions are forgiven forever if we only accept what God has done for us (Jn.3:16).

## **Section 3, The Sovereignty of God and the Salvation of Man**

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**God's Sovereignty over Time**

**Man's Will in Bondage**

**Faith vs. Works of the Law**

**God Chooses His Own**

**The Five Opposing Points**

## **Chapter 3.1 God's Sovereignty over Time**

The chapters of this section discuss the doctrine of divine election and fallen man's moral inability to respond to God's will. Divine election means that it is God alone who has chosen who will be saved, not man. However, a failure to understand time in relationship to God's sovereign election of his own and his unchangeable ability to foresee and ordain the future of all things can leave one not a little confused about this important doctrine. For that reason, this section begins with a study of time.

Our knowledge of the world is insignificant when compared with our lack of knowledge of the vastness of space. Yet, we at least know that God created the heavens and the earth on which we live (Ge.1:1). The element that we call time, however, has no physical dimensions and is therefore impossible to fully comprehend. Man has devised means to measure the cyclic sequence of events that are the result of time by the use of calendars and clocks. However, the earth itself does not actually experience time, it only undergoes change as that element that we call time passes.

Furthermore, time is something that most men consider so basic that even if the earth and space itself should vanish, time would remain. In fact, some even consider that God Himself must also be governed by time, or at least that He subsists in a dimension where time exists. So intrinsic to our thoughts is that element called time, that we cannot imagine any reality without it.

### ***Time is God's Creation***

Since man's attitudes and even his character changes with the passing of time, one may erroneously think that God also is somehow affected by time, or that He must "wait" for time to pass in order to determine and execute his own will based on the decisions or actions of his human creation. That would make God subordinate to time and the decisions of mankind such that He would no longer be in authority — no longer sovereign. If that were so, He would no longer be God at all.

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We greatly error if we think that God is in any way subject to time since at the very least we know that God has no beginning or end. We must further conclude that God has complete control over time since God is omnipotent. Since God has control over time, He does not age nor does He change.<sup>42</sup> "...One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2Pe.3:8). The present is the same as yesterday and tomorrow to Him. All things are visible to God: past, present, and future.

If we carry this reasoning to its ultimate conclusion, we must finally concede that God must have created time itself since all other things, including the earth, the stars, and heavens were created by Him. Even light, which is closely associated with time, burst forth at his command (Ge.1:3). "And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Ge.1:5). Time began when God set it into motion. "The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter" (Ps.74:16,17). God has not just created the physical universe. He has also created days and seasons. Since God has created all things by which we can know the passing of time, it is also apparent that God has created time itself.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Ge.1:1). Since God has no beginning or end, we must conclude that this is the beginning of creation — and therefore the beginning of time, as we know it. Just as God has created the physical universe, God has also created the "cosmos" of time itself. That God exists in a dimension different from ours is evident; that God exists in eternity must yet be fully appreciated. Until then, the awesome power of God the Creator cannot be fully grasped by man. God exists beyond all our understanding; his power is infinite and nothing is superior to his wisdom and strength. Since that is so, we must not fall short of worshiping Him by denying that God formed all of creation.

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<sup>42</sup>We discussed the immutability of God in Chapter 2.1 of this work. We saw how this related to His eternal attribute.

*Understanding Time through Allegory*

While all allegories must fall short at some point, they are often useful to promote an understanding of something that cannot be directly observed. As an aid to our understanding, time can be thought of as a long ribbon. The ribbon has both a beginning and an end. Rather than the ribbon being flat and smooth, it has regular ripples throughout its length that correspond to various cyclic events such as day and night and still longer ones corresponding to the four seasons and years. The various ages (which we sometimes call dispensations) are also apparent along its length. At one prominent point along its expanse is the cross of Christ that separates the two major divisions of time. That christological division is so significant that even man has recognized it through the use of the terms B.C. and A.D.<sup>43</sup>

At one end of the ribbon is the creation itself, while at the opposite end is the conclusion of the thousand-year reign of Christ that opens into the eternal ages as time ends (Revelation Chapters 21 & 22). It should be clearly understood that God has created and formed that entire ribbon of time and stands apart from it in a timeless expanse that surrounds the ribbon itself. The timeless expanse that surrounds time is what we call eternity. While time is contained within eternity, eternity is not a mere extension of time forward and backward. Time has a specific beginning and end; eternity has no bounds and is infinite.

God can look upon time full-length. From his vantage point, He can see the whole expanse or the smallest dimple. Up to this point, that is merely a restatement of his foreknowledge. However, time is his very own creation; He has formed each ripple and division. He has established each age according to his own will as He saw fit. Moreover, it is not just the greater expanse of geological history that God has ordained. It should further be evident that God has established man not only to occupy time, but that He has specifically ordained each individual soul to occupy a specific "distance" along it in a

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<sup>43</sup> B.C. designates time that passed before the coming of Christ, and A.D. (Latin: *Anno Domini* = "in the year of (our) Lord" ) designates the time that has passed since the coming of Christ.

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physical body on earth. That is the foundation for the understanding of predestination since God has also preordained the works that man accomplishes in that span. Therefore, no event, no matter how large or small, escapes God's view. Likewise, no event, no matter how large or small, escapes his will!

While this allegory describes time as a physical ribbon and eternity as endless physical space (i.e. "a void"), it should be understood that time and eternity are not actually in a physical dimension at all. Eternity and the time, which it contains, are in another dimension altogether — a fourth dimension if you will. While we can just begin to grasp the concept of time, our minds would snap if we should attempt to push too deeply into the realm of eternity. That is God's domain into which mere flesh and blood dare not venture.

### *Foreknowledge and Preordination*

It is evident that when God created the earth and mankind, He could foresee all of the events that would pass in the continuum of time that He has created. It is further evident that God not only does not wait to see future events, He has already preordained their occurrence. In God, all things that have already occurred (considered in terms of human accounting of time) occurred according to his will. Future events will also occur as He has set them forth. The present is the same as the past and future from God's vantage point and is well under his control. Away with such notions that God has created the heavens and earth, and not to be further bothered by his old creation has gone on to things that are more significant!<sup>44</sup> Away with such ideas that men have contrived saying that God waits to see how his creation will turn out! We must be convinced that what God has created will conform to that which He has assigned it, since to God it is already accomplished.

The foreknowledge of God, then, is not that He can foresee what will come about through "chance." It is not that He can foresee

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<sup>44</sup>Deism is the false belief that the only present evidence of God is to be found in nature and man's reasoning, and that after creating the world, God no longer cares for or is involved with His creation in any way.

what man will do, but that He can foresee what *He has done!* Time is a *completed* creation. Do the accounts in John's Revelation establish conditions regarding future events? That is, does God say if such a thing happens then He will do this, otherwise, He will do that? Can any of those future events be thwarted by mans' efforts? No, the events of the "end-time" are already *established* by God's will. No event whether past, present, or future will change that which God has preordained to occur at its appointed time.

### *Events in Time Are Not Chance Happenings*

If we look at the many things that God has created, those things we see all around us, we may discern that God has left nothing to "chance" having taken into account the smallest detail: the exact mixture of gases in the atmosphere that we breathe to the smallest bacteria going about the task assigned it. We are assured by Scripture that not even a sparrow falls without his notice, and that even the hairs of our head are numbered (Mt.10:29,30). It would be incredible to think that God would leave anything to "blind chance," for even the outcome of the simple toss of a coin is foreknown and therefore ordained by Him (Pr.16:33). All things bend to his will, for He has established it to be so.

We cannot consider that God's preordination extends only to groups of people or general but not specific events. Can we consider that the major events of this world could come about without the specific events that lead to them? If the specific events are brought about by chance or by the will of man, and God does not control those events, how can the resulting major events be God's will and not man's or nature's?

The Scriptures are full of examples of God's sovereignty (De.4:39; Jb.9:12 etc.) in that respect. We may be led to ask: How is God truly God if He leaves his work and choices to the whims of men or an accident of what we call nature? We must see that God's will can be accomplished only if He controls his creation in every way. Surely, God cannot be limited to taking on the major events without having power over every detail leading to them.

### *Time and Evolution*

It is necessary that we stop considering time as a consistent all-powerful thing in and of itself lest, as does the evolutionist, we worship the created element rather than the Creator. If we are foolish enough to deny the work of the Creator in the fabric of nature, the secrets of the beginning of all life, matter, and energy are ultimately lost in the depths of time — although the evolutionists continually try to pry them out of their “god” through various scientific and philosophic manipulations.

### **Scientific Manipulation**

Since man cannot travel back in time to observe life’s origin, and since man cannot travel into the future to see its end, any theory regarding life based upon time would at first appear to be logically safe. However, the converse is true since this hypothesis is based upon an unproven universal negative; that is, there is no Creator. The theory of evolution cannot be proven through observation since the observable pace of change within man’s own lifetime would be too small an increment with regard to long expanses of time.

The paleontologist searches in vain to find the “missing links” that connect various stages of the evolution of man in the past in order to demonstrate incremental changes brought about by so-called natural selection. While he has found a few remains over the years that have been alleged to be “missing links,” it should be apparent that the theory of evolution would require many hundreds of thousands of remains showing various stages of incremental change to be considered viable. Such voluminous remains do not exist. The few so-called links that are reportedly found most commonly turn out to be a malformed ape or human being that (fortunately) had no ability to reproduce its malformation through its offspring. Still others have been hoaxes from the beginning or they were created out of whole cloth from a single bone or joint. The supposed links are all based upon wishful speculation that is itself based upon the false assumption that man was not created.

Evolution is based upon circular reasoning within a faulty paradigm. All physical evidence suggests that each species of life on earth was created separately from the others. That there are similarities between species only suggests that a common creator fashioned them all. We therefore find that the theory of evolution is actually based upon anti-science since all scientific theory must be based upon observable events, not on the unobservable. The theory of evolution is actually unscientific since it is based upon non-existent evidence.

### **Philosophical Manipulation**

Actually, the "origin of all things" is not a matter of science; it is a matter of philosophy and religion. The evolutionist philosophically rejects any possibility of creation. Since physical studies do not support that philosophical viewpoint, he must bend them to fit. We should realize that the evolutionist has actually fashioned his own idol of God out of the created element of time. Given sufficient time, he says, all of the creations, including man himself, have evolved from lower life-forms and ultimately from primeval ooze. That the so-called law of "natural selection" could have resulted in order, rather than chaos, can only be attributed to the omnipotence of time.

Because the evolutionist refuses to see God as the creator of all things, he must seek through various philosophical theories to explain how all material things, including all living beings, came into existence through his own god (i.e. time). To the evolutionist, time becomes the means by which all things can come into existence since time is perceived as something separate of the physical universe yet controlling the order of the universe. Therefore, time becomes the hook on which the evolutionist hangs his entire bag of theories.

When time, itself, is seen as being the creation of God, all such philosophical theories fall apart. We must also realize that God has not created time as a means to bring forth his creatures through an evolutionary process. The compromise through which some have sought to reconcile the biblical account of creation with evolutionary theories is often referred to as "Creative Evolution." We must realize that if God is the creator (and He is), He has created time for the use of his creatures, not as a means for bringing them forth (creating them)

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through mere “chance.” Time is not God, nor does God require its assistance in the act of creation.

### *The Purpose of Time*

Rather, God has created time for the benefit of his physical creation. We should consider that time is given to us by God for our use as well. Time governs our lives on earth and is to us as real as the earth itself, as the food we eat, as the air we breathe, making up the days of our lives. Nevertheless, it must be considered in the same manner as our earthly lives: a vapor that is lost in the timelessness of eternity. Where does the knowledge that God created time lead us in understanding our relationship with God? For some, who have rightly considered that God is not affected by time and has full control over it, very little. For others who may believe that God is helpless against time, or that He must wait to see how his plans will turn out, very much.

When Adam sinned, Adam died, and yet he lived. That is, Adam lived for a span of “time.” In the many generations since Adam, each man has had his own day in the sun before his body returned to the elements from which it was made (Ge.3:19). For each man, God has established a span of time in which that man’s eternal destiny can be resolved through reprobation or redemption. Because we are on the ribbon of time, mans’ past is forgotten history, his future is yet unseen; it is only an ever-moving today that we have been given. “To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (He.4:7). Time has been prepared that all men may have the opportunity to repent and call upon the name of the Lord. This life is but the vestibule of eternity.

Time is also an arena in which God can work: “...when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son...” (Ga.4:4). Time is the finished work of God with the cross of Christ as its center-piece. Time is the setting in which the redemption of mankind took place by God’s grace alone. The destiny of man in the eternity beyond time is determined by his relationship to Jesus Christ in the time set aside for his life on this earth. It is all by the “determinate council and foreknowledge of God” that Christ was delivered for our sins and raised again from the dead (Ac.2:23,24).

Therefore, time is that which God has created to serve his own purpose in the carrying out of his will. Time is not something that runs rampant over God, or over his people. The events that occur in time are not only foreknown by God, but God actually foreordained them. Time is beneficial to man not only for day-to-day living, but it also provides the opportunity to grow and to know God as his wrath is stayed for a time. It is the golden hour to turn to Him and to be redeemed for all eternity through the blood of Christ, “through the blood of the *everlasting* covenant” that God has prepared in the fullness of time.

## **Chapter 3.2 Man's Will in Bondage**

Having inquired into time in the previous chapter, let us continue to explore the purpose that God has for it as it relates to mankind. From earlier chapters in this book, we have come to realize that man desperately needs a redeemer. Not only has the natural man sinned, he will go on sinning, ignoring the God who created him; not seeing God's will, he will only "do his own thing" until death overtakes him.

### ***Moral Inability of Man***

Though men should be about the work of glorifying God on earth, the natural man does not go about to do God's work, but his own. That is a result of the fallen condition of man, which was discussed earlier in Chapter 2.3 The Fall of Man, page 110. Even the Apostle Paul had to admit that when he would make a personal effort to do good, evil most often resulted. "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Ro.7:19).

Regardless of man's fallen condition, we must not deny that he still has a responsibility to do those things that are pleasing to God, things that are fully within God's will, and to do only those things. God's moral law as He gave it to man in the Decalogue has never been repealed (Mt.5:18), and it demonstrates that man falls far short of the glory that God had intended for him (Ro.3:23). Significant is the fact that the fall of man did not in any way absolve man of his responsibility to glorify and serve God, but it destroyed man's ability to respond to God's will. Though fallen man is fully responsible, he is not naturally responsive. Man, lacking the light of spiritual guidance, gropes around serving his own desires, not God's, rendering him morally incapable even of turning to Christ to receive God's mercy.

### **The Law of Sin**

That miserable condition is brought about by what Paul referred to as "...the law of sin which is in our members" (Ro.7:23). Man is by nature in bondage to that law and has no means of escape. Man can not will to do good, because there appears a way that seems

right to a him, but the way of that path is sin and at the end of it is death (Pr.14:12; 16:25). Seeing the power that the “law of the flesh” has upon the human soul, the Apostle Paul cried out, “Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ro.7:24,25). Then, says Paul, our only and sure deliverance from that condition is to be found in Jesus Christ not from any of our own efforts.

### **The Power of the Flesh**

The law of sin came about through the fall and perpetuates itself by way of the flesh. The fallen man is now a dichotomy consisting of soul and body, whereas Adam began as Spirit and flesh from which the soul was born. Man's spirit, though still present, is both deaf to the things of God, and dumb with regard to enlightening man's soul. It is for all practical purposes dead because of its lack of communication with God who is the source of life. Man can not respond, indeed can not even see the will of God without the light of his spirit which, in the natural man, radiates, not light, but complete darkness.

Therefore, only man's flesh that gives him his worldly nature edifies the natural man's soul. Fallen man does not see any need for redemption of his soul and as long as his flesh is appeased, his soul is at rest. The fallen man is actually quite happy in this life. He does not lament his lack of spiritual guidance; he actually rejoices in it. He believes that he is a free man who is able to do things his own way without the hindrance of religion and the law of God.

### **Imputation of Original Sin**

After Adam's spiritual death, his flesh lived on for a time and all of his offspring inherited his debased condition from him. Man is therefore a servant to his own flesh because of impending death, and his will is governed by that servitude. Many however say that they do not believe that we are responsible for Adam's sin, but only for our own. If we are accountable only for our own sins before God and if we did not ever commit any sin of our own, we would be righteous in his sight. Nevertheless, there is none who have not sinned (Ro.3:23).

There is none that can stand before God in his own righteousness (Ro.3:10). We are accountable to God for both our sins *and* our fallen nature from which they come. Because of Adam's sin, the entire race of mankind has the original contaminate of sin imputed to it. Though we cannot be held accountable directly for Adam's specific sin, we have inherited the sinful inclination and our status as sinners before God. That is what is referred to as original sin.

Our fallen nature alone does not bring forth sin; the world contributes to it. Sin is conceived by the joining of our lusts and the temptations of this world (Ja.1:14,15), as the things of this world (of which Satan is said to be the prince) give opportunity to our lusts so that sin is manifested. As fallen creatures awaiting death, we are evil and vile in the eyes of God. Compared to God's purity, we are like the stench of an open grave, and our speech is like the poisonous venom of a snake (Ro.3:13).

### *Doctrine of Free Will*

The denial of original sin (i.e. sin nature) leads us to the false doctrine of free will. In many churches today, the "free will" of man is a central doctrine and has even become a litmus test for genuine faith. However, that doctrine is not found anywhere in the Bible. The doctrine of "free will" actually stands directly in opposition to the teachings of the Apostle Paul. It has come about because of the misinterpretation of Bible verses that place an emphasis upon the necessity for a human *response* to the Gospel. The doctrine of "free will" did not really take deep root in Christendom until the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the teachings of one Jacobus Arminius.<sup>45</sup>

Free will can be a delicate subject to oppose in some circles because it would appear to some that if we do not teach free will, none will believe that they can ever turn to Christ and therefore none will be saved. It is apparent that many erroneously believe that man contributes in large part to his own faith and redemption. However, they have not thought out the implications of the false doctrine of "free

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<sup>45</sup>We shall discuss "free will" again in a more technical manner in Chapter 3.5 when we shall directly compare Arminianism with Calvinism.

will” and cannot see that this doctrine carried to its logical conclusion actually *excludes everyone* from coming to Christ since fallen man's nature and will is actually in direct opposition to the acceptance of salvation in Christ!

### **Free Will Defined in God**

We have seen that God has created all that exists and that even time was created by Him (Time is God's Creation, page 142). From our previous study of God's attributes (Chapter 2.1 The Eternal God, page 80), we concluded that God is sovereign in all his ways. That is to say, that God is a supreme ruler having supreme rank and power. God is superior to all other beings (which He created), and He is completely independent in his own actions, power, and authority.

God's dominion is over all, and *his will* is paramount. By will, we mean that God's actions are conscious and deliberate, and that those actions are fully governed by God's own internal moral and mental capacity which is infinite. Therefore, God has complete freedom in making his decisions, and since his will is at the heart of his own pure and holy substance, his choice cannot result in evil, but good only. Furthermore, there is not, nor can there be, any external influence upon God's will and his choices and decisions that emanate from it. As James said, "...God can not be tempted with evil..." (Ja.1:13). Equally as important is the infinite power within God's being by which He is able to carry out fully any decision or choice He makes regarding his creation with impunity. So much so, that He has preordained them to come to pass in the time that He created.

We have just described free will, since for the will to be truly free it must have at its root holiness and righteousness. It must be free of all external influence. Moreover, it must have at its disposal the power to carry out all of its dictates. Surely, we must recognize that man does not have free will, because his will does not fit any of the criteria. Ultimately, it is only God's will that *must* prevail. Therefore, *only God truly has free will.*

### **Holiness and Righteousness**

We soon realize that the so-called free will of man is a myth. Worse than that, it ascribes to man those attributes that belong to God alone (Ge.3:5). Both Scripture and experience deny that man's will stems from holiness and righteousness. The will of man naturally opposes the will of God. Man's will, corrupted as it is by his sin nature, is therefore ruled by Satan, who is the prince of this world, and must therefore be constrained by God's will; it is not at all free. Man's will fails the very first test.

### **Condition of Birth**

Let us continue to examine the will of man and see if in any way it can be construed to be free of influence, and fully independent of external control. Certainly, no man has control over the conditions of his own birth. That is, he may be born in this country or that; he may be born to rich or poor; he may be born to good parents or bad; he may be born male or female; he may be born in wartime or peace. Even the particular time or age that a man is born into is not in his control. If man had free will, he would have control over those conditions. We surely know that man is born of God's free will, not ours.

### **Spiritual State**

Just as we have no control over the times or physical conditions of our birth, we also have no control over the spiritual condition under which we were born. Therefore, the fallen nature is inherited from Adam, and the prince of this world further affects our thoughts until our will cannot be free, but it is governed by our own sinful existence. We are not immune, nor can we break away from that sinful attitude, for it is in our very nature. From that fallen condition, we cannot turn to God. Our lust for knowledge and the things of this world are too strong for us. We become a servant to our own lusts. The

ultimate end is death, for from our nature we sin and from sin comes forth death (Ja.1:15).<sup>46</sup>

Here we can finally begin to comprehend why our own efforts to attain righteousness can never justify us before God. It is simply not possible. All of man's works come from his own lusts, and before God, the garments of our works do not cover the nakedness of our sinful nature. We appear before God as if we were clothed in "filthy rags" that are full of holes (Is.64:6). Fallen man actually seeks vindication for his own *fallen will* rather than tune his life to God's perfect will.

### **Inherited Traits**

What, then, can we say about our inherited traits? All of those were carried into this world with us without any conscious effort on our part. Those inherited conditions are set up for us at birth and we had no choice of race, stature, color of hair and eyes, and the general physical health that may be hidden within our DNA. We did not have any choice or say regarding those traits nor for that matter can we change them by an act of will. No, rather our thoughts and attitudes are influenced by those traits.

### **External Influence**

How about the environmental influences that we encounter as we grow up and live day to day? Is our will free and independent of them? Alternatively, can we even say that they do not affect our decisions? If we are honest, we must admit that our thoughts and actions are almost totally in response to conditions and circumstances that we find around us. Our physical senses observe the world about us, and we respond by either embracing or opposing the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Those decisions are *always* influenced by our own immediate self-interest and desires without any regard for long-term consequences. While we may feel at the time that our decision is purely altruistic, if we examine our motives carefully, we

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<sup>46</sup>Man is a "totally depraved" creature as a result of Adam's fall. We shall discuss this at length in Chapter 3.5.

usually find that even that “altruism” is in our own supposed self-interest.

### **Power to Carry Out Actions**

What can be said about man’s power to carry out the acts that his will has dictated? Man may make a choice from the dictates of his will, but the power to carry out the action does not exist. None of the self-determination or “positive thinking” that man can muster can control or change the circumstances that we encounter. Moreover, if man had free will, he by an act of his own will could determine that he would never die, choose to live on earth forever, and actually have the power to carry it out. In all of that, he would thwart God’s will by eating of the tree of life that is forbidden to him.

Many of the “mind cults” falsely teach that man does indeed have the power to carry out the dictates of his will by the supernatural use of the mind. Since the will of each man is different, self-directed, and in opposition to the will of others, it is apparent that only one will could prevail, not all. Cultism aside, we observe that nature, time, the actions of others, and numerous other circumstances that are completely beyond our control thwart even our best efforts to follow through. Ultimately, it is God’s will and *only* God’s will that must prevail. “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps” (Pr.16:9).

Therefore, we recognize that man’s will completely fails the “free will” tests since God must be the standard. Holiness and righteousness is not at the root of man’s will. Man’s will is corrupted by the fallen nature that he inherits, and is further affected by the environment in which he lives. His decisions are not pure, often lack even basic knowledge, and certainly lack true wisdom. When man makes decisions from his own will, he often fails to have the resolve to see them through, and he certainly fails to have the power to carry them out. That is hardly the description of a will that is free, but a will that is corrupted and in bondage.

*Freedom of Choice*

Much of the confusion over man's free will is merely a matter of semantics. As a result, many incorrect concepts regarding the power of man's will have come into common usage. From those concepts, catch phrases develop which we all hurl about with great religious abandon. Over time, they become a touch-stone that are to be trusted explicitly and must not be too closely examined. That is true of the phrase "free will" as we speak of "free will offerings" and the like. As we shall see the confusion comes about over falsely equating two words: "will" and "choice." While man does not have a free will, he does have freedom of choice. That is to say, within the limits and dictates of his own nature and will, a man is free to choose that which is most pleasing to him. That freedom of choice extends from choosing what color of socks to wear in the morning to choosing a wife or a life-time career. Freedom of choice is what many are actually talking about when they say that man has a free will, but the implications of having a free will go far beyond merely having the freedom to choose.

Man can make decisions and choices. We cannot deny that this is so since we all are faced with thousands of decisions every day, but we all make our choices from the conditions that we face. Choices are made at the mental level while the will itself is rooted at a deeper level within man's soul. In some instances, our previous decisions may have precipitated the current conditions we encounter, but somewhere along the way, we are faced with making a choice of which we had no control whatever.

If we look more closely, we shall observe that we do not in any way control the alternatives set before us, but merely choose from one of them. As Jeremiah confessed before the Lord, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Je.10:23). From the exercise of our own will, we cannot create paths of our own liking before us. God is in control of the paths from which we must choose, and because He knows our nature, He has even predetermined by his perfect foreknowledge of our nature which alternatives we shall choose.

Therefore, we must make a distinction between “free will” and “free choice.” As we have seen before, man is not a mere automaton, a stage actor, or a puppet following some prescribed program or script. Man has full individuality; he is a *living soul*, which means that he acts as a free agent in the matter of making choices in accord with his own nature. We can see that those choices are truly made according to our own will, but that our will is *not free*! The will of man is in bondage. That bondage adversely influences our choices resulting in the failure of natural man to respond to God’s will.

### **Determinism and Fatalism**

It is very important that we make a differentiation between the limits imposed by the bondage of the will and the philosophical teaching of Determinism. Philosophical Determinism states that all things come about as a result of previous events as a cause sufficient to do so. That is, based upon what has previously happened, all future events are predetermined without exception as a result of an unalterable chain of events. This concept may be useful mathematically but somewhat less useful regarding material processes since it would of necessity ignore any unexpected variations that may occur in the chain. Moreover, it utterly fails when we move to the matter of man’s will and moral choices that are not based upon natural physical laws as Determinism supposes. If that thinking were carried through to the logical conclusion theologically, no one of the fallen race of mankind could ever be saved from eternal destruction since there would be no way that his terrible course could be altered once begun — even prior to his birth.

Preordination as expressed by the Apostle Paul differs greatly in as much as Paul recognizes the existence of a personal God who is able and willing to intercede for fallen man to alter his course. Thus, a man bent upon self-destruction because of a corrupted will can still be saved regardless of past events in his life or choices he may have previously made. Once his will is released from bondage, man’s choices become beneficial in sealing his salvation. Unlike deists who say that a god created the heavens and earth and then left it all to its own devices operating under natural laws that will ultimately

determine its destiny (or conversely to mankind to do with it as he wills), God is actively involved with his creation to redeem it from its fallen state.

Fatalism states that a series of events must happen in the future *regardless* of individual choices that are made. Unlike determinism, Fatalism states that there is a regulating force or agency that controls the outcome seemingly at random. That agency is commonly regarded by men as a woman and is related to the “lady luck” of the gambler. It then, makes no difference what choices any man may make inasmuch as he cannot alter the outcome. Choices become meaningless. As we can see, this differs greatly from the Apostle Paul’s view of the preordination of God.

Both Determinism and Fatalism deny the possibility of any supernatural intervention. While God predestines the outcome of his creation, He does not directly dictate the choices that a man makes. God’s work in the redemption of man is totally positive as a man is born anew in the Spirit. It does not please God to see anyone perish though all mankind deserves nothing more from Him.

### *Salvation is All of God*

From our vile condition, we of our own corrupt will cannot seek God for mercy. We know we cannot find any hope for redemption in his justice! Nevertheless, God has looked upon man with favor. Why is that so? Is sinful man worthy of God’s favor? Can man contribute any thing from his sinful nature to benefit God? In no way at all! God has intervened for man out of his own will in love with grace and mercy. It is from God’s own righteousness and love that He has reached down to save man. It is solely and only by the *grace of God* that men are saved!

### **Divine Intervention**

Only divine intervention can save man from the judgment to come and the darkness of eternal Hell. The prophet Jonah wrote, “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jona.2:9). David wrote, “In God is my salvation and my glory...” (Ps.62:7). The Apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore, I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also

obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2Ti.2:10). That is only a small sample of such statements to be found in Scripture. There can be little question that the work of salvation is God’s work offered to mankind, not the works of men offered to God.

That God has chosen to have mercy on some and not others cannot be either defended or criticized by any man, since it is an extension of God’s *perfect and free will*. God, Himself, has said that He will have “mercy on whom He will have mercy” (Ro.9:18). Therefore, can a man come to Christ by a choice made from his vile nature? Can he forsake his intrinsic lusts for the things of this world and turn to God? We know that he cannot. Nevertheless, God in his mercy has chosen some to receive salvation as a free gift. Those are the ones who believe from the heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and their source of redemption. That realization is not the result of a choice springing from our own bound will, for we fully see that both our own nature and the world denies Him, and our own lusts reject Him. How then can that realization come about?

### **Spiritual Rebirth**

*We must be born again!* God miraculously brings about a spiritual rebirth in us.<sup>47</sup> We are chosen of God for *his* own purposes, not ours. God chooses us to demonstrate *his* righteousness, mercy, and glory, not ours. We are called to inherit a glory that we in no way deserve that we may follow Christ and in doing so glorify Him. We are *still* sinners, we were born sinners, and we have committed sin; nothing can change that. We are, rather, now justified to God by the blood of his Son who becoming as one of us took on the form of our flesh, and taking upon Himself our sins, fully satisfied God’s wrath against us in his own body.

When man is born anew in the spirit, he begins to respond to God’s will rather than look to his own. We begin to live by faith in God’s eternal purposes, not by our human senses and wits. Man turns about from his course of self-destruction as he repents of his corrupt

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<sup>47</sup>The spiritual rebirth of man is described in detail in Chapter 5.4. This is much too important a subject to be discussed only parenthetically here.

nature. That response to God's work in us is what many have erroneously interpreted as the exercise of man's free will in making a decision to follow Christ. However, the decision was not made from our own will; it was made in *response* to *God's will* at work in us.

We have greatly benefited from God's will, for when God looks at his chosen, He does not see the vile rags of their corrupt works — full of holes and soiled with sin — but sees the righteousness of his Son in their stead. Therefore, do not praise *your* “decision” to accept Christ, do not even praise *your* knowledge of God, rather *praise God* for his mercy and love that has brought us to our realization. To God belongs all the glory!

## Chapter 3.3 Faith vs. Works of the Law

Man who is convinced that he can work his way to a righteousness that can stand before God often looks to the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount<sup>48</sup> to act as a standard for his own works. Nevertheless, he can never live up to them as we have already demonstrated. Instead, God has provided a sure way through the cross of Christ. It is only through faith in Him that we can overcome the world, the flesh, and Satan and in doing so, live up to the high standards that God requires.

### *The Faith of Abraham*

As we begin a comparison of faith verses works, we must first look at the Old Testament example regarding Abraham, a man that was justified by faith long before the Law was given. It is recorded that Abraham believed God, and his belief was counted to him for righteousness (Ro.4:3). We plainly see that Abraham did not choose God, but that God had called him out (Ge.12:1) and promised him that he would be a father of many nations (Ge.17:5). All that Abraham received of God was by promise (Ga.3:18), for Abraham was not righteous of his own deeds that he could earn or deserve anything. Rather, we find that Abraham merely believed God, and his belief was considered in the place of righteousness that he neither had nor could produce (Ro.4:5).

Where did Abraham's firm belief come from? If Abraham believed because he was already upright in God's eyes, then why is it written that his belief was counted for righteousness? We find therefore, that the power to believe was also given to Abraham in the form of faith. Based on that faith, salvation was given to Abraham unconditionally — founded upon a promise of redemption that would not be completely fulfilled until the coming of Christ (Ga.3:16). All of us who believe and are justified by faith today are the children of

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<sup>48</sup> The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' powerful reiteration of the Decalogue. The implications of this discourse are fully discussed in Chapter 9.1 of Book II of this work.

Abraham. That is, we are the offspring of the same faith that Abraham received (Ga.3:7).

It is very clear that Abraham was not justified by observing the Law,<sup>49</sup> for the Law of Moses would not come for more than four-hundred and thirty years after the time of Abraham (Ga.3:17; cf. Ex.12:40,41). We also see that Abraham was not justified by the rite of circumcision, because he believed God before that ritual was established (Ro.4:10,11). Therefore, without anything on Abraham's part to recommend him to God, God not only gave him faith that he might believe, but justified him for that belief. Anything that God chooses to call clean is clean indeed (Ac.10:15)! Therefore, there is precedence for our salvation through "faith alone" by the grace of God apart from works in the father of many nations, Abraham.

### ***For What Purpose Was the Law Given?***

Since salvation is all of God, it then follows that no works of our own are effective in bringing forth or facilitating our salvation. Even the faith by which we lay hold of our salvation is given by God to us and is not of our own efforts, strength, or perception (Ep.2:8). Then, we must ask, since the works of man are as "filthy rags" (Is.64:6) before God, for what purpose was the Law of Moses given to man to begin with. The Law required works of man that, as we have already seen, fallen man was unable to deliver. If only God can save man by his grace, and if God cannot accept any of man's imperfect works, "wherefore then serveth the Law" (Ga.3:19)?

### **The Law as a Control on Man's Sinful Nature**

We have seen that the Jews, which God led from Egypt through Moses, were a difficult and stubborn people (Ex.32:9). In spite of the many miracles by which God brought them out of Egypt, they still turned to other gods (Ex.32:1), and they did not always seek God but often turned to their own ways and the pagan ways of the nations

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<sup>49</sup>The Law here means not only the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, but also worship in the Temple and the entire ceremonial law that centered on the Temple.

around them. God chose to instruct Israel, not by the simple gift of faith which He had given to Abraham, but by the knowledge of his requirements for man in order to build the religious framework for the coming Messiah. It cannot be said that God, in giving the Ten Commandments through Moses, expected the Israelites to be made righteous by them. God knew their fallen nature, their pride, their boasting, their tendency toward worshiping idols, and their stubbornness. In fact, Paul said that it was actually because of the transgressions of that people that the Ten Commandments were given (Ga.3:19). Let us, then, further explore God's purpose in giving the Ten Commandments to Israel.

We can surely see that some tangible restraints were required on that chosen people to prevent them from engaging in rampant sin. For, sin was in the world long before the Law was given (Ro.5:13), but the Law made sin exceedingly obvious to man (Ro.7:13). From man's fallen nature came sin, and from sin came death (Ja.1:15). Death was in the world before the giving of the Law, but the reasons for death were clearly pointed out by the Law (Ro.7:8). Therefore, one purpose for the Law was to control the transgressions of the Israelites. Righteousness did not come by the Law and indeed could not have come by the Law, though the Law served to bridle man's sinful nature.<sup>50</sup> For, by the Law sin became exceedingly sinful. Man not only sinned, but also was then fully knowledgeable of the exact nature of that sin by the written word of the Law (Ro.3:20).

### **The Law Should Cause Man to Seek God's Mercy**

The second purpose for the Law springs from the first. By clearly seeing the requirements of the Law and by coming to the realization that each man and woman did not have the power to obey them fully, man was humbled into submission to God (Ga.3:23,24). Could man then ask for justice from God? No, God's own Law spoke

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<sup>50</sup>Notice that while the Law served to bridle or control man's sinful nature it did not change his nature. Man was still a sinner. Though the Law acted as a restraint upon him, man still repeatedly broke God's Law both in thought and in deed.

against them proving the validity of God's judgment that man was guilty and deserving death (Ge.2:17). What then could man do, but plead to God for mercy, since we are not capable of fulfilling the Law from our fallen nature? Therefore, man's pride and boasting was silenced by the Law (Ro.3:27); his need for God's mercy was fully seen. "For by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified" (Ga.2:16).

### **The Law Fulfilled by One Man**

Yet, time soon became full for the advent of the Messiah, since no man could ever be declared perfect by the standards that God established. *Except for one man!* That is the third purpose of the Law. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law (Mt.5:17), met all of the requirements of the Law, and walked perfectly before the Father (He.5:9). We surely see that the Law was also given for that purpose to the Jews: that Jesus, born a Jew, born under Jewish custom, tradition, and the Law of Moses, could fulfill all righteousness where man before could not.

The Law was instrumental in confirming Jesus as the unblemished Lamb of God. That is no small point, for Jesus was a man (as well as God) and was required to fulfill all of God's requirements *even as a man* (Da.7:13; Mt.8:20; 9:6; 10:23 etc.). The sacrifice must be fully man (Jn 11:50), for we may well ask, "how can God offer sacrifice to Himself of Himself to redeem sinful man?"

### **The Law Demonstrates Love**

As we take a closer look at the Ten Commandments (Ex.20:1–17), we notice that half of them pertain to God and half to man. All of the Ten Commandments can be summed up by love to God and to our fellow man (Ro.13:10). Love knows no boundaries or laws; it extends from the heart, not from the legalistic mind. Moreover, that love can only be brought about by the Holy Spirit within us (Ga.5:22,23). That is the same Spirit who dwelled first in Jesus (Mt.3:16,17) where perfect love for God was manifested in his perfect obedience to the Father and where perfect love for man was manifested in his death for us on the cross (Jn.15:9,10). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn.15:13).

Therefore, we find that the redeemed are brought into compliance with the Law of God, not by any outward works of the Moral Law, but by the perfect Law of Christ that the Spirit of God manifests in our hearts. We may even say, rightly, that Jesus put the Law into effect (Ro.3:31) since the condemnation of the Law drives us to the throne of grace, such that the Law is now effective in us through Christ who fulfilled the Law in every respect. Jesus did not just fulfill the Law outwardly in ritual or ceremony, but inwardly. The perfect man, our Lord, our God, and our savior: Jesus Christ!

### *Superiority of Grace over Law*

We see if we closely examine the book of Leviticus how God also instituted certain rites or rituals to go along with the Moral Law. Those were intended to point out the means by which man could be justified, not by the works of the Law, but by the grace of God. The Jews did not always fully appreciate the meaning of those rituals and they soon became legalistic mechanical ceremonies with only occasional instances of real meaning.<sup>51</sup> The Ten Commandments also became idolized and legalized by the Jews into external ritual. That is to say that they observed the Law outwardly, but not inwardly. Due to their corrupted spirit, they could not perform the requirements of the Law; therefore, they chose to perform them outwardly in the flesh ceremonially. By so doing, they saw no need to call upon God's mercy. That situation prevailed at the time that Jesus came to the earth. The Scribes and Pharisees were highly legalistic about such things as tithes and offerings (Mt.23:23) and the outward observance of the Sabbath (Mt.12:2), but inwardly where God looks, there was no true fulfilling of the Law. As Jesus said, they were but hypocrites (Mt.15:7,8).

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<sup>51</sup>The first seven chapters of Leviticus are a perfect picture of the person and work of Christ. The offerings were intended to instruct Israel regarding the coming Messiah.

**Grace Excludes Legalism**

Why then should we seek to keep the Mosaic Law if it was given only to point out our transgressions? If we have the Spirit of Christ, we are no longer under law that we may seek to justify ourselves before God, but under grace as the requirements of the Law are fulfilled in us by the Law of Christ. As it is written, his laws will be put into their minds and written in their hearts (2Co.3:3; He.8:10). “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Ro.13:10). No wonder Paul gave such importance to love as the only enduring gift of the Spirit — “a more excellent way” (1Co.12:31; 13:1; 13:13)!

We who are in Christ are no longer under Law but under grace; however, if you are not under grace then you remain under the Law. That is true whether the Law is acknowledged or not. Nonetheless, we cannot serve two masters, but must choose one of them. If righteousness can be attained by works of the Law then Christ died for nothing (Ga.2:21), because it would not have been necessary that He should have come or that He should have died for us. May God forbid that we should even think of Jesus’ death as meaningless! Therefore, we must not seek to obtain our own righteousness by attempting to keep the Ten Commandments through ritual works. In so doing, we would spurn the gift of God (He.10:29), throw the cross back in his face, and attempt to do it on our own. There is only one door: Jesus Christ, the way, the Truth, and the life (Jn.14:6)! Salvation can be obtained only by the grace of God, not by his Law.

**Free of the Law of Sin and Death**

Therefore we are set free from the “law of sin and death” that rules within us (Ro. 8:2;7:5). No longer can God’s Law condemn us (Ro.6:14). If righteousness (and salvation) could have come by a law, surely it would have come by the Ten Commandments: for they were given by God (Ga.3:21), “...But, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” not by the Law (Jn.1:17). Although we are now free from the condemnation of the Law, we are not free from the love of Christ that constrains us (2Co.5:14,15). He has paid the price for us, and now we

are His. Therefore, we should freely deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Him (Mt.16:24). His yoke of grace is easy, while the way of the lawbreaker is extremely hard. The burden He places on us is light, while law keeping can only bring forth a heavy load of guilt because of our continued failure to keep the Law perfectly (Mt.11:29,30).

### **What the Law Says to Those under Grace**

However, we must also explore what justification by faith requires of us and excludes from us. Many who profess belief in Christ say that Jesus set an example for us in his actions. That is to say, that since Jesus was baptized by John, we should be baptized; since Jesus lived a perfect life, we should also be perfect; since Jesus fulfilled the law (the Ten Commandments), we also should fulfill the law. All of those statements are false in the context in which they are generally presented. While it is true that Jesus did set an example for us as the perfect man, it does not follow that man can make himself perfect by merely following his example. We cannot be saved by his life, but by his death and resurrection — not through our emulation of his life, but by our acceptance of his sacrificial death that atones for our sins.

Let us now consider the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments of God; and in particular, let us determine the relationship between the Law and those who have been justified by faith. Do the Ten Commandments have anything to say to us today, we who are saved by grace? Yes, provided we approach them in the light of the Holy Spirit. Grace has wiped away the penalty for their violation in the cross of Christ so that they no longer condemn us. Rather, the Law now instructs us in how we can live lives in accordance with the salvation that we already have. As we continue to learn from their teaching, we find that following them is highly valuable to us as a way of life. Not only is a life of obedience pleasing to God, it is also pleasing to us as well as is befitting the sons of God. That should not be surprising since the Creator of man surely also knows what benefits his own creation.

**Our Reflection in the Commandments**

In the Ten Commandments, we perceive not only how we should be (and are not), but also how Christ is. We no longer tick off each commandment every day in a hopeless attempt to accomplish them by our works, but we can look to them for enlightenment into our own nature. Rather than a source of light, they are a mirror in which, by the light of the Holy Spirit, we are able to see our miserable condition and our hopeless state. In so observing, the wonder of God's grace in saving us without any merit on our part is magnified until we praise God with renewed faith. That is important because even among the elect there is a tendency to fall back on ritualistic works to ingratiate us to God.

Therefore, we must seek to avoid legalism on the one hand and antinomianism (moral lawlessness) on the other. To fall into legalism is to reject the redeeming grace of God, but to fall into antinomianism is to deny that God's moral Law is good and right (Ro.7:12). Because we have been freed from the bondage of our sin, we are not now free to sin with impunity (Ro.6:1,2). Christ did not die to save us *in* our sins, but *from* our sins. Therefore, the love of Christ toward us constrains us in all that we do (2Co.5:14,15). That is not legalism; for we do not seek eternal life by our efforts through works since we already have eternal life in Christ by means of grace alone. Nevertheless, we are constrained to labor in love to serve Him who first loved us, because we inwardly desire in all things to please Him. From beginning to end, our salvation is all of grace through faith alone. It begins with faith, continues in faith, and ends with faith. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Ro.1:17).

## Chapter 3.4 God Chooses His Own

As we have seen, man cannot be saved by his own works in any way, but is saved totally by the grace of God. Man with his fallen nature is completely dependent upon God's grace, as it has been fully given through the sacrifice of his own Son on the cross. We cannot *do* anything to attain our own salvation or even to maintain it once it has been received. Furthermore, if we cannot save our *own* souls, how can we expect to "win" the souls of others? We have shown that the repentance (turning) is brought about in us by God Himself, because no man comes to Christ unless the Father first draws him (Jn.6:44). Therefore, rather than man choosing God, God chooses men according to his own divine pleasure. God then gives the elect to his Son for an inheritance (Jn.17:6; Ep.1:18).

### *Justification*

"Moreover, whom [God] did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified..."(Ro.8:30). How or in what way are the elect just and how have they become justified? Justification, simply stated, is a legal declaration of being right, or righteous, before God and his law. Since man cannot by his own efforts or state of being claim innocence before God's law that condemns his every thought and action, God's justification of his elect must be made on another basis. That basis is the imputed righteousness of Christ to our account that is appropriated through the means of faith by which we are declared not guilty. If faith were something that we could create in ourselves, it would still be works, but as we have read in Ephesians 2, verse 9 even faith is a gift of God. Only those whom God has elected will truly live by faith (Hab.2:4; Ro.1:17; Ga.3:11). Therefore, as we read in Romans 8:30, justification is a work of God.

### *God's Righteous Election*

Some things that the Bible teaches are hard for us to comprehend, and even harder for us to accept. One such thing is the doctrine of divine election that is the obvious conclusion from an

understanding that salvation is all of God's doing on man's behalf. Immediately the cries go up that God would be wrong in bestowing a gift of saving faith on some while others receive none. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" (Ro.9:19). In other words, some ask how God could find any fault with those who continue on the path to destruction only because God has not willed that they be saved. That is, they appear to be doing only that which God has forced them to do. However that is not the case since they are actually doing that which their fallen nature dictates for them to do, and God has merely chosen not to intervene.

### **Man's Sense of Fairness Offended**

The usual argument against the doctrine of Divine Election is that God is being unfair. If He were fair, he would make salvation equally available to everyone. If God is unfair, He must therefore be unrighteous. Since God is not unrighteous, the doctrine of Divine election must be wrong. However, inasmuch as the doctrine of election is found throughout Scripture and in particular, in the Pauline epistles, it either becomes necessary to ignore those passages or merely say that they are too "spiritual" to be accurately understood.

We must understand that fairness is a concept that is valid only among equals, not between the Creator and that which He has created. Paul demonstrated that fact through an allegory of a potter and his vessels.

**"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory..."**  
(Ro.9:21-23).

Does fallen man's idea of what is "fair" supersede God's knowledge and wisdom? As Paul said, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" (Ro.9:14). For God said to Moses "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on

whom I will have compassion” (Ro.9:15). God said that as a simple statement of fact. We cannot be so bold as to dictate to God how He will exercise grace since none of us deserves it. “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Ro.9:18). God in the beginning created man who fell from God’s glory through sin, and without any merit on the part of men, God has chosen some to receive his salvation (Ro.9:22,23).

### **The Fallacies in Man’s Reasoning**

The first fallacy of man’s reasoning is found in fallen man trying to tell God what is right and what is wrong. That would place the unrighteousness of man above the righteousness of God. Would we then set ourselves up to judge God as to his intended purpose for his own creation? “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” (Ro.9:20). Didn’t all men fall under the headship of Adam and deserve death and destruction (Ge.2:17)? God therefore exercises mercy in the extreme when He chooses to save *any* man from certain destruction that that man himself has of his own will chosen as his destiny. We must understand that man has no inherent “right” or even desire to be saved; he is solely dependent upon God’s mercy.

The second fallacy is found in believing that God wrote words to men in the Bible that He expects them to ignore or fail to understand (2Ti.3:16).<sup>52</sup> The serious Bible student surely knows that God says what He means and means what He says. If we don’t understand major portions of Scripture, there must be something wrong with our interpretation of its teaching, not ambiguity or contradiction in God’s Word. We cannot select only those things in the Bible that are to our liking, but must accept all of it or reject it all.

### ***Universal Invitation***

The widespread message of the Gospel is a universal invitation for every man and woman to repent and accept Christ. There is no exclusion as is evident by the word “whosoever” that appears in many

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<sup>52</sup> This denies the perspicuity of Scripture through which God’s Word is made understandable to all redeemed men regardless of their intellect.

of Jesus' statements, "**Whosoever** therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Mt.10:32; emphasis added). "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn.3:16; emphasis added). In the book of Revelation Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if **any man** hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Re.3:20; emphasis added). The Apostle Paul also said "**whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Ro.10:13; emphasis added). As Jesus taught, he often used the phrase, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Mt.11:15).

### Desirative Will of God

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not **willing** that **any** should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance" (2Pe.3:9; emphasis added). The word "willing" as is found in this verse is by context the "desirative will" of God inasmuch as God has not declared anywhere in Scripture that all men will be saved. Quite the contrary, Jesus Himself declared that many would be cast into Hell: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Re.21:8). As John Calvin observed, "So wonderful is his love towards mankind, that he would have them all to be saved, and is of his own self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost" (*Epistles of Peter*, page 419). For that reason, the Gospel message is universal and is intended for all who will hear it.

### Decretive Will of God

Most certainly, God takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" as is evidenced in Ez.33:11. Nevertheless, God pronounced by his "decretive will" (i.e. by decree) that the soul than sins shall surely die (Ge.2:17; Ex.18:20) even before Adam had sinned. As the Apostle Paul pointed out, God is presently being patient with the sinful

depravity of lost mankind so that his glory may be recognized by contrast in his redemption of the elect: “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory...” (Ro.9:22,23).

### ***Error of Universal Salvation***

Not all will confess Christ, believe in Him, or hear his voice. God’s universal invitation therefore does *not* result in universal salvation since not all will repent and come to believe, as present experience and centuries of history attest. Moreover, universal salvation by definition would not require any response on the part of man to repent. All men would be automatically saved, as a consequence of Jesus’ atoning death, along with their sinful nature, and God’s justice would be thwarted. What kind of salvation is this? Heaven would be spoiled with the same evil that besets the earth today. God would have abdicated and Satan would have won; evil would have parity with good.

That radical view is not tenable from either a Scriptural or a rational viewpoint. Scripture makes it very clear that not all men will be saved when it warns very clearly about eternity in Hell for the reprobate (Ps.9:17; Mt.7:13; 13:49,50; 22:13; etc.). In view of what we observe in the world about us today, universal condemnation would be a more rational position to take since the spiritually blind fill this world.

### ***God’s General and Effective Call***

Many will be called, but few chosen (Mt.20:16). That fact results in a misunderstanding by many regarding the nature of man’s salvation. Because many, for a time, appear to accept Christ and then turn away, some assume that it is possible for believers to lose their salvation. Many are *attracted* (called) to Christ for various reasons, but they are not *chosen* of God to eternal salvation (Judas Iscariot is the classic Scriptural example). The widespread invitation to accept Jesus as savior is a *general call* to all who have the “ears to hear” (Mt.13:9).

Many hear and are attracted by the call, perhaps even work in God's service for a time and then later, as their interest wanes or the work becomes burdensome to them, they depart from the faith. Those were called (in the general sense), but were not chosen. Equally significant is the fact that they did not choose to stay. It was contrary to their fallen nature to stay. Only when God specifically calls an individual to Himself for redemption does the *general call* become the *effective call* that converts them and unites them to Christ.

Therefore, we must conclude that each individual is specifically chosen by God, yes, even *created* by God for salvation or for instruments of his wrath according to his divine will (Ro.9:21–23). How obstinate we would be to say that we received salvation by means of our own will, for if we say we received it by our own will, we say we reached out for it in our own merit and we have seized it by our own strength. Then we could not say that salvation is by the grace of God, but by the choice of men through their own works (Tit.3:5).

### *Security of the Believer*

Since God has foreknown and ordained those that He will to receive salvation (Ro.8:29), it is not reasonable to assume that God “saves” men for a short time only to let them go. God's salvation is not temporary, nor is it merely received for the term of our mortal lives; it is eternal. As Paul said, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1Co.15:19). We would be miserable because we would find ourselves in a never-ending struggle in service to Christ without any hope of attaining eternal life. The only men that are truly saved are those that continue on in faith until the very end having within them the hope of the eternal consequences of that faith (Ep.6:18; 1Pe.1:13; Jn.15:9).

If we could lose our salvation and repent again, could we then be saved again, only to be lost again, and saved again only to be lost again repeatedly? Shamefully, that would require Christ to be crucified afresh each time we repented. The author of Hebrews had something to say about Jewish Christians that had accepted Christ, repeatedly fell away in an attempt to maintain salvation through their own works in Judaism, only to turn and profess Christ again over and over: “For it is

*impossible* for those who were *once enlightened*, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made *partakers of the Holy Ghost*, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall *fall away*, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they *crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh*, and put him to an open shame” (He.6:4–6 ; emphasis added).

However, since **God** has chosen a particular man to receive salvation, his salvation is absolute and secure. For Jesus said of those whom the Father gave Him that, no one could pluck them out of his hand (Jn.10:28,29). Once we are truly saved, we are saved apart from this world for all eternity. Otherwise, eternal salvation would be neither salvation nor eternal!

### *Insecurity of the Pseudo-believer*

If we could believe, contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture, that man of his own fallen nature is fully capable of choosing to follow Christ, and later chooses to reject Him, we have the basis for the false teaching that a believer may lose his salvation. Many are seen to profess belief in God and in his Son for a time, but later fall away.

That kind of teaching gives a false impression of what is meant by salvation in suggesting that it only means that men choose to serve God for a short time in this life while they attempt to clean up their worldly lives for a while through personal works or church attendance. If that were all there was to the Christian faith, no man would ever truly gain salvation to begin with, let alone fall away from it, since it is an attempt to gain salvation through faulty personal works.

Those who are said to have lost their salvation were only attracted for worldly reasons for a time at an intellectual or emotional level, or they were merely going through the motions of religious form. If they had been truly saved, they would have continued in the security of the fold of God (1Jn.2:19). The service rendered by the unsaved may appear to be good in the eyes of man, and God may even be able to turn some of their efforts so that his will is served by them. However, the "good" done by the unsaved most often only hinders the Gospel, frustrates God's grace, and puts all the emphasis upon the works of men rather than upon the saving power of God.

The pseudo-believer<sup>53</sup> may attend church services, aid the poor, and even serve on church boards. Those people have an intellectual form of affirmation, but they have not received the gift of the Spirit of Christ.<sup>54</sup> Those profess Christ, but for the wrong reasons. They often attempt to follow the example of Jesus' teachings without any personal knowledge of God's grace. There is no depth to their belief; it is superficial. These are those that Jesus described in a parable in which the Word springs forth for a short while then withers and dies (Mt.13:5,6). Because the water of life is not in them, they are as dry as a desert to God's Word.

Due to man's intrinsic religious bent, the churches in this nation attract multitudes who are not saved. Too many equate church-going, church membership, or religious piousness with salvation. Many equate Christianity with a mere religious system. An earlier Gallop poll of the United States populace revealed that 84 percent "firmly believed in Jesus Christ" and 94 percent believed in "God." Considering the present religious and moral corruption prevalent in this land, it is apparent that this "firm belief in Christ" did not mean that all were saved. Some are merely attracted to Jesus' teaching, to religious ceremonialism, church socializing and activities. The Church has grown from its humble beginnings into a great tree in which every imaginable kind of "bird" roosts today (Mt.13:31,32).

### **Salvation Determined by Time of Death?**

Those who falsely assume that man receives salvation and then loses it may yet agree that God numbers a man's years. For surely they must agree that the time of a man's death is ultimately determined by God, and not by man (1Sa 2:6). If, as some suggest, salvation is lost after being obtained for a time, we observe that God still chooses those

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<sup>53</sup> The term pseudo-believer means that the person is only playing a part and is not genuine much in the way the Jesus used the word "hypocrite" in Mt. 7:5 and other places to describe the false believer of his day.

<sup>54</sup> The significant difference between those that are merely called to service for a time and those that are chosen is the fact that the chosen have the Holy Spirit living in them. This takes place as the "new birth" which is discussed in Chapter 5.4 (see Jn.3:1-8).

who are saved. He merely takes them from this life when they yet believe, or later when they no longer believe. If that sounds like foolishness, it should! God does not need to take men from this life while they are in a state of belief or unbelief to determine whether they will be saved or unsaved. He has already determined that by his own sovereign will before each of us was born.

We must not subscribe to the ridiculous notion of eternal salvation by time of death, but we should understand that God, through any manner of consideration, maintains his will for his own creation. Obviously, if God takes us from this life when and how He wills, He also has preordained those whom He has chosen as his own. Having seen the sovereignty of God, and the wonders and works that have been accomplished by his hand in purchasing our salvation, how can we rebel at the thought that He chose us, rather than that we have chosen Him? We rather should accept that knowledge with great joy!

### *The Knowledge of Election Brings Assurance*

Without the knowledge that it is God who has chosen us rather than we choosing Him, we could never have full assurance of our relationship with Him for we would constantly fear that we will let go of our faith. If we of our own corrupt will have chosen God, we may again reconsider the immediate cost and choose the world! However, since God has chosen us, we are secure, because God will not change his mind and let us go. Our faith is strengthened and our choice is made firm by the will of God Himself.

We are privileged to *know* that we are chosen of God. As Paul put it to the Thessalonians, “*Knowing*, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much *assurance*...” (1Th.1:4,5, emphasis added). It was God working through the Holy Spirit within them that brought that assurance. They did not somehow earn the Holy Spirit’s presence because they believed; they believed because the Holy Spirit worked in them. It is only in the firm knowledge that we have been elected of God that we can have the true assurance of salvation and eternal life. With Job of old we can each “...*know* that *my* redeemer liveth”(Jb.19:25, emphasis added). We can agree with

Paul that “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that *we are* the children of God” (Ro.8:16, emphasis added).

Therefore, we do not have a “hope so” salvation, but a “know so” salvation. With Isaiah we can ourselves proclaim, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation” (Is.12:2). Salvation is not some decision that we have made, nor is it some ritual that we have performed, it is ***God Himself*** who is our salvation. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life...” (1Jn.5:12,13, emphasis added).

Moreover, such knowledge does not come to us as a result of some intellectual prowess that led to a decision that we have made, but the decision comes from an inner understanding that God, Himself, has given us as He reached down to save us. Our knowledge is further strengthened as we read and study God’s Word and the Holy Spirit applies it to our lives. “And we *know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1Jn.5:20, emphasis added).

### **God Is For Us!**

The unbeliever fears to get too close to God because he believes that God is against him. That is understandable since the unbeliever is still under condemnation because of his unredeemed sinful nature. However, when God reaches down and arrests the unbeliever, regenerates him, and places him in Christ, a new relationship exists between God and that man. God has taken on the responsibility for that man’s salvation and his rehabilitation. God justifies the sinner to Himself by placing him under the blood of Christ.

Having done so, how could God then oppose that man in any way? “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things” (Ro.8:32)? God does not rejoice when one of his own stumbles nor does God

place obstacles to our faith before us that we may turn away from Him.<sup>55</sup> God is not against us, but for us!

**“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us” (Ro.8:28–31)?**

Here we read that God “foreknew” those who would come to Christ. Not that He just waited to see which choice certain men would make, but He *knew* them as his own before they came to a saving decision. God predestined that they would be seen in the image of his Son, rather than a perverse image dressed in their own vile rags.

Therefore, those who God has foreknown and predestined are also called to Christ that they might enter into his rest. Moreover, those, though they have sinned and are consequently no better than other men, are declared to be just before God because of the blood of Jesus that has been shed for us. We, as sons, shall inherit all things, even eternal life, and along with Jesus, we shall know God’s presence. We are held secure in a salvation not of our works, but completely of God’s grace. Who can withdraw it? “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth” (Ro.8:33). If God has declared his own to be justified, who can point an accusing finger. Since it is Christ that makes intercession for us, who can condemn us (Ro.8:34)? Certainly not God!

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<sup>55</sup>When severe trials come into the life of a believer, Satan intends it to break us and cause us to fall. But, God uses such testing to prove the power of faith in our lives that we may trust more and more in Him and not in ourselves.

**The Power of God's Grace**

Now we can see the great power of God's grace. Since salvation has been given to us, we may freely do God's will as the Holy Spirit reveals it to us without looking over our shoulder for Satan's darts. We no longer need to proceed as one who expects Satan to ambush us and make us turn again to sin, which would cause us to lose our hold on eternal life. We no longer need fear that we may lose our faith and turn away from God. If we have the certainty of salvation, we are free from Satan's clutches.<sup>56</sup>

Why then should we work in fear as if we could lose our hold on eternal life? Who can do a good work under such bondage? "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Ro.8:15). We have been created anew in Christ to do the good works that God has set forth for us to do and are sent forth as sons to do our Father's will. Since we are now all members of the same household, the sons joyfully do their Father's will of their own choosing.

Nor, need we ever question that faith which has been so graciously given to us for though we are weak in the flesh, we are saved in that firm hope (Ro.8:24). Even our prayer life by which we maintain communication with our Father is both protected and directed by God: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Ro.8:26).

**The Firm Foundation of Faith**

We may have at one time thought that our salvation was as a piece of driftwood to which a drowning man fearfully clings. That is, we feared that our strength would give out and that we would sink below into the depths of darkness. However, as we grow in the

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<sup>56</sup>This does not mean that Satan will not attempt to divert us and to trap us, but that he no longer has us to contend with. He must now contend with the Holy Spirit that dwells within us. "because, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1Jn.4:4).

knowledge of the Gospel, we observe that the “driftwood” is a fortress of hope that encloses us, and that our feet rest on the bedrock of God’s promise. Therefore, the overwhelming waves of this life’s tribulations cannot harm us, for God is for us! It is for that reason that we can understand the confidence of Paul when he said, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ro.8:38,39). Such is the firm foundation of our faith!

### *Reexamining Our Decision*

Therefore, look back on that time when you decided to follow Jesus. Why did you choose to follow Him? Did you swell up with the pride of a choice well made? Did you expect some earthly gain: wealth, comfort, self-importance, physical health, power, or perhaps just peaceful living? If your decision was made based on those things, you have chosen “religion” not Jesus.<sup>57</sup> You have chosen fantasy not Truth. You have chosen works not grace! Those are the very decisions that can be made from a fallen will that remains in bondage to Satan. You have not chosen Jesus over the world, but instead have chosen to wrest salvation from God by the means of this world. That cannot be.

However, if when you look back on that time when you decided to follow Jesus and perceive that you were drawn to Him by a power beyond your own strength, you have some understanding of the wonder of divine election. In all outward appearance, the decision to follow Jesus seems to be ours alone; yet, we were drawn to it by an inner belief that sprang to our minds. Though we believe and we have made a decision, we cannot help but look back on that decision and realize that God had destined it to be so long before we knew of it. Through that free gift of faith, man, who could not respond to God’s

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<sup>57</sup>Religion is a system of beliefs and practices. It is a philosophy of life that does not necessarily have any basis in fact. Even an atheist abides by a certain "ethical" behavior based upon his beliefs that include the denial of the existence of God.

will, being weak in the flesh, is enabled to respond. It is no longer our puny strength in which we place our trust, but in God's infinite power working on our behalf.

Therefore, beloved do not rebel against God's grace. Accept the fact that God, working through the Holy Spirit, has given us even the power to believe. Praise God for his infinite mercy and for his wondrous good will toward us — by God's grace we are saved (Ep.2:8)!

## Chapter 3.5 The Five Opposing Points

No serious study of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and the salvation of man would be complete without at least a brief formal discussion of the two opposing doctrines that even today divide believers and churches. This chapter is intended for those who wish to explore the subject of the first chapters of this section in further depth. It was John Calvin who so well expressed the doctrine of God's sovereignty and his choosing of his elect. So much so, that such doctrine today is referred to as Calvinism. John Calvin (1509–1564) was a Frenchman who put Protestant theology into a systematic form in such writings as *Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion* in which the Reformation beliefs were carefully explained.

If Luther was the heart of the Reformation Movement, surely Calvin was its organizer. Martin Luther's response to the diatribe by Desiderius Erasmus lay to rest the false doctrine of man's free will (*"The Bondage of the Will"*). Calvin echoed much of Luther's thoughts, but went beyond them in further upholding the doctrine of God's sovereign grace. Today, Calvin is more noted for what is generally considered his severe stand regarding divine election and predestination, rather than his wide-ranging efforts in organizing the many doctrines of the Protestant faith. For that reason, many have done without the knowledge that this man's efforts could impart to the hungry believer. That is not to say that the writings of Calvin are inspired and without error; yet, they are obviously guided by a personal zeal for Truth and a deep respect for God's Word.

It was Jacobus (aka: James or Jacob) Arminius (1560–1609) a Dutch professor of theology at Leiden University, the Netherlands that first gave serious opposition to the reformed doctrine of election stating that it was God's will that all men be saved, not just those that He had specifically chosen. Arminius believed that it was possible for men to have free will and yet believe and declare that God was still sovereign. While Calvin believed that man's will was corrupt and in bondage (as did Luther), Arminius believed that man enjoyed a free will with which he could either oppose or seek God. To Arminius, salvation was a matter of man's efforts in grasping what God had done

in Jesus' atoning work, rather than him receiving it without effort by God's hand as God specifically willed.

Arminianism<sup>58</sup> is sometimes referred to as "Semi-pelagianism," though a distinction should be made between the two. Pelagius, of much earlier times, believed that man could earn his salvation through his own works alone. Semi-pelagianism, simply stated, says that man is only able to contribute a "little" works to his salvation with God supplying the bulk of the effort. Nonetheless, without that "little" contribution by man, God would be rendered powerless to save anyone. This false doctrine frustrates the power of God's grace and sees God as being only semi-sovereign (however that could be).

Arminianism, on the other hand, says only that all men have the innate power to exercise their free will to *accept* what God has fully accomplished without the need of God's explicit election and intervention. It should be realized, however, that Arminianism quite easily degenerates into a form of Pelagianism in practice as greater emphasis is placed on human ability. As we can see all forms of Pelagianism as well as Arminianism completely rests on the false foundational assumption of man's innate goodness and free will.

The two opposing doctrines of Arminianism and Calvinism emerged out of the Reformation Movement with Calvinism being the basis for Presbyterianism under John Knox, and Arminianism being the basic thrust behind John Wesley's Methodism. That is not to say that other groups and denominations did not then and later of necessity align themselves with one doctrine or the other; they did. However, even today, some vacillate between the two positions fully claiming neither.

### *The Five Points of Calvinism*

Out of the complete systematic works of John Calvin, the Calvinists of Arminius' day formulated five points that were essential

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<sup>58</sup> The words "Arminian" or "Arminianism" should not be confused with the similar sounding words "Armenian" or "Armenianism" that are also spelled somewhat alike but are in no way synonymous one with the other.

to the Calvinistic position in response to specifically declared Arminian doctrines. It is interesting to note that Calvin himself did not specifically state those five points, nor does the study of those five points do justice to all of his systematic theology regarding the Sovereignty of God. Yet, those are the five specific points that the Calvinists defended, and against which the Arminians took issue. Today, those who defend man's free-will ability in coming to salvation (i.e. self-acquired faith) are referred to as Arminian in belief, while those who defend the Sovereignty of God in freely choosing his elect are referred to as Calvinists. Regardless of which position one takes, it is just as important to examine those five points today as it was four centuries ago. They cannot be ignored; we must either take issue with them or confirm them.

While it will soon be made clear that the Arminian actually opposes all of the points of Calvinism, a Calvinist may be said to embrace all or a lesser number of those points. As a result one may be referred to as a 3-point, or 4-point Calvinist. However, the five points are quite dependent upon each other such that if the first point is true, it must follow that each succeeding point is logically also true. We must either accept divine election in full or reject God's sovereign work in redeeming mankind.

Of course, any doctrine that is divorced from Scripture becomes mere human speculation. Theology is the study of God, his nature, his methods, and his purposes. Apart from Scripture, all such study is mere human philosophy. It is, therefore, important to see that John Calvin did not state more than the Apostle Paul regarding election, and carefully quoted Paul in his own writings. Even today, there are those who would be done with the Pauline epistles because they teach not only physical resurrection (which the religious liberal opposes), but also divine election (which the Arminian opposes). Therefore, let's carefully examine the five points that the Calvinists defend, and the Arminians just as avidly reject that we may more clearly understand each position.

The five points of Calvinism can be remembered by the acrostic TULIP, where each letter of this word begins a specific point as follows:

1. **T**otal Depravity of man
2. **U**nconditional Election
3. **L**imited Atonement
4. **I**rresistible grace
5. **P**erseverance of the Saints

The following chart directly compares the doctrines of Arminianism with that of Calvinism in five summary statements:

ARMINIANISM	CALVINISM
1. <b>Mans depravity is not total</b> — man has free will — there is some good in man which he can exercise to turn to God and accept Christ	1. <b>T</b> otal depravity — man is morally powerless to make any effort to save himself and does not even have the desire to seek God
2. <b>Election conditional upon faith</b> — faith as an effort of man comes before election	2. <b>U</b> nconditional election — God supplies the faith to believe to whomever He will
3. <b>Grace can be rejected</b> — God’s efforts to save can be thwarted by man’s will	3. <b>I</b> rresistible Grace — God’s efforts on man’s behalf cannot be thwarted by man
4. <b>Universal atonement</b> — salvation is intended for all persons	4. <b>L</b> imited Atonement — salvation is limited to the elect of God — those whom God has chosen
5. <b>Believer can fall from grace</b> — it is possible to lose ones salvation.	5. <b>P</b> erseverance of the Saints — the Holy Spirit seals the believer to eternal salvation

### The Total Depravity of Man

As we can clearly see, the first point, Total Depravity, immediately separates the Calvinist from the Arminian. The word “depraved” means corrupt, wicked or perverted in thought and actions.

If man is totally depraved,<sup>59</sup> he is totally corrupted and is incapable of reaching out to God; indeed, he does not even desire to be reconciled to God. If salvation were dependent upon a totally depraved man's "free will" *no one could be saved* because it would be up to man to turn to God, and man is morally incapable of it! Indeed, the will of a depraved man can be seen to desire nothing but evil so that his freedom to act upon such a will can ultimately produce nothing but evil works.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, while the depraved are free to act (make choices) from their own will, they cannot from their own will choose to do that which is truly good, nor can they seek God. Therefore, we must see that the doctrine of Total Depravity and the doctrine of Free Will are not compatible.

If the doctrine of "free will" were true, we must believe that man has been exercising his free will to seek God since the fall of Adam. However, the Apostle Paul has said, "There is *none* that understandeth, there is *none* that seeketh after God" (Ro.3:11; emphasis added). It would further follow that the capacity for attaining salvation is within man, but few, if any, have actually achieved it. However, "it is written, There is *none* righteous, no, not one" (Ro.3:10; emphasis added). As for saving faith, we would believe in Christ, then, because of a residual "good desire" that is within each man to do so. But, "they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is *none that doeth good*, no, not one" (Ro.3:12; emphasis added). The implication of "free will" is that man has a capacity for both good and evil, and given the right circumstances will not only choose, but also do that which is good. But, Paul said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that

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<sup>59</sup> The word "depraved" already implies totality. In that sense, the word "total" is for emphasis only. One cannot be partially depraved as the Arminians assert. Man is either depraved or he is not.

<sup>60</sup> When we think of evil, we most often think of sinister acts such as murder. While murderous acts cannot be excluded, the use of the word "evil" here denotes all of the self-centered thoughts that exclude the interests of our fellow men and, still more significantly, exclude the will of God.

which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Ro.7:18,19).

If this “free will” teaching was true, we may well have cause to wonder why Jesus died on the cross to save man, since man had it within his own power to reach out to God by merely exercising a moral ability to do good rather than evil. Those that are not helplessly depraved could help themselves, or at the most, they may need some minor assistance. We can surely see that the death of the Son of God on the cross was not an act of mere assistance to help man help himself, but an extreme effort by God to save an utterly depraved mankind (Ro.7:24,25). To believe otherwise, is to place the major emphasis on the life of Christ in setting an example for us. In so doing, we could not find any value in his atoning death (Ro.3:25,26). Jesus’ living example would have been sufficient to spur man onward to achieve righteousness by exercising the “good” that was in him all along through his “free will.” If that were true, then Christ is dead in vain! Far better that He should have lived forever on the earth to be a living example to every generation that all may “follow Him” in that example. What kind of “gospel” is this? A perverted, but familiar, gospel often expounded by the religious liberal.

The doctrine of Total Depravity does not mean that man deliberately seeks to do evil, but it does mean that because of his fallen nature, he is *morally incapable* of doing only that which is good, and he therefore cannot find a way to salvation by his own righteous efforts. We all know “good men” (after our own human judgment) that have nonetheless rejected Christ. How can that possibly be? Surely such men have it within them to do good and the “inherent goodness” to exercise their “free will” to turn to Christ and be saved? Nevertheless, that does not happen; instead, they are left to depend upon their own efforts to win salvation apart from Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. All of their best efforts are tainted with evil because they do not seek the righteousness of Christ as a gift from God (Ro.9:31,32). Many of those men would seem to be far better than most of us, both in intellect and compassion. Why don’t they exercise their “free will” to believe and to be saved? The answer is clear: It is because they

make choices from a will that is not free at all, but from a will that is in bondage to Satan through Adam's fall.

Therefore, though we may judge some men good and honorable, they are as much depraved as the drunkard and the murderer because none have the moral ability within themselves to obtain righteousness and so come to salvation.<sup>61</sup> All men must be called or drawn by God through the working of the Holy Spirit so that they may believe that which their so-called "free will" (actually, their "bound will") prevented them from believing. By the grace of God, many men are called out. Furthermore, God has not looked upon the elect to pick the best of men from the multitudes, but often those we would judge as the worse. We must recall, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Ro.3:23)! All are equally depraved and guilty before God. God has chosen to save those whom He wills by his sovereign choice alone.

Therefore, the Arminian must reject the doctrine of Total Depravity if only because he places his trust in the ability of that which he perceives as man's free will. Though many who embrace the Arminian doctrine would deny it, they still believe that man can save himself by works. Perhaps, the unsaved may be persuaded to "accept Christ" by the diligent efforts of other men. In fact, the doctrine of "free will" insists that man can make a choice to do good and to grasp salvation by his own efforts. The real issue, then, is not depravity versus free will, but grace versus works (Ro.3:20–22)! Any perversion of the Gospel always results in an attack against this central doctrine of God's grace. If man can exercise a "free will" to grasp salvation for himself (even if we only refer to the act of belief), then salvation is of works. On the other hand, if man is so depraved and corrupt that he is helpless to act (even to believe), then his salvation is totally dependent upon the grace of God alone (Ro.3:24).

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that we can not mix works and grace in the matter of salvation when he said, "if by grace, then is it no

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<sup>61</sup>We are not suggesting that we can equate murder on a par with less violent acts. But, all such acts, regardless of degree, are self-centered violations of God's Law that spring from a similarly depraved human nature.

more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Ro.11:6). The total depravity of man is a fact that no amount of wishful thinking can change no matter how much more palatable that would be to the human ego. We tend to reject total depravity because we cannot bear to think that we have fallen so low that only God can save us. Yet, that is painfully *true* (Ro.3:12–18)! In fact, that is the full thrust of the Gospel message. The “good news” is not that we should work harder to achieve righteousness or even to attain saving faith. The Gospel does not say that God has provided a means by which we can save ourselves by striving to follow Christ’s example. Rather, the Gospel, the “Good News,” is that God has done it *all* for us in Christ Jesus and has *freely given* us everything we need to be saved. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ep.2:8,9).

### Unconditional Election

If only God can save man, why does He choose one man over the other? We know that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Perhaps one could think that one man is a little more deserving than is another of God’s grace. Yet, how can that be so if all men are so tainted by evil that *all* fall short of the glory of God (Ro.3:23)? Perhaps we may reason that God merely knows in advance which one will believe and chooses that one because of his foreknowledge. Perhaps God chooses one over the other because He has foreknowledge of the service that a certain man will render over the other. Neither can be true, because such thinking puts some intrinsic worth in a man that forces God to choose him over another. It ignores man’s depravity and God’s sovereignty. It is important to understand that *no man deserves to be saved*; salvation is received only by the grace of God who chooses to extend mercy.

The Arminian must either reject the sovereignty of God with regard to the saved and give man the glory, or he must embrace some form of conditional election. That is, that a certain man is chosen because of God’s foreknowledge of that person’s future faith or good works. God’s elect, in effect then, would choose themselves through

their intrinsic worth or by human effort. That kind of thinking goes against the grain of Scripture for, again, it attempts to pit works against grace.

We are often amazed that God has chosen certain men or women whom we would never have thought would be “able” to accept salvation in Christ. Those are often men and women who, in our eyes, have lived terrible lives and have committed great sins. Conversely, we are often amazed that God has not chosen certain of those who through their “good works” have tried diligently to obtain their own righteousness. Nevertheless, neither is “able” and neither has lived up to God’s standards; both require redemption by an act of God.

The doctrine of Unconditional Election merely states that God has chosen some men to be saved from the multitudes of a corrupt and depraved humanity because it was his pleasure to do so. It is not based upon some positive condition that He has found in individual men because no man has any redeemable qualities. We must leave the choice fully in God’s hands. He has not revealed to us his reason for choosing one and not another, and we must trust God that his choices are right and good. Is that so hard to do? After all, *all* humanity clearly deserves the judgment of God that can only bring eternal damnation to all. If God would save many men from that horror by pulling them out of the fire with out specifying any condition for his doing so, is God doing something evil? In addition, if we still insist that salvation is conditional, we must ask what condition it is that any man could meet. We have already seen that man cannot meet any of God’s requirements.<sup>62</sup> God’s election of the saved must be unconditional because none of us can meet any of God’s conditions for self-righteousness. Salvation is all of grace and no man has anything of his own that he can add to it.

While some may readily accept the doctrine of election, we must ask ourselves if it is also true that God chooses some to eternal ruin. This is often referred to as the “doctrine of reprobation.” It is

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<sup>62</sup>We need but look at the Law of Moses and the nation of Israel to see the inability of man to measure up to God's requirements even with force under an ideal theocracy.

obvious that if God does not elect a certain person to receive salvation, He by default condemns them to future judgment and wrath. How can God condemn those that are only acting out their evil desires in accordance to God's own choice in not saving them from their sinful state they ask (Ro.9:19)? That is a strange question, but the primary objection most have to the doctrine of divine election is again that God is not being fair. The Apostle Paul addressed that issue in Romans Chapter 9. Who are we to argue with God's sovereign choice, since God is God and we are but his creation to do with as He wills? He is the potter and we are the clay to be formed into any kind of vessel that He chooses (Ro.9:21).

While God does relegate, by default, many to eternal damnation, He does that by not interfering with them in any way. God exercises no express action in that regard, but merely gives them over to their own natural desires to do as they wish without intervention (Ro.1:28). Therefore, their future punishment is just, because it stems from their own thoughts and actions. God has no obligation to save his enemies, which we all were when first born in our natural state. God has chosen to save some of us out of his great love, mercy, and grace, not out of any obligation to us. We have no viable defense for our rebellion, which began with Adam and continues in the human race even today. God always has the final word. As Paul said, "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Ro.3:4). That leads us into the next point of the acrostic.

### **Limited Atonement**

Perhaps this one point has caused the most conflict between believers. Many, who consider themselves Four-point Calvinists draw back from accepting the fact that the atonement of Christ is not made available by God to everyone. For that reason, we will explore this one point in a little more depth. However, we should see that if we accept Total Depravity and Unconditional Election, this point must follow logically from them.

We surely see that not all men will be saved. To believe otherwise is to believe in "universal salvation," whereby all men will be saved regardless of their relationship with God and his Christ. God

must then accept the arrogant sinner in his unregenerate state into Heaven. If that were true, how could God ever judge the world (Ro.3:6)? How would Heaven be Heaven? We read that Jesus died for the sins of the *world* (1Jn.2:2). That is quite true inasmuch as if there had been even one fully righteous man in this world, Jesus would not have needed to come and die. Therefore, his atonement was *necessary* for the salvation of the entire world. Certainly, if Jesus died for the sins of the entire world, his atoning work must be not only necessary, but also *sufficient* for all of mankind. In the words of Nicolaus von Zinzendorf:

**“Lord, I believe were sinners more than sands upon the ocean shore, thou hast for all a ransom paid, for all a full atonement made.”**

There is, we must admit, a general sense in which *all* men do enjoy the benefits of Jesus’ atoning death. Even the arrogant sinner and the atheist have benefited, although the benefit is limited for the time the unsaved spends in this earthly life. This is often referred to as the “common grace” of God. For, if Jesus had not come forth to save mankind from its own corruption, even when Adam first sinned, the world would have been destroyed and all of mankind with it. Surely, the judgment and holiness of God would have demanded it! Only God’s promise of redemption through the Messiah prevented it (Ge.3:15). The very fact that men walk, breathe, and enjoy God’s providence today is due to the work of Christ on the cross. God has not limited the sunshine, gentle rains, and flowers to a few, but has generously given his earth to all to enjoy. In that one sense, the benefit of Jesus’ atonement is not limited to the elect. However, Jesus did not come and die just to bring forth ephemeral life for mankind but to bring forth the abundance of eternal life through total redemption from the fall.

The Arminian position is that Jesus’ death on the cross only made eternal salvation *possible* for *everyone*, conditioned upon their personal response to the Gospel message. Therefore, the atonement that Jesus brought forth in his death would only be a *potential* atonement, not absolute. The power of the atonement would be diminished to that of a dormant state, not living and active until a man

grasps hold of it. We plainly see that if Jesus died to make absolute atonement for everyone in the world, He certainly failed to do so since not everyone responds. The Arminian view of salvation, then, is not that of grace, but again ultimately conditioned upon man's own works. That brings us back to the ultimate question: Is salvation of men, or of God? The Calvinist position is that Jesus died only for the elect; He did not die for the non-elect. Therefore, Jesus' death made complete and absolute atonement for those whom his Father had given Him to the exact and full extent that God had intended and ordained. The atonement is active, complete, and absolute. There is no failure in either the scope or ability of the atonement that Jesus brought forth in his death on the cross for mankind.

It is obvious that Jesus' atoning work is effective to salvation and eternal life only for those who believe in Him (Jn.3:18). Therefore, we must make a distinction and say that although the atoning work of Christ is *sufficient* for all men, and that the sins of all mankind were borne by Him on the cross, the atonement is *effective* unto salvation only for those who are called out by God and, therefore, believe in Him. That is the exercise of "special grace" by God. Unlike God's common grace which is a benevolence toward all mankind that sustains their lives on this earth, special grace is conferred on a limited number of persons according to God's will in order that they may receive eternal redemption.

Here also is the basis for the condemnation of the lost, which is that they are so depraved and corrupt that they reject the power of the atonement. Today, men *remain* in a lost condition not because they are sinners (all men have sinned because they were born in a lost state of sin), but because they arrogantly reject the gift of salvation in Christ. Man in his fallen nature is blind to Truth. That is how radically depraved mankind is! Yet, we who have been saved must also see this: but for the grace of God, we also would have gone down the same dark road of unbelief. That fact destroys all personal pride in being the elect of God. God has lifted his chosen out of darkness, for his holy purposes, and for his own glory that the atonement made by his Son might be made fully effective in them.

Those who oppose the doctrine of Limited Atonement<sup>63</sup> often portray a man that desires to receive the salvation of Christ, but is restrained by God from doing so because he is not one of the elect. We must realize that such a person does not exist. As we have seen, no man naturally seeks God because his fallen nature prevents him from doing so (Ro.3:11). His natural inclination is to reject God and deny that he needs redemption since he rejects God's authority and judgment. That person will never call out to God and plead with Him for mercy. Nor will he lament that he is not one of the elect, because he does not want to be. It is true that the sinner is often miserable in his sin, but being miserable does not ensure that he will cry out to God for salvation. The sinner's way is always hard. His common solution to his miserable condition is to commit more sin because that is the only way he knows. Only if God arrests him will he hear, and only if his spirit is reborn will he respond.

We must understand that while we must say that the atonement is limited to the elect, we, as men, cannot exclude anyone from coming to Christ (Jn.3:16). The door of salvation is open to *any* who will accept Jesus' righteousness for his own covering and forsake his own corrupt efforts. Jesus' atonement is truly sufficient for all mankind, but we also know that it is rejected by the multitudes. One simply cannot receive that which he cannot or will not accept. Yet, out of that multitude of people comes those who have given up on themselves, and have accepted the work of Christ. *Whosoever* will come to Him will be saved, and *none* will be cast out! We must see that this wondrous faith is not something that we drummed up in ourselves to force or even to entice God to choose us over another; rather, it is something that we have received without condition through God's special grace and mercy that we may receive the full atonement for our sins in Christ. It is all through God's work and election.

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<sup>63</sup> The doctrine of limited atonement is sometimes referred to as particular atonement as opposed to a general atonement.

**Irresistible Grace**

By Irresistible Grace, it is meant to say that when God chooses to save a person, He will accomplish the task. It is as simple as that since God is omnipotent. We have seen that God's working does not depend upon the efforts of man or some inborn value that men have in them. Therefore, all of the effort is from God's side. Paul said of the Philippians, "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Ph.1:6). Paul placed the emphasis on God's work in them, not in their works for God. Paul's confidence was in God's work not the works of the Philippians! The good deeds of the Philippians were an evident outpouring of God's grace in them. We must remember that God saves men by his grace; that is, out of his unmerited and undeserved favor. Therefore, God's grace *must* be invincible in the act of salvation. If that were not so, the elect as well as the multitudes would reject the gift because the elect, being but natural men (before the indwelling of the Holy Spirit), are just as blind and corrupt as are the lost.

In saying that God's grace is irresistible, we do not mean to say that depraved man will not attempt to fight against the initial efforts of the Holy Spirit. Even the Apostle Paul "kicked against the pricks [goads]" for a time (Ac.9:5; 26:14). That is, Paul reacted against the workings of the Holy Spirit within him as he continued to persecute Christians and reject Christ. As we have seen elsewhere, it is totally against man's depraved nature to give up on his own works accepting the fact that he is a hopeless sinner in need of God's redeeming grace. Paul's zeal for works and his opposition to free grace had turned him into a mad man. Nevertheless, Paul was not allowed to fight against God's grace forever. Though the elect may seek to run from it, ignore it, or even curse it, the Holy Spirit has turned on a light within his soul that cannot be ignored. The dawning of Truth as the Holy Spirit convicts him of his sins and makes the benefits of Christ real to him is eventually more than any man can resist. Therefore, though a man may make every effort to reject Truth, God's grace will win out over his stubborn and corrupted will.

Those who oppose the doctrine of Irresistible Grace often portray sinners being dragged against their “free will” to receive salvation. What needs to be understood is that God only puts the light of Truth within the darkness of that man so that his spirit becomes alive and illuminates his soul. Once Truth is seen and finally recognized, the sinner will quite eagerly respond positively to Truth and come to Christ to receive that great salvation that is offered. We may as well argue that a man that is insanely bent on suicide by jumping over a cliff should not be restrained from doing so, but allowed to make his leap to death. (It would not be *fair* of us to stop him). Once his sanity is restored, that man will quite joyfully turn away from the precipice. When God restrains us from continuing on to the eternal abyss, restores our spiritual sanity, and leads us away from the path of sin, we wondrously benefit from it.

Rather than question the fact that God’s grace is irresistible, we should rather praise God that it is true! We would not have come to Him if it were not true. We would still be naked and blind — dead in our trespasses and sin — if it were not for God’s irresistible grace. Furthermore, since we made no effort in order to receive that grace which overpowered our depraved souls and evil minds, pulling us from shades of darkness and upward into plains of light and Truth, we cannot receive any credit even for having accepted it. No, we cannot praise our own faith, or even the fact that we came to believe in Christ as a personal achievement. It was all given to us by a grace that was totally irresistible. Our praise must be directed toward God and to Him alone for what He has done on our behalf.

### **Perseverance of the Saints**

It follows that if God’s grace is irresistible, and if God has chosen the redeemed based on unconditional election, that no power could extract the believer from the hand of God. Jesus said of the elect (his sheep), “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (Jn.10:28,29). Thus it is that once having received eternal salvation, a child of God cannot ever lose his

salvation. He certainly may, as we put it today, “backslide” and lose close fellowship with the Lord for a time. Nevertheless, having first been given salvation on an unconditional basis, he is unable to do anything that will cause him to lose eternal life. After all, when we say eternal life, we mean forever; otherwise, eternal is not eternal at all.

That does not mean that once saved, a child of God will go about living a life of habitual sin (Ro.6:1,2). To say that would be to deny the power of the Holy Spirit working within him. There is something dreadfully wrong when a professed believer does not live in accordance with the hope that he says is within him. “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1Jn.1:6). One cannot praise God and sin against Him at the same time. However, we should know that all who profess to know Christ and say they have placed their hope in Him are not truthful witnesses. Many today profess a form of pseudo-salvation and even lead many others astray to accept a fleshly temporal “salvation from conscience” instead of true salvation from sin and eternal life.

Yet, we also should not think that perseverance means that the true believer is faultless and unable to stumble into sin. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1Jn.1:8). Left to their own devices, the elect could fall into sin and disbelief continually because of their old nature that remains in their flesh. Therefore, it is not so much the perseverance of the “saint” that prevents the elect from habitual sinning, as it is the persistent power of the indwelling Holy Spirit ensuring that the child of God will continue his course until the very end. The believer perseveres because God perseveres. Therefore, we are more correctly talking about the “Preservation of the Saints” rather than the “Perseverance of the Saints.” He who is indwelt by the Spirit of God is both saved and immediately regenerated in the spirit into a new creature (2Co.5:17). Moreover, the work of the Holy Spirit does not stop there, but continues working to regenerate the mind as well (Ro.12:2; Ep.4:22–24). Can God fail in the task that He Himself has chosen to do in that vessel which He has also chosen? For that reason, he who is called, justified, and glorified in Christ Jesus, is indwelt by the Holy Spirit

and can not fail ultimately to do God's will for him in his life because it is God who works in him.

### **In Conclusion**

Therefore, those "strange" doctrines are not really so strange at all. Rather, they show the power of God to save even the likes of us or any other man or woman who comes to Him through Christ. They are at the very heart of the Gospel message. Those doctrines do not discourage the preaching of the Gospel to all men, as some may think, but actually establish a mandate for it. The Holy Spirit is not only working in the one to be saved, but through the one who gives forth the Good News of salvation in Christ. Nor are those some new extra-biblical doctrines that a man named John Calvin dreamed up; the teachings of the Apostle Paul are quite of like mind, and echo throughout Scripture in the writings of the Apostle John and other authors under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Until we finally come to an understanding of God's absolute authority in his election of his own out of a totally helpless and depraved mankind, we can have no real understanding of grace. While we may use the word "grace," we too often may only see it as God's response to our faith, not the very source of faith itself. As long as we believe that our salvation is dependent even in a small part upon our own efforts acting out of a supposed "free will," grace will have lost its wonder and ceases to be amazing. Only when we finally surrender and decide to let God be God does his grace become a shining beacon of assurance and hope. It is truly amazing!

Today, there are many who believe that they have saved themselves by trusting Christ, and still cannot see that it is God, Himself, who has called them into his family. It is not so much a question of whether those individuals are saved. If they have abandoned their worthless works, truly trust Jesus Christ alone for their salvation, and believe that his blood has redeemed them, they are saved indeed. It is more a matter of whether in the joy of their salvation they glorify themselves rather than God. The question is whether they see God as having reached down to save them, or they see themselves as having reached up to grasp God. Certainly, if we

should glorify God in all things, we should surely glorify Him for our salvation rather than exalt our own sense of personal faith. Our faith itself came from God through Christ as an unconditional gift when the Holy Spirit came to make his home in us.

## **Section 4, Jesus, the Christ**

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**The Birth of the Messiah**

**The Early Life of Jesus**

**The Anointing of Jesus**

**The Crucifixion**

**Jesus' Agony on the Cross**

**The Resurrection of Jesus**

**Jesus' Ascension to Heaven**

**The Second Advent of Christ**

**The Christ of Prophecy**

## **Chapter 4.1 The Birth of the Messiah**

In this section, we are going to discuss the historic events related to the birth, early life, anointing, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the Messiah (the Christ). We shall also discuss the purpose for which Jesus came and the nature of his work on the cross. We shall attempt to bring out the significance of that wondrous work of God as we discover various “bench marks” in each chapter. We shall not discuss all the detailed teachings of the earthly ministry of Jesus at this time, leaving them instead for later discussion in context throughout this work.

### ***Circumstances Leading up to Jesus’ Birth***

Before we can properly discuss the birth of Jesus, we must first consider various circumstances that led up to that miraculous event. In doing so, we will be following the dialog that Luke set forth in his epistle to Theophilus. It would appear that Theophilus, who had learned of the teaching and miracles of Jesus through various other accounts, might have requested a more complete account from Luke. Or perhaps, Luke having heard of Theophilus’ intense interest chose to write the epistle unsolicited as he said in his own words, “That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.” (Lu.1:4). We find the text of that epistle in the Gospel of Luke. In Chapter 1, Luke carefully and chronologically tells of the events leading up to Jesus’ birth, which he then relates in Chapter 2.

### **The Angel Gabriel’s Announcement to Zechariah**

Luke’s Gospel is generally considered to have been written for the Greek mind. It is most likely that Theophilus was a Greek and not a Hebrew. If so, he would not have had a very strong background in the history and traditions of Judaism, nor the significance that angels had taken in that regard. We are introduced to the angel Gabriel in Luke 1:5–25 in connection with his announcement of the birth of a son to Elizabeth the wife of Zechariah. Both Zechariah and his wife were of old age. Zechariah was a Levitical priest who served in the temple, and his wife who had been barren all her life was to give birth to a

male child whom Gabriel stated should be named John. The significance of this birth will be seen later, but in the words of Gabriel,

**“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord”** (Lu.1:15–17).

Because Zechariah had asked for a sign from Gabriel, he was struck dumb and was not able to speak until after Elizabeth had given birth (Lu.1:20). Elizabeth went into seclusion for 5 months following the time she knew that she had become pregnant. Perhaps this was in part due to embarrassment that she, an old woman, was pregnant, or perhaps it was because of her concern for the welfare of the child she carried in her womb. Whatever her reason, she gave praise to God that he had removed the life-long disgrace she had suffered from being childless (Lu.1:25).

### **Gabriel's Announcement to Mary**

Mary was no doubt looking forward to her coming marriage to Joseph and the prospects of settling down with him in Nazareth. No doubt she was looking forward to having children of her own and living in much the same way as others of her station. She would have had no idea concerning the special privilege that she would receive, nor the sorrow that she would suffer because of it.

**“And in the sixth month [of Elizabeth's pregnancy] the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said**

**unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end”** (Lu.1:26–33).

The conception, which soon thereafter took place in Mary’s womb, was not a natural generation by the agency of man, but was a supernatural conception brought about directly by the Holy Spirit. When Mary asked how she could conceive without knowing a man, she was told, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Lu.1:35). The line of the seed of destruction in Adam that man passed on from generation to generation was broken in the conception of Jesus because Mary “[knew] not a man” (Lu.1:34). Mary, being not yet married (but betrothed) to Joseph, was a virgin (Lu.1:27). In that way prophecy was to be fulfilled as God had said centuries earlier through the prophet Isaiah, “...a virgin shall conceive and bear a son” (Is.7:14).

### **Joseph’s Difficult Decision**

We can only imagine Joseph’s dilemma as he discovered that his betrothed was with child— knowing full well that it was not his own. Luke does not tell of this in his account, but it is recorded for us in the Gospel of Matthew.

**“ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily”** (Mt.1:18,19).

Joseph was a devout Hebrew believing in the traditions of his fathers. Therefore, finding that his betrothed was with child, which he erroneously assumed must be another man’s, he knew that he could not complete the marriage and take her to be his wife. One must

assume that Mary tried to tell him about the visit and the message of the angel, but it would have been more than he could accept from her mouth alone. His great love and concern for Mary was nevertheless demonstrated in the fact that he did not want to put her forth as an example to be subjected to public ridicule, as would have been common in those days, but instead considered putting her away from himself quietly in some far-flung place so that no one would know of her disgrace.

**“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (Mt.1:20–25).**

From this text we should not infer that Joseph *immediately* consummated the marriage with Mary, but from the phrase “knew her not” we may properly assume that they did not live together as husband and wife until after the birth of Jesus had taken place.

### **Mary’s Visit to Elizabeth**

Before the angel Gabriel had left Mary, he had mentioned to her that Mary’s relative, Elizabeth, had conceived in her old age and was already in her sixth month of pregnancy. This was intended to be assuring to her as Gabriel said, “For nothing is impossible with God” (Lu.1:37). To that Mary had answered, “I am the Lord’s servant ...May it be to me as you have said” (Lu.1:38). Elizabeth had undoubtedly been told by her husband that their child was to be a

forerunner to the long awaited Messiah (cf. Lu.1:76–79). Not surprisingly when Mary knew that she was with child, she hurriedly made a trip to visit Elizabeth who lived in the hill country of Judea to be with her until the birth of her child.

**“And [Mary] entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord” (Lu.1:40–45).**

Mary apparently stayed with Elizabeth for three months and would have left only after the birth of John had taken place. Perhaps she would have stayed even longer until after the birth of her own son except for the fact that an edict from Rome made that impossible.

### *The Decree of Caesar Augustus*

According to Luke in Chapter 2, verse 1 at the time this transpired a decree was issued by Caesar Augustus that the entire Roman world was to be counted in a census for the purpose of taxation. Luke states in verse 2 that this was during the time that Cyrenius (Quirinius) was governor of Syria: “(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)” There has been some confusion about this reference by Luke inasmuch as Quirinius was recorded as governor in A.D. 6, whereas Jesus birth is commonly placed at 4 B.C. However it may be that the word translated as “first” in verse 2 should have been translated as “before” or “prior” thus indicating that the census that Luke is referring to was made prior to the census conducted during the time of the governorship of Quirinius a decade later. Luke must have had certain knowledge of the census that took place at the birth of Jesus or he would never have included it

in his epistle. Nevertheless, we have no secular record of such a census having been conducted. In order for this decree to be obeyed, each family needed to return to their city of origin to be enrolled in the census. Because Joseph was of the household and lineage of David, he needed to return with Mary to Bethlehem, the City of David.

### **The Trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem**

We are not told exactly when Caesar's decree was made in relationship to the birth of Jesus nor how long each family had to satisfy its requirements. Therefore, it may be that Joseph and Mary began the trip to Bethlehem long before the child was due in order to escape any gossip surrounding her pregnancy in the village of Nazareth. Nevertheless, since Mary had stayed with Elizabeth for three months following her conception, we do know that she was already with child for at least three months and perhaps as much as six months when the trip began. Since we are not given any details in Scripture such is mere speculation.

The journey would certainly have been arduous and difficult. Though the distance, which was approximately 70 miles, is not great between Nazareth and Bethlehem in modern terms, it would have taken them some time to complete the trip over the rugged terrain in those days. We cannot even be sure that Joseph had a donkey at his disposal for Mary to ride during the trip as tradition suggests. Joseph, being a poor carpenter, most likely could not afford one. In fact, riding on the back of a donkey for any length of time would have been far worse than walking for a pregnant woman. Whether Mary and Joseph made this trip alone to Bethlehem or in the company of others of the House of David also traveling there for the census is also not known.

### ***The Birth of Jesus***

“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered” (Lu.2:6). As we can see from this verse, there is no indication of how long Joseph and Mary may have been in and about Bethlehem before the birth of Jesus. It could be that they had been staying near the hamlet with a relative or had been living in an encampment near Bethlehem up until that time.

Nevertheless, when they looked for accommodations in Bethlehem they found that there was no room for them in the Inn.

### **The Inn**

When we think of an Inn today, we picture a relatively large building having many rooms and comfortable accommodations. An Inn in those days may have been no more than a single room in a house that was used to put up guests out of the elements. Such accommodations were not comfortable and were very crowded and dangerous as well. Robberies and other crimes were quite common among the guests. For a woman to give birth in the midst of the prying eyes of such a mob of humanity would have been unthinkable. Therefore, contrary to popular belief, the innkeeper was probably providing the best accommodations that were available under the circumstances (Lu.2:7).

While we commonly see model stables crafted out of wood depicting the structure in which Jesus was born, the shelter was more than likely a cave that was ordinarily used as a stable. The stable was being used for overflow because of the great numbers of people in Bethlehem who came in response to the edict of Caesar Augustus (Lu.2:1–4). It is probable that Mary and Joseph were not the only ones that night in crowded Bethlehem that found shelter in a cave. Mary and Joseph, like so many others, were staying in Bethlehem so that they could be counted and taxed in their own taxing district (Lu.2:3).

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Lu.2:7). Such were the inauspicious circumstances surrounding the entry of the Son of God into the world. He was not born in a King’s palace, nor was He born in comfortable surroundings, but in a cave in Bethlehem. “But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Mi.5:2).

### **The Angel’s Herald to the Shepherds**

**“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in**

**the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds” (Lu.2:8–18).**

Had it not have been for the appearing of the angels to the shepherds, Jesus’ birth would have gone unnoticed by the multitudes in Bethlehem that night. Outwardly, just another baby had been born to a poor Jewish couple that had come to Bethlehem from Nazareth to be counted in the census and to pay their taxes. However, it was so much more than that; God had identified Himself with the weak and the poor of this world in order that He might save them from their sins. Humble shepherds had the privilege of being the first to bring the good news of his arrival to a sleeping world.

### **Date of Jesus’ Birth**

The actual date of Jesus’ birth is unknown. In fact there is not even any certainty regarding the season of the year. Some have placed his birth in the spring of the year while others believe that his birth more likely occurred in September or October. It is highly unlikely

that it was December 25. The notion of it being “a cold winter’s night” is based more upon the traditional winter Yule celebration of pagan origin, not upon any Scriptural or historical fact.<sup>64</sup> Since shepherds were grazing their flocks in the fields around Bethlehem, we must assume that there was adequate grass for the sheep (Lu.2:8). There is most certainly no reason to believe from the Scripture texts that there was snow on the ground.

### **The Virgin Birth**

The critic has denounced the possibility of a virgin giving birth. However, we are not talking about a natural conception, but a unique *supernatural* conception brought about by God Himself. While the birth of Christ was quite natural, the conception was not. The critic has attempted to interpret the word “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14 as “young woman.” Surely, many young women had borne a son and had called his name “Immanuel” in honor of the promise by the time Jesus was born.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, how could a “young woman” giving birth be called *a sign* since that was (and is) a common occurrence (Is.7:14)? There can be no doubt about what Isaiah meant by his prophecy since he said a virgin giving birth was to be a unique sign. Whether or not one chooses to accept the fact of the virgin birth of Christ, there can be little doubt about what the Bible teaches. The explanation of the virgin birth by the angel to Mary as related by Luke simply cannot be misunderstood by any rational means (Lu.1:35). We surely realize that Luke was a physician, and he therefore knew exactly what he was saying.

### *The Focus of the Incarnation*

The Christian must not overlook the profound significance of the virgin birth. Not only does that of necessity fulfill prophecy, it is also a sign that Jesus was not born as an ordinary man. The miracle of

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<sup>64</sup> For details surrounding the fixing of December 25<sup>th</sup> as the date of Jesus birth and the pagan celebrations surrounding that error, see Book II, Chapter 13.4.

<sup>65</sup> Note that "Immanuel" is not a name, but a description given to a name that was given to the incarnate Christ. It means "God with us" and is fulfilled by the name "Jesus" which means "The Lord Saves."

the virgin birth has been attacked heavily by Satan, because if Mary conceived of a man, then Jesus would have been only a man, born under the curse of death, and would have been unable to redeem himself, let alone provide an atonement for the sins of all mankind. Our faith and hope for eternal life would disintegrate into ashes. We must understand that Jesus did *not* inherit the fallen nature of man.

The birth of Jesus Christ is the focal point of time and for a very good reason. By that very act, God unilaterally intervened to redeem mankind. Interpreted, the name “Jesus” means, “the Lord saves” or “Jehovah saves.”<sup>66</sup> Jesus is the very means by which God “saves” man from his hopeless state. However, what part does the birth of Jesus play in the salvation of mankind, and in what way does this work of God prevent the ultimate destruction of man? For many, that central question will go unanswered; for they will say it is enough to believe on Christ without understanding anything of the gift itself. Yet, to truly understand that gift is the basis for our faith. It is the difference between shallow acceptance and meaningful belief.

The significance of the event that took place that night in Bethlehem is not the birth of another child into the world. Nor was it just the birth of an important man who would say marvelous things and perform great miracles. The true significance is found in the fact that in that marvelous moment *God became man*. God took on Himself the pitiful weakness of man’s flesh by setting aside all of the glory of his deity. The significance of Jesus’ birth is found in the incarnation<sup>67</sup>, as the Son of God also became the son of man in the flesh. God brought Himself down low to walk in the same earthly plane as his creation; God was suddenly living in our midst! We should not merely celebrate the birth of a baby or even of a great man, but we should instead celebrate the wonder of God identifying Himself with man by taking on the form of human flesh. Therefore Jesus was

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<sup>66</sup>The name “Jesus” was not uncommon in that day, as the Jew hoped for deliverance from the oppressive yoke of Rome. But, the name uniquely belonged to Christ, for the angel had told Joseph, “...thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mt.1:21).

<sup>67</sup> The word “incarnation” means that God, who is Spirit, and man, who is flesh, were united within one body of flesh in the person of Jesus.

not “born” in the usual sense that day in Bethlehem because He (being God) is eternal having no beginning or end. While unto us a child was born, it is still more important for us to understand that unto us God’s Son was given (Is.9:6).

### **Jesus, the Son of Man**

Adam was the son of God. That is brought out clearly in the Gospel of Luke (Ch 3 vs. 38). Adam is rightly called the son of God because God created him (Ge.1:27). However, the account in Luke is not the genealogy of Adam, but of Jesus through the line of Mary showing Jesus to be a descendant of Adam.<sup>68</sup> So, one may ask, what is the point; aren’t all men descended from Adam? That is precisely the point! Jesus, born of a human mother, Mary, was and is fully human, born in human flesh. Mary was not more than other women were since she was born of a man named Heli (Lu.3:23). Mary was completely human in every way, and was not the product of an “immaculate conception.” While Mary was chosen of God to be the human mother of Jesus (Lu.1:28), that in no way implies that Mary, herself, was in anyway deity or was granted certain graces or attributes above other women, as Roman Catholics would suppose.<sup>69</sup> As we shall see, to ascribe deity or even some intrinsic worth above other women to Mary destroys the significance of the coming of Christ. It was necessary that

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<sup>68</sup>The genealogy of Jesus through the line of Joseph is given in the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 1. Luke 3, verse 23 seems to state that Joseph was the son of Heli, but Matthew 1:16 makes it clear that Joseph was the son of Jacob. Joseph was the son of Heli by marriage to Mary who was the daughter of Heli (i.e. son-in-law). The words "the son" are not in the Greek, but have been added in the translation in Luke's Genealogy while "begat" is in the Greek in Matthew 1:16. While Joseph was not the natural father of Jesus (as Lu.3:23 and Mt.1:16 makes clear), his line gave Jesus the legal right to the throne of Israel as the "son of David" (Mt.1:1,6).

<sup>69</sup>There can be little doubt that Mary was a wonderful woman or God would not have chosen her to bare his Son into the world. But, while Mary can rightly be called the "mother of Jesus" (pertaining to the flesh), it is **not** proper to call Mary the "mother of God." Mary was merely the human agency by which the Son of God took on human flesh and came into the world.

Mary be perfectly human in every respect so that Jesus, Himself, would be completely human.

### **Jesus, the Son of God**

From this discussion, we can see that Christ is not only the “son of man”, but also the “son of God” through Adam. However, all men could be considered the “son of God” through Adam. Jesus is the Son of God not only of the line of Adam, but is uniquely the *begotten* Son of God (Jn.1:14). That is very important for us to realize: Jesus is the *begotten* Son of God, *not* the *created* as was Adam. Jesus is *descended from Adam* through the line of David by Mary, yet *Jesus is begotten of God as his father by the power of the Spirit of God* (Lu.1:35).

### **Jesus, Born the Perfect Sacrifice**

We must now return to the account in Genesis where God killed two animals and covered Adam and Eve with their skins (Ge.3:21). This signified that man’s sin could be “covered” by the spilling of blood through the death of a surrogate. However, it was only a signification, since the blood of animals cannot save man; mankind alone is responsible for his own sin. That signification points to the need for atonement for man’s sin to be made by another like Adam. If by one man’s fall all could be condemned to death, so by one perfect man’s death could all be raised again to eternal life (Ro.5:17,18,19). When Adam sinned, he condemned the entire human race to death. Only if a perfect man satisfied the penalty of death could eternal life be restored.

Nevertheless, such a one could not be born of human parents, because he would carry the seed of destruction within him, yet he must be human to satisfy God’s justice. Considering this dilemma, man could never redeem himself. Therefore, began the long process of God preparing man for the coming of the deliverer who would stand perfect before Him. As a woman (Eve) played a part in the transgression, so a woman (Mary) would also play a part in the salvation of mankind thus redeeming women as well as men (Ga.4:4). For that purpose, Jesus was born of a virgin in Bethlehem (Lu.2:11).

If God had created a second “Adam” from the dust of the ground to *replace* the first Adam, he would have been the head of an entirely *new* creation which would have replaced the old Adamic race, not redeem it. He could not have died a substitutional death for the old race of which he was not a part. Jesus, the second Adam of our race, being born of Mary has inherited the human and physical nature of the old Adamic race, but without the sinful nature of Adam. While Eve played a part in the original sin, in that Satan deceived her, Adam was the responsible person for he sinned knowingly. The seed of destruction is carried through the seed of the man, not that of the woman.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, God quickened the seed of Mary through the Holy Spirit so that the sinless man begotten from her womb was both man and God.

We must see that if Jesus had been only human, he would have been as all other men, and being unjust before God could not have offered himself for us. If Jesus had been only God, how then could sacrifice for man's sin have been offered of God to Himself? God demanded and required satisfaction from the *flesh of man* for man's act of disobedience (Ge.2:17). Only man could atone for his own sin. However, God could accept nothing less than a perfect sacrifice that fallen man could never provide though generation after generation would come and go. There was no other way but for God to descend to earth in the likeness of sinful flesh in the form of his only begotten son, Jesus (Ro.8:3). Thus was the sacrifice prepared; the just would die for the sins of the unjust at the appointed time.

Therefore, we should see that overshadowing the incarnation is the specter of the cross. The two events cannot be separated. We cannot truly see the wonder of the incarnation unless we also understand the agony of the crucifixion. While men are often drawn to

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<sup>70</sup>The fact that the sinful nature is not imparted through the seed of the woman does not mean that women are without a sinful nature. Eve, herself, took part in the sin and was also taken from Adam who sinned. Mary also inherited the sin-stained nature of her father Heli and so was also under the curse of Adam. But, that sin nature is not passed from the woman to the child, but from the father to the child. Jesus' father is God Himself, thus breaking that chain of sin in Him.

the advent of the Son of God into the world, they often shrink from his exodus through death. Yet, the first was for the purpose of the second. Christ was born into the world in order that He would be slain by the wicked hands of sinful man as a final sin offering. All of that was to be carried out "...by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Ac.2:23). God prepared the perfect sacrifice that He required, having given Christ to mankind through the incarnation and then accepting the sacrifice from man through the crucifixion.

## **Chapter 4.2 The Early Life of Jesus**

Little is known of the life of Jesus before He began his public ministry at the age of thirty. The Scriptures do not give much information about that time in his life. Nevertheless, it is possible to piece together some information regarding his life, and by careful speculation, we may make reasonable assumptions regarding his early life from what we can see in Scripture. Outside of Scripture, only a few of the first century writers of any credibility even mention Jesus in their writings; those all lack detail and do not help in putting together his early life.

### ***Frivolous and Erroneous Stories***

Other books of inferior quality give details of Jesus' childhood that are but ridiculous fiction and engage in romanticism. One such account states that Jesus brought a young companion back to life, who had died after having fallen from a rooftop, when the boy's mother accused Jesus of having pushed him. After the boy vindicated Jesus of his death, the story says that the boy lay down and merely "resumed his death." Another story says that Jesus turned mud pies into birds when He sailed them into the air. Other stories telling of miraculous power, which the young Jesus used in frivolous ways, also prevailed in the early Christian era. Obviously, such stories have no credibility and do not add to our knowledge of Jesus' first thirty years but only add confusion to our limited knowledge.

### ***New Testament Silence***

We may well ask why none of the New Testament writers addressed Jesus' early life in detail? At first, there would have been no need to; the first Gospels were not even written until about thirty years had passed after Jesus' ascension (about A.D. 60). Jesus was a Jew, and his ministry was at first considered a Jewish or Palestinian ministry; Jesus' ministry was well known among his followers. In addition, sufficient proof of his identity as the Messiah was to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures such that no additional information was required.

Regarding the absence of accounts related to Jesus' youth, we must consider that a Jew did not come of age to teach until he reached thirty years of age. We are given the details of Jesus' birth in Scripture because it fulfills prophecy. We can generally conclude, then, that events in the first thirty years of his life were not significant with regard to his fulfilling prophecy or to his later teaching ministry. For that reason, we are only given incidental details from which we must assume that Jesus led the ordinary life of other Jewish children and young men of that time and place.

While Jesus' early life would have been quite ordinary for a young Jewish child, that is not to say that Jesus was any ordinary child. Even at that early age, Jesus was the Son of God. Therefore, we must conclude that during his childhood, before his human mind was fully developed, He was kept from many of the frivolous errors and sins that other children engaged in. It was necessary that Jesus be kept from all sin even in his early childhood in order to be the sinless one that could atone for all the sins of mankind. In Psalm 91 verses 11 and 12, we read that the angels had charge over Him to "keep him in all thy ways." These verses are those that Satan misquoted by leaving out that very phrase (Mt.4:6). The true implication of those verses is that Jesus would be protected from any association with sin during his childhood, not that He would be physically protected from the consequences of sinful actions.<sup>71</sup> In the following dialogue, we will try to combine stated biblical incidents with what is known about Jewish living in those days to reconstruct the probable circumstances of Jesus' early life.

### ***The Stay at Bethlehem***

After Jesus' birth in Bethlehem of Judaea, the family would have stayed in or near Bethlehem to be counted and taxed in compliance with the order by Caesar Augustus (Lu.2:4,5). Their only

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<sup>71</sup>Jesus was born without a sin nature and therefore had no inclination to sin. The angels charge would have been to keep the undeveloped child from being involved in frivolous acts as his mind developed and as he associated with his young peers. The Lamb of God must be untainted by sin and without any moral blemish (see Ex.12:5,6).

immediate visitors in the stable on the night of Jesus birth (as far as Luke's account states) were shepherds who, having been instructed by an angel, had come to see the "Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Lu.2:11). On the eighth day after his birth, Jesus would have been circumcised according to the Law of Moses in Bethlehem (Lu.2:21; Le.12:3). Mary would have been considered ceremonially unclean according to the Law of Moses until forty days had passed from Jesus' date of birth (Le.12:4). As a result, and in accordance with the Law of Moses, Jesus would have been presented in the Temple only after forty days had passed since his birth (Lu.2:22; Le.12:6). We are told that a pair of doves was sacrificed at the Temple (Lu.2:24). That offering was not made for Jesus, but for Mary. The Law required a lamb for a burnt offering and a dove (turtle-dove) for a sin offering. If a lamb could not be afforded, two doves should be offered instead (Le.12:6–8). Since two doves were offered, we know that Joseph and Mary were not affluent, but were poor.

"When they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth" (Lu.2:39). It is not necessary that we assume from this verse that they *immediately* returned to Nazareth.<sup>72</sup> It is obvious from Matthew's gospel account that they returned to Bethlehem for a length of time. Perhaps they returned the ten miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to prepare for the longer journey to Nazareth, or perhaps Joseph even sought to live in Bethlehem rather than Nazareth (Mt.2:22); the exact reason is not known. The length of stay at Bethlehem is also not known, but it would certainly have exceeded the six weeks (forty-two days) that would have been required to present Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem.

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<sup>72</sup>Luke simply does not report the events that transpired between their leaving Bethlehem and their eventual arrival in Nazareth. Each Gospel has its own purpose and its own readers in mind. Apparently Luke did not feel that the relating of those events was essential knowledge to his reader or to the purpose of his writing.

*The Arrival of the Wise Men*

During that stay in Bethlehem (which may have been as long as two years at the very most, but could have been a shorter time of several months), the “wise men” came from the east and arrived at Jerusalem (Mt.2:1). We know that the wise men did not come before Jesus was presented at the Temple in Jerusalem. If they had, Joseph could have afforded the required lamb for the burnt offering. Further, the journey of the wise men would have begun when the star first appeared at the exact time of Jesus’ birth (Mt.2:2); some time must be allowed for their long journey from their eastern land.

Those “wise men” or “Magi” were actually astrologer-priests.<sup>73</sup> Those occult priests knew of the prophecies concerning the coming Hebrew Messiah; perhaps even to the extent that they knew He was to be born in Bethlehem in Judaea as did Herod’s priests and scribes (Mt.2:5,6; cf. Nu.24:17). Having seen the new star appear in the heavens in their distant land, they had come to worship him.<sup>74</sup> The priests were not merely asking direction to Bethlehem when they visited King Herod. That was a stop both to pay courtesy to the King of Judaea, and to ask the whereabouts of the new-born King which they may well have expected (by that time) to find installed there in Jerusalem: “Where is he that is born the king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (Mt.2:2). Herod was very sensitive to any threat to his rule. Herod, then, pretending that he too would worship the child, directed the wise men to bring him word of the child’s whereabouts (Mt.2:8).

When the wise men turned toward Bethlehem, the star again miraculously appeared to guide them. Up until that time the new star

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<sup>73</sup> Some, not liking to refer to them as astrologers, choose instead to refer to them as astronomers. However, astronomy and astrology were very closely related studies in those days.

<sup>74</sup> Notice that the account does not state that the star appeared in the eastern sky, but that it was observed by the astrologers whose home was to the east of Israel. It was a star that appeared in their western sky in order to draw them toward Jerusalem (see Mt.2:1 & 2).

could have been a God-directed natural event such as a super nova, but the reappearance of the star that guided them to the exact house where Jesus stayed could only have been a supernatural phenomenon (Mt.2:9). By this time, Mary and Joseph had secured accommodations in a house — they certainly did not continue to live in the stable — and Jesus was a young child: “And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him...” (Mt.2:11).

We do not know how many wise men there were. It has merely been assumed through tradition that there were three because of the three types of gifts presented (Mt.2:11). Certainly, we cannot assume that three “kings” traveled that great a distance carrying precious gifts without a large escort. While three men asking about a newborn king may have been dismissed, the large company of men who likely arrived in Jerusalem that day would have greatly alarmed Herod. When the astrologer-priests left Jerusalem, they did not return to inform Herod of Jesus’ whereabouts, because they were warned in a dream not to do so (Mt.2:12).

### ***Herod’s Threat against Jesus’ Life***

Herod knew only that the newborn king of prophecy was born in or near Bethlehem. He also knew that the young king was surely under two years of age because of the time of the star’s first appearing as reported by the wise men (Mt.2:16). Herod’s only concern was that a contender had been born which could take his throne. Herod was an Idumean Jew and a puppet king under the control of Rome. His concern turned to outrage when he finally realized that the wise men did not return to him, but had left the country (Mt.2:16). In his rage, Herod ordered all male children under the age of two in Bethlehem and the surrounding area to be slain (Mt.2:16). Here is where we observe that Joseph and his family did not *immediately* return to Nazareth, as the account in Luke would seem to indicate (Lu.2:39). Rather, an angel warned Joseph to leave Bethlehem in the night and escape south to Egypt, because Herod would try to kill Jesus (Mt.2:13). Therefore, Jesus was not there when Herod’s soldiers killed the young children (Mt.2:17–18).

The trip to Egypt was most certainly financed by the gifts received from the wise men. It is believed that the stay in Egypt was not long, perhaps no longer than a year or two. Upon the death of Herod, Joseph returned with the child and his mother to Israel from Egypt through southern Israel. Nazareth was located to the north of Jerusalem. Perhaps Joseph at first thought of returning to or through Bethlehem, but decided to bypass Bethlehem and Jerusalem and return by the western route to Nazareth when he was warned that Herod's son ruled in the province of Judaea (Mt.2:22).

### ***Jesus' Childhood at Nazareth***

“And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (Lu.2:40). Therefore, Jesus grew up in the little town of Nazareth. Nor did He grow up as an only child. Mary and Joseph had six other children of their own: four boys by the names James, Joses, Simon, and Judas (Mt.13:55). He had at least two sisters who are not named in Scripture (Mt.13:56). Jesus, as the older, would have had some responsibility in looking after his younger half brothers and sisters. Jesus did not grow up in total isolation.

A Hebrew boy was generally under the charge of his mother until the age of five, after which, his father instructed Him as an apprentice in the family trade. (Young girls generally remained under the charge of their mother until marriage). It is evident that Jesus would have received instruction from Joseph in the matter of carpentry as a trade. It is likely that Jesus was already beginning to learn much about the carpentry trade by the time He was twelve years old.

### ***The Family Trip to Jerusalem***

Joseph and Mary, being devout Jews, visited the Temple at Jerusalem every year at Passover (Lu.2:41). On one such trip, when Jesus was twelve years old, Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem when his family returned to Nazareth (Lu.2:43). No one missed Him immediately, since each assumed He was returning with another in the group as they made their way home. When He was missed, Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem to find Him in the Temple “...sitting in the

midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Lu 2:46–47). When his parents asked Him why He had stayed behind, Jesus answered, “...wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business” (Lu.2:49)? They did not understand that He referred to God and the business for which He was sent to earth, and not Joseph and his carpentry business (Lu.2:50).

### *Jesus’ Life as a Young Man*

Then, Jesus returned to Nazareth and was subject to his parents.<sup>75</sup> Jesus grew in wisdom, as He grew into manhood. He also grew in favor with both God and man (Lu.2:52). Surely, Jesus worked in the carpentry shop as a carpenter (Mk.6:3), and repaired doors, made furniture, fabricated yokes for animals, assembled plows and the like. He would have associated with many people in the course of his trade and found favor with all of them. The sinless nature of Jesus would have made Him extremely attractive to all that knew Him.

Nazareth would have had its own synagogue (perhaps even more than one). Jesus would have attended with the rest of his family on each Sabbath day. The synagogues were presided over by elders much in the same way that was later early first century churches.<sup>76</sup> We are told in the Scriptures that it was Jesus’ custom to attend the synagogue in Nazareth (Lu.4:16). Scripture reading had an important place in the service, and singing as well as prayer was also included in the Sabbath-day observance.

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<sup>75</sup>Joseph's death is not recorded, but is believed to have occurred sometime during Jesus' ministry. Matthew 13:55 implies by its wording that Joseph is still living at that time, while on the cross, Jesus commended Mary to John for her protection. If Joseph were still living, this would not have been necessary (cf. Jn.19:26 & 27).

<sup>76</sup>The early Christian churches were actually patterned after the Jewish synagogues as would have been reasonable and proper for a young Church that was made up entirely of Jews when it began. Synagogues were established during the time of the exile in Babylon when Temple worship had been suspended both by the captivity and the destruction of the Temple building.

***The Beginning of Jesus' Teaching Ministry***

Up until the time that Jesus was thirty years old, He would have attended the synagogue service as a participant, but He would not have been allowed to teach. He was taught the Scriptures in the synagogue by the elders, so that He was very familiar with the Scriptures in the Greek Septuagint, though his native tongue would have been Aramaic. Up until the age of thirty, Jesus could not have begun his ministry by Jewish law. When men became thirty, they could then become a teacher (a rabbi), as did Jesus. Those were the circumstances of Jesus' life as his active ministry began and which was signaled by the coming of John the Baptist (Mt.3:1-12).

## Chapter 4.3 Jesus, the Anointed One

Messiah, or in the Greek, *Christ* means “God’s anointed one.” Several Greek words are translated “anointed” in our New Testament. The Greek word, *aleipho* merely means to refresh by making clean through washing and is used in various everyday ways where it could be used to mean washing one’s face to daubing mortar on a stone wall (Eze.13:10 etc). However, the Greek word *chrío* has a more narrow meaning signifying the putting on of a ceremonial office or position. It is this sacred and ceremonial meaning that is meant by the “anointing of Christ.” Jesus was anointed of God by the “putting on” of the office of the Christ. That anointing occurred at the time of his baptism in the Jordan River. That baptism in water was purely symbolic in the manner of the Jews as Jesus submitted to his Father’s will. The actual anointing occurred immediately following the baptismal act as the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon Jesus.

### *John, the Baptist*

At the time when Jesus was about thirty years of age, God called forth a man named John (Lu.3:2). John had been born of Elisabeth and Zacharias six months before the birth of Jesus (Lu.1:36). That means that John’s ministry could have started as much as six months before the ministry of Jesus had begun. Elisabeth and Zacharias lived near Jerusalem (hill country of Judea) where Zacharias served in the Temple (Lu.1:8,9). Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth about seventy miles to the North. Therefore, while John and Jesus would have met each other (especially on the occasion of visits to Jerusalem) they were not constant companions. Before John was born, an angel had appeared to Zacharias in the Temple saying that John would go before the Lord “...in the spirit and power of Elias... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Lu.1:17). John was actually the last of the Old Testament prophets, since God was soon to speak his final Words through “...his Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (He.1:1,2).

John’s ministry had been foretold of old. The Jews were constantly looking for the Messiah, and expected the return of Elijah

(*Elias* in the Greek) before the coming of the Messiah (Mal.4:5).<sup>77</sup> Therefore, when John began baptizing and calling on all to repent and witnessing that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, he drew quite a crowd of people. The Jewish leaders sent priests and Levites to determine just who this man was (Jn.1:19). When they asked John if he was the Christ (i.e. the Messiah), John quickly stated that he was not (Jn.1:20). When asked directly if he was then *Elias*, he said that he was not the prophet Elijah (Jn.1:21). Nevertheless, he said that he *was* “...the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord” as said the prophet [Isaiah] (Jn.1:23; Is.40:3). Therefore, while denying that he was Elijah returned to the earth in the flesh, he affirmed that he was the forerunner predicted by Isaiah to come in order to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

### *The Jewish Tradition of Water Baptism*

John baptized with water (Jn.1:26). It is important for us to understand that the baptism of John was not the same as that practiced today by Christian believers who often submit to water baptism as a symbolic act to identify themselves with Christ or as a ceremonial initiation in order to join a local church.<sup>78</sup> We must understand that baptism (Gr. *baptizo*) was a common act performed by the Jews under the Mosaic laws of purification (Ex.30:17–21; Le.11:25). Its implication was that of washing or cleansing the body to make it ceremonially presentable to God in acts of worship and for Temple service.<sup>79</sup> John’s ministry was that of preparing the Jewish people for the coming of their Messiah. However, beyond merely the washing of the bodies of the Jews was the necessary washing of their minds by both thoughts and deeds of repentance. John’s baptism was merely a

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<sup>77</sup> Elijah will actually return in the flesh before the second advent of Jesus as we shall discuss in Book III of this work. The Jews at this time would have seen both advents as the same event.

<sup>78</sup> The Christian tradition of ritual baptism is discussed very thoroughly in Section 15, Chapters 15.1, 15.2, and 15.3, Book II of this work.

<sup>79</sup> The Jews also commonly baptized proselytes (converts) to the Jewish faith.

This act both symbolized a cleansing from their Gentile sins, as well as an act of identification with the Jewish faith and nation.

symbolic act representing the greater effort of the Jews in cleansing their minds to stand before their God and to receive his blessing. Water baptism, in itself, has no power to cleanse a person in order to make him presentable before God; it is only symbolic of that inner cleansing that must first take place in hearts and minds. John's message was to repent (i.e. to turn from sin and toward God in the heart and mind) in order to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Water baptism was a symbolic outward response signifying the heeding of that message (He.10:22).

While ritual baptism was a common practice of the Jews, the widespread and general calling of the Jewish multitudes to repent and to be made ceremonially presentable to God, implied that some momentous event was about to take place. Prior to God appearing before the people in the mountain of Sinai, He said to Moses, "...Go unto the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow and let them wash their clothes" (Ex.19:10). At that time, the Law (i.e. the Ten Commandments) was given.

Once again, God was preparing to visit his people, not in the fire and smoke of Sinai, but with his glory hidden in the cloak of human flesh in the person of his own Son. This time, it was not Moses that gave the message to the people to cleanse themselves, but a man named John. The wild appearance and manner of John was quite indicative of the prophet Elijah, who was also a man of the wilderness. That resemblance was not lost upon the Jewish people. John was not a man of religious office delivering a formal message in the Temple, but the resounding cry of a man out of the wilderness around Jerusalem calling for Israel to repent and to prepare to receive their long-awaited Messiah.

### ***The Three-fold Purpose of John's Baptism***

The purpose of John's baptism was actually three-fold: First, through the act of baptism, John enjoined those who were baptized to repent of their sins, and turn toward God (Lu.3:3). The second purpose for John's baptism is that, through the act of baptism, the Christ would be revealed to him and to all of Israel. There is still a third significant

purpose for John's baptism. Jesus was anointed to take upon Himself all of the sins of the world as our High Priest (Jn.1:29)

### **A Call to Repentance**

It cannot be said that John's baptism itself brought repentance, for he admonished those Pharisees and Sadducees for coming without minds and thoughts suitable for repentance (Lu.3:7,8). John did not over value his baptism with mere water in that he said "I indeed baptize you with water...", for he knew that the one who would follow him would baptize "...with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Mt.3:11; Lu.3:16). The outward cleansing of the body with water cannot truly compare with the inner cleansing of the soul with the Holy Spirit of God.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, it can be rightly said that John only prepared the way for Christ by sounding the "trumpet" and turning the minds of the Jews toward God that they may receive their Messiah.

### **The Revelation of Christ**

God had told John, he should recognize the Christ (the Messiah) by seeing the Spirit of God descending from heaven like a dove and remaining on him (Jn.1:31-34). John was acquainted with Jesus and already knew Him to be the sinless one sent from God. Nevertheless, it was not up to John to verify Jesus as the Messiah; it was up to God. Any human doubt that John may have had was set to rest when God Himself identified Jesus as his "beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." When Jesus came forth from the water, that event occurred as John had been fore-told that it would (Mt.3:16,17). Through the symbolic act of water baptism, John identified Jesus as the Messiah and announced Him to all Israel by saying that "...this is the Son of God" (Jn.1:34), "Behold the Lamb of God" (Jn.1:36), and in plain terms, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of

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<sup>80</sup>While fire is most often associated with God's judgment, here it may more correctly be interpreted as the conviction of a coming judgment. To be "baptized" in this sense is to be overwhelmed with pending judgment for our sins. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts men of their sins in order that they may turn to God (repent) and be cleansed of their sins in the blood of Christ.

the world” (Jn.1:29). Through John’s ministry, Jesus was revealed as the long awaited Messiah!

### **The Anointing of Our High Priest**

Until the time of his baptism, Jesus had lived a blameless life, and He was perfect before God. Yet, the main work that Jesus was to perform had not yet begun. When Jesus came to John to be baptized, John at first refused Him, and said, “...I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me” (Mt.3:14)? John understood that Jesus would join the redeemed to Himself by an act of identification (baptism) through the Holy Spirit and not merely symbolically by an outward act of ritual water baptism (Mt.3:11). “And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt.3:15).

John knew that Jesus was perfect in the sight of God and had nothing of which to repent. However, Jesus at that time began the main work for which He was sent by suffering Himself to the repentance of many. The Levitical High Priest represented the Jewish people before God; Jesus, our great High Priest, took it upon himself to represent every sinful man before God. Jesus took upon Himself the exact role for which the Father had sent Him. Then came the Spirit of God from heaven and a voice, which said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt.3:17).

John came to baptize with water in the Jordan River; a purpose established by God Himself to the ends that He required. However, we must remember that God Himself was also on earth in the flesh in the man Jesus Christ. For when the Spirit descended upon Jesus, it was given without measure (Jn.3:34) that in Jesus was “all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col.2:9), that is, fully God in the flesh (Jn.1:14). The “God-man” had come to take upon Himself the sins of the whole world, to suffer the just punishment for those sins, and in so doing to impart his righteousness, by grace alone, to all who would receive Him. God’s anointed had come out of eternity and had appeared in time upon the pages of man’s history thus fulfilling God’s promise.

Surely, of all the mortal men that were born of woman there is none greater than was John the Baptist for he announced to a waiting

world the coming of the Messiah, and through his God-given ministry the work of Christ began (Mt.11:11). John belonged to the old covenant of law; Jesus was to be the beginning of a new covenant of grace. As Jesus' ministry began out of the ministry of John, so now the new covenant would be built upon the legal foundation of the old. The old covenant would not be destroyed by the new, but the old would fade into the background as its purpose was fulfilled and the new was built upon it. Now Christ would increase in significance, and John would decrease (Jn.3:30), since the old covenant must now give way to the new, John's work was completed. The Messiah was revealed. He had come!

### *Jesus' Earthly Ministry*

The teaching ministry of Christ during the three years from his baptism to his death on the cross will not be covered in detail here in this section. Because of the importance that should be placed on various events and teachings of Jesus' ministry they would be better covered in a topical manner rather than relate them here in a mere historic dialogue.<sup>81</sup> Many essentials of his teaching will be covered later under various topics as they occur throughout this work.

The religious liberal, today, places the major emphasis upon the ministry of Christ to the extent that they no longer see Him as God incarnate but see Him only as a man who was a great teacher who had compassion for people. They see Him as a man who, unfortunately, died at an early age as a revolutionary because he angered his fellow Jews. In misplacing the emphasis, the liberal misses the major purpose for Jesus' coming into the world, which was to die for the sins of the world and thus reconcile sinful man to a Holy God. Salvation did not come by means of Jesus' teaching ministry, but through his suffering of death on the cross on every man's behalf. The salvation of men's souls entirely depends upon their acceptance of the atonement made for them through the blood of Christ.

That said, we must not slight the importance of Jesus' ministry on earth during that time. For Christ's ministry was the cornerstone of

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<sup>81</sup> The four Gospels in the Bible already adequately cover this dialog.

truth that the apostles laid as the foundation for all Christian doctrine that would follow his ascension even to the present day. In addition, the ministry of Christ officially offered the Kingdom of Heaven to the Jews in the person of the King. When the King, Himself, was rejected by the Jews, the theme of Jesus' teaching changed to that of the new covenant Church Age in order to prepare his disciples for the time of grace in which we now live (Mt.13:1–58). The Kingdom of Heaven is in abeyance today, but it will someday come into full fruition when the King returns at the end of the Church Age to set up his Kingdom on Earth. The rejection of the Kingdom by the Jews has not thwarted its establishment, nor has it even delayed it, but it has made way for the present age wherein many, both Jew and Gentile, will receive the salvation of God through Christ.

It was only after Jesus was baptized of John (Mt.3:13–17) and after the wilderness testing by Satan (Mt.4:1–10), that He, being filled with the Holy Spirit, began to teach in the various synagogues (Lu.4:15). We read of Jesus teaching at his hometown of Nazareth in the synagogue in Luke 4 beginning at verse 16. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Lu.4:16). To say that Jesus' teaching was not well received in the synagogue at Nazareth is an understatement. "And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong" (Lu.4:28,29).

Jesus' teaching was not well received in his own hometown where He was well known as the carpenter's son, but it was received by the multitudes in other synagogues where He taught. As we read in Luke's gospel, He was "glorified of all" that heard Him (Lu.4:15). As Jesus said, "A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" (Mk.6:4). In general, it was the poor, the brokenhearted, those oppressed by sin, and the blind and the bruised that heard Him (Lu.4:18). The religious leaders became increasingly opposed to Him until the opposition ultimately led to his arrest and crucifixion, as we shall discuss in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4.4 The Crucifixion

We must understand that it was preordained by God that Christ should die on the cross at Calvary (Mk.8:31). It came as no surprise to God or to Jesus, Himself, that He must offer Himself up on the cross. All of the events that occurred during Christ's life were leading to that one central event, but death would come at the hands of sinful men.<sup>82</sup>

### *Placing the Responsibility for Jesus' Death*

It may be seen that although the Jews were consenting, even demanding Jesus' death (Lu.23:21), the actual sentence was carried out by non-Jews, that is, by Gentiles or more specifically Romans (Mk.15:16,25). That must be said to silence those that would place the responsibility for Christ's crucifixion totally at the feet of the Jews. Pilate could have and should have released Jesus for he found no reason why Jesus should have been sentenced to death (Mk.15:10; Lu.23:4,14). Yet, Pilate did not release Jesus but gave Him over to death by crucifixion (Lu.23:24).

Though Pilate attempted to "wash his hands" of that responsibility, the final decision, in the human sense, was still his own (Mt.27:24). True, Pilate attempted to persuade the people by offering to free either Barabbas or Jesus (Mt.27:17). Surely, he considered that the people would rather that he release Jesus than Barabbas, for he knew that they had delivered Jesus from envy, not for any wrong doing, and Barabbas was a notorious murderer (Mk.15:10,7)! Yet, "the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus" (Mt.27:20). Pilate caved in to the peoples' evil desires when Jesus was falsely accused of setting Himself up as a king in opposition to Caesar (Jn.19:12). Pilate knew full well that this was a mere ploy on the part of the Jews. Jesus had already told Pilate that his kingdom was "not of this [age]" and,

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<sup>82</sup>The offering of the perfect sacrifice needed to be made by man, not by God. It was, thus, man offering the perfect sacrifice to God for his sins. A perfect sacrifice that God had provided to be sure; nonetheless, the Lamb of God was an offering from sinful man to God through Jesus Christ our high priest.

therefore, represented no physical threat to Roman rule (Jn.18:36). Pilate, already in a shaky position with Caesar because of frequent rebellions of the Jews, surrendered Jesus to death even though he knew that Jesus was innocent of any actions requiring death by the civil authorities (Mk.15:15). No, the death of Jesus cannot be placed solely at the feet of the Jews.

In a larger sense, Jesus was predestined to die on that cross. It was for that express purpose that Christ had come on the earth. All of those events had to occur according to the will of God. Then, can we excuse both the Jew and Gentile for carrying out God's will? In no way! For, the act of condemning an innocent man to death, insisting, and carrying out the act was evil; that the innocent man was also their Messiah was unmistakably evil. Man's thoughts are always bent toward evil! If those multitudes had turned to God, there would have been no crucifixion, but they would not, indeed *could not*, because of their fallen nature. Therefore, God used the fallen nature of evil man to carry out the act that his justice required.

Nor can we who did not live in that generation that crucified Christ escape blame. Not only are we the descendants of that generation (both Jew and Gentile), we must never forget that it is *our* sins as well as their sins that made the sacrifice necessary. The sin offering was made for us as well as for them. Therefore, the blame for the crucifixion of Christ must fall at our own feet as well as the generation of man that yelled, "crucify him", nailed Him to the cross, and reviled Him and railed upon Him as He hung there. Even today, men revile Him and crucify Him repeatedly in their minds as well as their speech. We must accept the blame in order to lay claim to the offering. We must confess *our sins* for which He was crucified in order to receive God's salvation. We must give up our own perceived self-righteousness in order to receive the true righteousness of God through Christ.

Pilate, very distraught by the behavior of the Jews, had a sign placed on Jesus' cross that read: "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Jn.19:19). The entire city could read that sign that was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (Jn.19:20). The deed was proclaimed in every major language of that day. No urging by the

Jewish religious leaders could cause Pilate to have the sign taken down (Jn.19:21,22). Though Jesus was the long awaited King of the Jews, his sacrificial death was for the sins of all humanity. The entire city knew of that event so that nothing was done in secret, but openly with the full knowledge of all of Jesus' friends and enemies alike.

### ***The Method of Roman Crucifixion***

Because of the nearness of the Jewish Passover, Jesus was nailed to the cross rather than being tied to the cross as was sometimes typical of Roman crucifixion (Jn.20:25). By that means, his death would be hastened. It is not known whether the two others that were crucified with Jesus were tied or nailed to their crosses, but since the Sabbath day was rapidly approaching, they were probably nailed to their crosses as well. The extreme torment that Jesus underwent on the cross in our behalf, suffering both the wrath of man as well as the wrath of God, would have been sufficient to account for his earlier death. However, Roman crucifixion was ordinarily a long ordeal. Severe scourging with a whip was also a common practice before crucifixion. The scourging resulted in extreme exhaustion and loss of blood. That practice, no doubt, accounted for the fact that Jesus was physically unable to carry his own cross to Golgotha.

The criminal, affixed to the cross, would often hang there for two or three days before death finally came. When death did come, it was usually from heart failure, not loss of blood. Often the dead body would remain on the cross for as long as fifteen days to set an example for others who would dare to violate Roman law. Burial in a sepulcher was ordinarily denied in order to invoke the final indignity. That is why Joseph of Arimathaea needed to plead with Pilate for Jesus' body (Mt.27:57,58). In order to finally ensure death, the victim's legs would be broken which seriously impaired their breathing. In other instances, a fire was built beneath the cross, and the victim would die of smoke inhalation that finally put an end to their suffering.

### **The Cross**

The exact structure of the cross on which Jesus died is not known. The Greek word *stauros* translated "cross" in Scripture

actually denotes only an upright pole or stake. For that reason, it is thought by many that Jesus' cross was merely a vertical pole dropped into a socket dug in the ground. The only possible cross-member that we are told of in Scripture is the sign that Pilate had ordered hung on Jesus' cross.

The traditional cross, which is used symbolically today, is a Latin cross that consists of a vertical upright, and a horizontal member fixed to it a shorter distance from the top than the bottom. This Latin shape evolved from traditions existing from the times of the early Roman Church, and it came about through the infiltration of Christianity with paganism that began in the third century. The mystic symbol Tau "T" that stood for the ancient Chaldean god Tammuz was slowly accepted as the symbol for the cross of Christ. The horizontal member was commonly lowered thus giving us the present traditional symbol that somewhat represents a man standing with outstretched arms.

We must understand that the Latin cross is only a symbolic representation of the crucifixion. There is no real evidence that Jesus died on a Latin cross. Other crosses that were used by Romans in that day were shaped like the letter "T", "X", or even like a plus sign: "+". The Roman emperor Constantine's vision of a cross in the third century was that of a Chi or "X" that was probably represented by crossed swords on the shields of his army.<sup>83</sup>

### *An Account of the Crucifixion of Christ*

Christ was on the cross for six hours before his death. As stated above, that was a very short length of time for death to come by crucifixion; it was purposefully drawn out over several days in order to maximize the agony of death. That caused Pilate to be amazed that Jesus had died so quickly (Mk.15:44). During the first three hours, the Gospels describe these accounts: The soldiers parted Jesus' garments, and cast lots for them as He was readied for crucifixion (Mt.27:35; Mk.15:24; Jn.19:24). Even at that hour, Jesus asked forgiveness for

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<sup>83</sup> Constantine the Great as well as the origin of Christian symbols will be discussed in Book III of this work.

them: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lu.23:34). On the third hour of the day (nine o’clock A.M. as we reckon time today), Jesus was nailed to the cross (Mk.15:25).

Those that passed by Jesus reviled Him saying, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Mt.27:40). The chief priests mocked Him saying “He saved others; himself he cannot save” (Mt.27:42). The soldiers also mocked Him, saying, “If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself” (Lu.23:37). None of those people expected Jesus to come down from the cross. They did not know that Jesus willingly suffered their rebuke. Jesus could have saved Himself even at that hour, since He was God in the flesh, but He chose to hang on the cross in pain and intense suffering. Therein is the great love of Christ revealed; for, if Jesus had saved Himself He would have destroyed all mankind. Instead, He chose to die even for those who reviled and mocked Him — yes, even for those and for countless generations of those to come (Lu.23:34). Truly, “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn.15:13). Nevertheless, Jesus had no friends to comfort Him as He hung there on the cross; even his closest disciples had deserted Him at his trial. “All his acquaintance... stood afar off, beholding these things” (Lu.23:49).<sup>84</sup> It was while men were yet enemies to God, that Jesus gave his life for us (Ro.5:8,10)!

Were there none who believed that Jesus was truly the Son of God? Even Jesus’ disciples who were distraught, shocked, and confused could not fathom the event that they were seeing with their own eyes: the death of the one whom they thought was the Christ upon a Roman cross — dying even as the worst of men die. Crucifixion was a death reserved only for the most terrible of criminals, insurrectionists, and traders (Ga.3:13).

Yet, even at that horrible hour, God was in full control. The events that must pass were to pass even as God had already ordained. No better evidence can be seen of God’s control than in the two men

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<sup>84</sup>While most of Jesus’ disciples had deserted him, the notable exception was the Apostle John who stood with Mary, the mother of Jesus, near the cross (Jn.19:25-27).

who were crucified along side Jesus (Jn.19:18; Mt.27:38). That those men were suffering so cruel a death indicated that they were not only thieves but also revolutionists, rebellious against both man and authority. Both men railed on Christ and insulted Him as they were put on the crosses (Mt.27:43,44).

### ***The Condemnation of the Cross***

Oh, that we may look on those two men as representative of all humanity! For, we are all condemned for our transgressions and rebellion against God. Only the final execution needs to be carried out! Were those two men thieves and worse because they had performed acts making them so? No. Rather, from their nature they were compelled to carry out the desires of their minds. Out of their nature came the acts for which they were condemned. Moreover, were not both of those men equally guilty of condemnation? Both had been tried and found guilty. The sentence was the same for both, death.

We too stand before God, condemned of acts that have sprung out of our fallen nature. The acts have not caused us to fall; rather, it is our fallen nature that has brought forth the acts. Moreover, we need not think that our sin is less than that of our brothers, because the just sentence is the same; death is the universal sentence of God against all men for their sin. From our nature comes sin, and from sin comes the sentence of death.

### ***The Cross Separates the Saved and the Unsaved***

One of the malefactors that were crucified with Christ railed on Him saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us" (Lu.23:39). That should sound familiar to our ears, for most men today rail on God saying: "Show yourself and we will believe" and "if you are God, do not allow the suffering and sadness that we observe all around us." It is apparent that this thief could not see beyond the suffering and troubles of this life and neither can most of us today. For we are too deeply concerned with the extension and joys of this present life, rather than concern ourselves with thoughts of eternity.

The second man, also condemned, also hanging on the cross, also suffering, also dying, finally rebuked the first man (Lu.23:40).

Seeing death, the second man did not look behind him at what he was leaving, but looked toward the ultimate judgment of God that was more terrible than that which he was suffering. For he said, “Dost not thou fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation” (Lu.23:40)? Confessing the sins that had brought him there he continued: “And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds...” (Lu.23:41). Recognizing the sinlessness of Christ he went on to say: “...but this man hath done nothing amiss.” Believing, he continued, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Lu.23:42). Could such a change of mind, such insight, such trust and belief come from the depths of that evil man? No, for good does not come from that which is evil. That this man came to that realization was totally the work of God the Father in that He *drew* him to Christ (Jn.6:44).

### *The Power of the Cross*

What then of that man's eternal status? Shall he go before the judgment alone, even as the other malefactor who railed against God even to the end? The Words spoken by Jesus to that man tells us that Christ had secured that man. There is two-fold meaning in the Words of Jesus: “Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Lu.23:43). First, Jesus said that this man would be “with Him” in paradise; therefore, where Christ would be, that man would be in his presence.

Secondly, that man would be in a place called “paradise.” To those that would venture to say that the man's presence in paradise did not mean he had been redeemed and thus had no entry into Heaven, lets look at the root of the word “paradise.”<sup>85</sup> The word “paradise” (Gr: *paradeisos*) defines a place of great beauty (not unlike Eden) and a place of peace and blessedness. When men died under the Old Covenant, their souls went to a place called *Hades* in the Greek or

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<sup>85</sup> Those who insist on salvation taking place only through the ritual of baptism (baptismal regeneration) often point out that paradise does not mean Heaven in this verse. Since the thief could not have been baptized at this late hour, he could not have actually been saved.

*Sheol* in the Hebrew. There, death held them captive. *Hades* was divided into two compartments, one consisting of paradise where the redeemed awaited the coming of Christ, and a second compartment of condemnation where men awaited the final judgment and the sentence of eternal punishment in Hell. Between the two compartments a wide gulf had been affixed that none could cross (Lu.16:26).

When Christ died and entered *Hades*, he entered paradise (Ep.4:9). There He met with all of the Old Testament Saints who had foreseen his day and had long awaited his coming (Jn.8:56; Lu.16:20-31). When he arose from the dead, He took all who had been held captive by death in paradise with Him, and when he ascended into Heaven, He also took those with Him into Heaven to remain there in his presence forever (Ep.4:8).<sup>86</sup>

The dying thief knew that Christ was coming “into a kingdom.” That it was not a kingdom of this world, the thief knew full well, for they were leaving this world behind! What did the thief mean by “remember me?” Would Jesus play word games with this man next to Him on the cross by promising him a temporary presence with Him in paradise without redemption? All who had ever entered into paradise were the redeemed of old without exception. The meaning is clear; this man’s faith, given by God, would save him from entering the place of condemnation, for Christ would remember him in paradise and carry him from there along with Him into the very presence of God in Heaven itself.

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86 It is very important that we recognize the important distinction to be made between *Sheol* and Hell. *Sheol* or *Hades* is a **temporary** place where the souls of the unregenerate dead go to await final judgment. Today, the soul of the Christian immediately goes into the very presence of Christ in Heaven upon his death instead of *Hades* since paradise has been emptied and closed by Christ. All who die without redemption in Christ continue to enter the remaining compartment of condemnation in *Hades* awaiting final judgment at the end of time. Inasmuch as their names will not be found written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, that judgment must be based upon their fallen works alone. At that time, Christ will issue the final sentence condemning them to the lake of fire, the outer darkness of Hell, for all eternity.

What a message for us exists in that mirror of humanity. Oh that we would look ahead toward that coming Kingdom, and not look back! For, all who believe in Jesus, the Son of God, confessing their worthlessness before Him and believing until the end, will be with Him in the final paradise of Heaven forever. To that end, may we all pray. For, "...whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn.3:16).

## Chapter 4.5 Jesus' Agony on the Cross

As the sixth hour of the day approached (noon), Jesus said to his mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" (Jn.19:26) and then said to the disciple John, "...Behold thy mother" (Jn.19:27)! In so saying, Mary would henceforth be treated as John's mother, and John as Mary's son, in accordance with Jewish custom. Thus a home was provided for Jesus' mother; that is reasonable evidence that Joseph was not still living at the time of Christ's crucifixion.

Now, as the hour of mid-day arrived, that hour of the day when the sun should have shown the brightest, complete and utter darkness fell upon the whole land (Mt.27:45). We can never know exactly what occurred in those last three hours as Jesus hung on the cross. The darkness may have symbolized the wrath or the withdrawal of God.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps nature surrounded that event in a veil of darkness because of the terrible affliction that Jesus suffered. While we can never fully probe that veil of darkness, it is important that we gain some understanding of what went on as Jesus was crucified. It was by means of the cross that our salvation was assured.

### *Jesus Suffered a Vicarious Death*

It has been said that Jesus was born in a rented stable, was buried in a borrowed tomb, and even died on another's cross. If we read the Gospel accounts carefully, we notice that the cross upon which Jesus died that day was actually prepared for Barabbas, not for Jesus. It was when Barabbas was freed by the insistence of the mob, that Jesus took his place. Jesus surely died in Barabbas' place, but we must not stop there. Jesus was innocent of any wrong-doing before man or before God. His death was not merely a substitutional death for Barabbas, but the perfect substitute for the death of all mankind. All of us today who will accept that fact can see that we also died on that

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<sup>87</sup> A solar eclipse could not have caused this darkness since the Jewish Passover occurred at the time of a full moon. At that time of the month, the moon could not have covered the sun's surface. Also, an eclipse could not have lasted for 3 hours as the account describes. The darkness was of a supernatural origin.

cross nearly two-thousand years ago though we were not yet born. Jesus died for us before we drew our first sinful breath. We died when He died; we live because He lives. That is what it means to be “in Christ”.<sup>88</sup>

However, it is not merely a matter of us seeing ourselves as having died in Christ; it is even more significant that God also sees us in Christ. For the substitution to be effective, God must accept the death of Jesus in our stead. We can be sure that this is true in that it was the “...determinant council and foreknowledge of God...” that delivered Christ in our place (Ac.2:23). God gave the sacrificial system to Israel to demonstrate substitutional death for sin. God in Christ prepared Him as the perfect offering to be made once for all. Where we were once all in Adam (in which all must die), we who believe through faith now find ourselves in Christ (in which all are made alive) (1Co.15:22). Our federal head was once Adam, but now it is Jesus Christ who is the second Adam replacing the first. Our natural birth made us all members of Adam’s fallen race; a spiritual rebirth transforms us into a godly redeemed race in Jesus Christ.

### ***Jesus Was Forsaken of God***

Jesus was heard to call out in Aramaic, “...My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mt.27:46, Ps.22:1).<sup>89</sup> The 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, which tells of Christ’s agony on the cross, gives us some insight into Christ’s sorrow. God, the Father, forsook Jesus as He hung there on our behalf. God, the Father, would not come to Jesus’ to provide comfort though Jesus cried out to Him as He suffered there in the bright light of the morning, and in the heavy darkness of the afternoon (Ps.22:2). How can we understand that? Jesus, the Son of God, had never known a moment when He could not have fellowship with his Father in Heaven. Even in the garden of Gethsemane where He faced the ordeal of the cross, He was able to communicate with his Father.

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<sup>88</sup>This doctrine, often known as "identification truth," is clearly spelled out for us by the Apostle Paul in the sixth chapter of his epistle to the Romans.

<sup>89</sup>Jesus likely spoke both Aramaic and Greek fluently. Since the 22<sup>nd</sup> psalm was written in Aramaic, Jesus' words were a direct quotation from this psalm.

Now, his Father would have nothing to do with Him though He cried out for his Father's comfort and aid throughout the ordeal of the cross! The 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm tells us that Jesus did not merely hang quietly on the cross, but cried out in his agony to his Father.

### ***Jesus Was Made Sin for Us***

Why could not God, the Father, communicate with and comfort his own Son during that horrible hour of his suffering on the cross? The answer is found in the words, "but thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Ps.22:3). God is a Holy God and cannot look upon iniquity. Nor, can He give comfort to sin. Though Jesus was the sinless one, as He suffered on the cross He was made sin for us (2Co.5:21). Jesus took upon Himself the sins of all mankind from Adam until man's little day on this sin-filled earth shall end. As Jesus cried out in his agony, his Father turned his back on Him because all of the sins of mankind were heaped upon Him. God had delivered the fathers of Israel when they had called out to Him (Ps.22:4,5). Why was Jesus not heard? "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people" (Ps.22:6). Jesus in that hour was made worse than a sinful man could ever be; He was made the human embodiment of sin itself. No ordinary man could have carried the load of sin that was upon Him as He suffered for the sins of the whole world. Jesus had drunk the cup of our iniquity to the dregs (cf. Mt.26:39,42; Mk.14:36; Lu.22:42). The pure and sinless One suffered the horror of being made the fullness of sin in every aspect of its atrocious foulness.

### ***Jesus Suffered Man's Wrath Because of His Perfection***

Would that man could have appreciated the agony that Jesus submitted Himself to suffer on their behalf upon the cross. Mankind was offering up the perfect and final sacrifice for their sin through their Great High Priest with no apparent knowledge of that fact (Lu.23:34; He.4:14). When the Jew offered up a sacrificial lamb it was, at least, with solemn ceremony and with some understanding of the temporary atonement that the offering made for their immediate sins. Yet, as the unblemished Lamb of God was offered up once to

atone for all sin, past, present, and future, He was not offered up with any sense of reverence or even with any sense of pity. Rather, He was "...a reproach of men, and despised of the people" (Ps.22:6). The wrath of man hounded Jesus as they slew Him. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, he trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him" (Ps.22:7,8). That was as much as to say, "If God wants him, He can have him, for we reject him!" Even as the Jews rejected Him, the Romans encircled Him like wild animals awaiting the death of their prey. "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion" (Ps.22:12,13).

### ***Jesus Suffered Physical Death***

Some would think, wrongly, that since Jesus was God in the flesh, He could not have suffered as other men suffer death. Alternatively, we may be led to believe, as did some of the Gnostics that He only suffered a symbolic death that was only in appearance and not in reality. Admittedly, we all have difficulty understanding how Jesus being God could die. Yet, the fact of Jesus' death is fully supported by Scripture. It was necessary that Jesus actually die on the cross in order to satisfy God, not merely to convince men. A symbolic death could not do that. Rather, Jesus, who was God, was made to be a little while lower than are the angels that He may actually suffer death in the flesh as a man. That Jesus, "...by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (He.2:9). The glorified Christ said, when He appeared to John on the island of Patmos, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore..." (Re.1:18).

Nor was Jesus spared the physical and emotional pain of death. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, which foretold Christ's agony on the cross, gives us some insight into his pain. Jesus was "poured out like water," his spirit thinned and spread. All of his bones felt as if they are out of joint. His heart became as wax, his manly courage was melted within Him (Ps.22:14). His physical strength was dried up like a sun-drenched piece of broken pottery. His tongue cleaved to his jaws, because God has brought him to the dust of death (Ps.22:15). At that time, Jesus was

heard to say, "...I thirst" (Jn.19:28). Jesus experienced extreme pain when the Gentiles (commonly referred to as dogs by the Hebrews) enclosed Him and drove the nails into his hands and feet (Ps.22:16). His agony from the cross was such that He could count all his bones singly as his joints pulled apart under the stress. His enemy looked and stared at Him (Ps.22:17). Even his garments were gone — the final indignity since He would have no further use of them — divided among the soldiers in his very sight. His coat went to him who had "luck" by casting lots (Ps.22:18). He was cursed of God for our sake, and He suffered every physical and mental horror in real death.

### *Jesus Suffered God's Wrath on Our Behalf*

It was bad enough that men had reviled and forsaken Him. It was even more horrible that God, the Father, had turned his back on Him as Jesus suffered there on the cross. However, God did much more than merely forsake Jesus to the physical and mental sufferings of the cross. God, whose wrath had been stored up against the sins of all mankind, loosed his vengeance upon the Lamb who was made a sin offering for us. In the ceremonial law of the Old Testament, the sacrifice was consumed by fire, which signified the wrath of God that was loosed upon the animal sacrifice that was substituted for the one who had brought the sin offering.

Now, the fire of God's judgment was turned upon Jesus as the sky darkened and God lashed out at his own Son in our stead. What must it have been like to be hanging there between Heaven and earth finding no place of comfort in either — forsaken of men — forsaken of God — suffering death — and then to suffer the full wrath of God upon all human sin? It is well for us that the curtain of darkness was pulled over the eyes of men when God unleashed his full fury upon sin; it is not something that we could bear to see and live. Because Jesus suffered that wrath in our stead, we shall never know the full horror of God's wrath unleashed upon sin. Even for the unsaved, Jesus has borne the blunt of God's wrath that they may for a time walk upon the earth without being immediately consumed. Moreover, for the redeemed who believe in Him, He has borne it all that we may also walk upright in heavenly places! "He is the propitiation for our sins:

and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1Jn.2:2). God judged the human race for their sin and carried out the full punishment for that sin against the only One who could have borne it — the sinless Christ.

### *Jesus Suffered Spiritual Death*

We can clearly see that Jesus suffered physical death upon the cross, that is, the death of his physical body. However, death for sin involves much more than that. The sinner must face eternal condemnation as well as everlasting alienation from the very presence of God. Because Jesus was made sin for us and died in our place, He also suffered that alienation and condemnation in our stead. On the cross, Jesus bowed his head and quietly said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Lu.23:46; Ps.31:5). Having said that, Jesus died on the cross that had awaited Him from the beginning of time. Jesus died the death of the sinner both physically and spiritually. His soul was separated from his body, and his Spirit was returned to his Father. He, Himself (i.e. his soul), suffered the eternal separation from God that we all deserve.<sup>90</sup> “What is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth” (Ep.4:9)? Jesus died; his body entered the tomb and his soul entered into *Sheol (Hades)*, the place where the souls of men go after death.<sup>91</sup>

“But [God] wilt not leave my soul in [*Sheol*]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Ps.16:10; cf. Ac.2:27). God would not, could not, leave the soul of his only begotten Son in *Sheol*, nor could He suffer his Holy One to see the corruption of the grave. Just as it was necessary that Jesus be made sin and die both physically and spiritually, so was it also imperative that He should not remain there for eternity! This is Jesus, “whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Ac.2:24). While Jesus suffered death in every way that a

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<sup>90</sup>It should be noted that only Christ could suffer eternal separation in a span of time. Only the Eternal One, Himself, could compress eternity into three days.

<sup>91</sup> See footnote 86, on page 240

mortal sinner could die, it was not possible for death to hold the sinless Son of God forever.

We must leave the wonder of Jesus' resurrection to the next chapter, but it is important here to understand that Jesus fully suffered death both physically and spiritually. Just as his body was resurrected from the tomb without seeing corruption, so was his soul resurrected from the eternal habitations of the place of dead souls (*Sheol*). When Jesus returned, He brought with Him the "...keys of [*Sheol*] and of death" (Re.1:18). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..." (Ro.8:1)!

### ***Jesus Made Full Atonement to God for Our Sins***

Jesus not only died on our behalf and suffered the wrath of God in our stead, He also satisfied God's need to have his Holiness avenged. Adam, when he sinned, cast aspersions upon the character of God. Man was not just disobedient, he also offended God's very being. It was necessary that atonement be made for the sin of man against God. Even the wrath of God loosed upon all unholiness and sin would not satisfy the deep wrong that man had done to a loving God. God's character would remain tarnished by the terrible offense of his own creation. In the Old Testament, atonement was made for sin by the offering of blood upon the altar by the high priest, who was man's representative before God. That was but a representation of the need for a perfect and righteous man to offer his own blood to make amends for the offense of man's sin against God.

Jesus Christ was to be that perfect and righteous man. Jesus offered his own blood upon the altar of the cross to atone for the grievous injury that man had made to God's person. We must realize that atonement is something of extreme value that man must offer to God, not something that God offers to man. Only the precious blood of Jesus Christ could satisfy a Holy God that amends had been fully made for the offense. That offering has been made in Christ for every man and woman who accepts Christ as his or her representative before God. When Jesus offered his blood, the door of communication was again opened between God and man. As the Temple veil was rent from heaven to earth, top to bottom (cf. Mt.27:51), God said that He

was satisfied: full atonement had been made to a Holy God for the offense of sinful man.

### ***Jesus Purchased Our Redemption***

In turn, God can offer redemption to all who accept the blood of Christ as atonement for their sins. “Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (He.9:22). “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1Pe.1:18,19). “For ye are bought with a price...” (1Co.6:20). Therefore, we must see that Jesus purchased our redemption with his own blood that was offered to God for the atonement of our sins.

God has recovered us from the brink of destruction and has set us free from the prison in which Satan had us bound. Because we had fallen far from any hope of communion with a Holy God, we found ourselves under bondage to that fallen spirit which controlled our lives and demanded the last ounce of flesh. We could not even see beyond the prison walls to the wondrous grace of a loving God. In fact, we saw God as a tyrant that desired an obedience that we would not (indeed, could not) offer. Nevertheless, the price for our freedom has been paid in full! Light has flooded the prison cell of our soul and we have been led forth to know the wonder and majesty of God. As our redemption was purchased, the order for our release was given. For those who will accept the redemption that is offered, liberty is received (2Co.3:17).

### ***The Victory of the Cross***

The worldly man has a difficult time understanding that victory could be obtained in the process of death by crucifixion. They may be able to understand that a cause could be furthered by the death of a martyr, but as we have seen Jesus was no martyr. On the surface, Jesus’ crucifixion may only appear to have been the death of an innocent man by the miscarriage of Roman justice. Nevertheless, the crucifixion was no miscarriage of God’s justice, no accident, no miscalculation, no senseless sacrifice to further a cause. It was for all

of the reasons previously stated in order that God could vindicate his holiness and save sinful man, his own creation, from destruction.

Jesus said, "...I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (Jn.10:17,18). Jesus did not commit suicide. He was commanded of God, his Father, to lay down his life with the full knowledge of his authority to restore his life. No man had the power to take the life of the Son of God; Jesus Himself must be the one to lay it down. Jesus could have escaped his captors in the garden of Gethsemane just as He had escaped would-be captors on many other occasions, but his hour had come. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (Jn.17:1,2).

As the ninth hour approached (3 P.M.), the centurion heard Jesus shout with a loud voice, "It is finished." (Jn.19:30; cf. Mt.27:50). A cry of triumph, for Jesus had finished the work for which He was sent into the world. Three words with oh so much meaning, for Jesus paid it all! Having said that, Jesus bowed his head and quietly said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit..." (Lu.23:46; Ps.31:5). Having said that, Jesus died on the cross that had awaited Him from the beginning of time. Jesus did not die as a martyr to some religious cause. He died to gain the victory over man's sin against our Holy God that death itself may die.

An earthquake shook the earth, and rocks were broken in two, and the veil of the Temple, into the Holiest of Holies, was torn in two from top to bottom signifying that access to God by man was open and was no longer veiled (Mt.27:51; Mk.15:38; Lu.23:45). The sacrifice of the Lamb of God had been made: the perfect sacrifice of the only just man that ever lived for the unjust multitudes. God had accepted the death of his only Son in our place. Light came back upon the land replacing the darkness. And the centurion, a hardened soldier, having seen and heard the events of those last moments, feared greatly and said, "...Truly this was the Son of God" (Mt.27:54).

***The Immediate Aftermath of the Crucifixion***

The legs of the two thieves were broken to hasten death, but Jesus was found already dead (Jn.19:32,33). Therefore, Jesus' legs were not broken, but one of the soldiers pierced his side, and blood and water flowed from the wound (Jn.19:34). Jesus was wrapped in a clean linen cloth and laid in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, who was a secret disciple of Jesus (Jn.19:38–40), and a huge stone door was rolled over the opening (Mt.27:60). All of that was done in haste, since the 12<sup>th</sup> hour (6 P.M.) approached. That was the start of the Passover (Jn.19:42). All must be completed before the evening of the Passover when all must be indoors.

The chief priests and Pharisees, fearing that Jesus' disciples would come and steal Jesus' body from the grave, went to Pilate asking that the tomb be guarded until after the third day (Mt.27:64,65). They did that, because they remembered how Jesus had said that He would rise again after three days (Mt.27:63). They feared that if Jesus could be made to appear to arise from the grave that they would have more trouble than when He was alive. Then too, one cannot help but wonder if they also feared that Jesus would, indeed, arise on the third day as He had said. The priests and Pharisees went to the sepulcher, sealed the stone, and set forth the guard provided by Pilate (Mt.27:66).

The day of the Passover had begun at sundown on Friday evening and extended until sundown on Saturday. It was therefore Sunday morning at daybreak before any of the Jews ventured forth (Mt.28:1; Mk.16:1; Lu.24:1; Jn.20:1). God had passed over sinful man; the lamb had been consumed (Ex.12:10). As that first day broke forth, so was a new era to begin for all mankind — an amazing era of grace.

## Chapter 4.6 The Resurrection of Jesus

That Jesus died on the cross is an historical certainty. That matter is doubted by few, for men die every day. Yet, of greater importance and significance is the fact that Jesus did not remain dead, but having defeated death, He arose again to life (Lu.24:5–7). To be very clear, the body of Jesus was raised by the Holy Spirit so that Jesus was (and is) the same Jesus that died on the cross. Jesus was raised from the dead complete in body, soul, and spirit.

### *The Necessity of Jesus' Resurrection*

If we fail to realize that Jesus arose from the dead in the flesh, we destroy in our minds the truth of the Gospel. Such disbelief does not change the fact of the resurrection, but it does change our relationship to Christ with regard to trusting Him for our own resurrection. If we believe we have truly died with Him, it would follow that we would remain dead in Him; therefore, it destroys all hope of our own future resurrection from the grave. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him” (Ro.6:5,8).

Paul said, “if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1Co.15:14). If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, Christianity is meaningless. It would be a religion devoid of any hope. The ultimate great hope of Christianity is the bodily resurrection of the dead. When Jesus died, He carried all of our sins with Him to the grave. If we are identified with Him in his death, but we are not identified with Him in his bodily resurrection, where then is our hope. “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished” (1Co.15:17,18). The sin debt to God would be paid through Christ’s death, but there would be no *justification* of man to God without a living Christ. However, as Paul said, “[Jesus] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our *justification*” (Ro.4:25 emphasis added).

Therefore, it was imperative that Jesus be raised from the dead in order that we who died with Him should also be made alive in Him. If there were no resurrection, then Jesus would have been but a martyr who paid the price of atonement in order to appease God, but provided no benefit to mankind. Without his resurrection, there could be no justification and no fellowship between God and man. When Christ arose from the grave, where He had put to death the sin of the entire world, we who are in Him also arose with Him. “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ro.6:11).

Satan has done much in an attempt to destroy this truth, because it is the sure proof of his defeat. When Jesus arose from the dead, the chains with which Satan bound us to himself were broken. Satan constantly attempts to justify his own continued existence by accusing man of his sin before God. Nevertheless, in the death of Christ, mans’ sin debt has been paid in full. In Jesus’ resurrection, man is fully justified to God in the perfect person of Christ. Satan lost in his attempt to use mans’ sin as a shield for his own evil. God is just in saving all men who stand in Christ, while He is also just in condemning all that is evil to the lake of fire (Re.21:8).

If Jesus did not rise in his body from the dead, then we also have no hope of life after our death, but cling to a vague hope of some form of spiritual existence that knows no substance in reality. Why then did Christ come to Earth? For what purpose was his death on the cross? Jesus, speaking of his own, said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (Jn.10:10). Yes, and not merely life in a mindless and bodiless state of being which is akin to death, but eternal life in fullness and abundance. Having accomplished his purpose isn’t it appropriate, even necessary, that Jesus Himself should be the first to rise from the dead? “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1Co.15:20).

### ***What Says the Scripture Accounts?***

The biblical accounts of Jesus’ resurrection leave no doubt that Jesus appeared alive from the dead, for as we read in his own words:

“...it is I myself” (Lu.24:39). The claim of physical resurrection is not some theory that is unsupported by the facts of Scripture. Why then do some recoil from that Scriptural truth while, perhaps, still claiming to support the authority of the Bible? A careful study of the Scriptures leaves a rational man with no alternative but to accept the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ as an incontrovertible fact. If we are able to believe in the existence of God, are we not then able to believe *all* of the Truth that He has revealed to us in his written Word? The accounts of the Scriptures are very clear: Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, because death was not able to hold Him (Ac.2:24).

Therefore, all arguments against the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ must necessarily arise from rationalization of the human mind apart from Scripture. Most all anti-resurrection theories have originated with the rank unbeliever. The secular minded man would naturally think that way since he lacks the benefit of spiritual guidance and acts in complete ignorance of the historic accuracy of what is actually contained in the Scripture text.

Nevertheless, it is also true that many who confess Christ as savior, or at least call themselves “Christians,” often find themselves siding with unbelievers in denying the physical resurrection. That state of doubt was once the condition of the Apostle Thomas: “But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus<sup>92</sup>, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (Jn.20:24,25).

Even genuine believers often feel foolish in going up against the “law of nature” which states that that which dies does not spring back to life; the flesh decays and is no more. We must admit that death is both common and absolute in the human experience. That is the

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<sup>92</sup> The word “didymus” means “twin.” It is not known if Thomas actually had a physical twin brother or sister. Perhaps he was only referred to by this name because of the twin sides of his mind as he vacillated between human rationalism and unbending faith.

natural occurrence in a sin-cursed world, but death is not natural: it is the result of sin. Yet, when we speak of the resurrection of Christ, we are not speaking of a natural event, we are speaking of a unique *supernatural* event. We are speaking of God Himself directly intervening in the affairs of man.<sup>93</sup> Why then should it seem so strange that God can overrule so-called “natural laws” which He Himself instituted?

### ***Myths Concerning Jesus’ Resurrection***

That all myths concerning Jesus’ resurrection may be laid to rest, let us briefly look into the tales that men have devised to discredit the Scriptural accounts. Perhaps when faced with the certainty of Scripture, even those men, as did Thomas, shall yet believe (Jn.20:26–28). As “Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (Jn.20:29). Having carefully studied the Scriptural records, let us also believe through the eyes of faith though we have not seen Him with our physical eyes.

For, what good to any of us is a dead Christ (1Co.15:12–14)? Would we not then, as the Pharisees, exclaim that if He could save others, He could not save Himself (Mt.27:42)? In saying that, they were also stating that Jesus had no power at all to save anyone. May that thought never be entertained in the minds of the redeemed! For, we are convinced that Jesus has not only the power to save us to the uttermost, but that He has provided proof of that power through a demonstration of that power in that He Himself arose from the dead.

### **The Stolen Body Theory**

According to the written record, a fictitious story was spread abroad by the Jewish leaders in the days following Jesus’ resurrection that his disciples had stolen his body out of the tomb and had buried it elsewhere so that they could falsely claim that Jesus had risen from the

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<sup>93</sup>The unbeliever (agnostic) often says that he requires a supernatural sign from God in order to believe. Yet, he denies the fact of supernatural intervention when directly faced with it.

dead. Scripture further states that the Roman guards that had been stationed at the tomb were bribed with money to spread that story, and were promised protection from any disciplinary action undertaken by Pilate against them (Mt.28:11–15).

Of all the theories that we are to discuss here, this theory has the most credibility since it was the first theory that was advanced by men actually present at the time of the resurrection. That is not to say that it is rational or that it will hold up under scrutiny. Nevertheless, this first theory denies all of the other theories that other men have advanced over the ages since. In a sense, this is the only theory that we need deal with at all. If a better explanation (other than resurrection) were available, the Pharisees would certainly have presented it first. For that reason, we shall take some time analyzing it here.

Roman guards were stationed at the tomb specifically to prevent any possibility of the disciples taking the body and falsely claiming resurrection (Mt.27:62–64). We are also told that the tomb had been sealed with the seal of Rome which would have carried the death penalty for any who dared to break it (Mt.27:66). One does not ordinarily need to take such extraordinary measures to guard a corpse in the grave. Rather than providing any protection for the guards, the Pharisees would have been greatly angered by any genuine report of the theft of the body, and they would have surely reported the failure to properly guard against it to Pilate. That this did not happen proves that the guards told the Pharisees a miraculous story that was so frightening to their ears that they were willing to pay the guards to spread a false story and would make an extreme effort to intercede for them before Pilate. That means of intercession would be to tell Pilate privately that their rumor that was being spread about was not true, inasmuch as the Pharisees obviously did not have any influence with Pilate regarding the way he chose to discipline his military.

According to the story, that the Pharisees and the guards agreed to circulate, the body of Jesus was stolen while the guards were sound asleep (Mt.28:13). There are several fallacies with that story: First, there was the difficulty of quietly removing the huge stone from the entrance. Then, why would the disciples have removed Jesus' burial clothes and left them in the tomb (Jn.20:6,7)? Surely, the guards

could have awakened at any time while they were doing that. Lastly, Roman soldiers were not in the habit of sleeping while on guard duty. The guards would have come up with a better story than that in an effort to save their own lives. Since the guards were to be placed for three days (Mt.27:64), a sufficient number of guards would have been placed there that they would sleep in shifts. We must remember that those were highly trained Roman soldiers, not civilians. In that foreign land, Roman soldiers had great reason to take guard duty seriously because of a possible rebellion of the Jews.

According to the recorded account in Matthew, "... there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." (Mt.28:2–4). That is the real story that the guards told the Pharisees. Looking for a credible explanation that would hide the true facts, the Pharisees likely considered that the guards "sleeping" was close enough to their being "like dead men" to carry the story.

Assuming for a moment that all of the guards were actually asleep, we must be led to believe that they continued to sleep through the noise and commotion of the huge stone being rolled away (Mt.27:60). Not one of them, but *all* of them! Were all the guards deaf, or perhaps snoring that loudly? Surely, the miraculous is easier to believe than that. On the other hand, perhaps it was just an earthquake that rolled back the stone at the very moment that the disciples came to steal the body. Talk about coincidence! Moreover, the guards apparently slept through the earthquake. We see how impossible it was for the guards to have been asleep as the story being circulated put forth. Moreover, we realize that if the guards were truly asleep as the story states, they would not have any idea of what happened to the body since a man asleep is not aware of any happenings around him. The testimony of the guards would be worthless if that were the case, and the true account given in Scripture again is un-refuted.

Since the guards were obviously not asleep, this tale would actually have us believe that the disciples, who had earlier run away in the garden when Jesus was taken (Mt.26:56), had overpowered alert

well-armed Roman guards. If so, we must ask where is there any recorded evidence of dead guards or of any dead disciples? Heavily armed and well-trained Roman soldiers would not have given up without a fight and then gone to the Pharisees to tell them about it.

Having overpowered the guards the disciples would then have rolled back the sealed stone door, taken the time to remove Jesus' burial clothes leaving them in the tomb, moved Jesus' body out of the tomb where it had already been buried, and then buried it elsewhere in secret. All of this was supposedly done in an inexplicable attempt to fake the resurrection of a man whom they knew to be dead. Not likely! Surely if that band of disciples were so inclined, they would rather have made an attempt to free Jesus *before* the cross, not after He had died and was buried in the tomb.

The disciples were in no frame of mind to do anything like that after having seen Jesus, whom they believed to be the long awaited Messiah, die in so humiliating a manner on the cross. Even they surely would have expected Jesus to come down from the cross if He was the Son of God; they did not yet perceive that his death on the cross was necessary (Lu.24:6–11). Their Messiah, whom they thought would set up the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, had just died on the cross and now their hopes were dashed (Jn.20:9). They most likely expected to be hunted down and brought to trial themselves, for now that Jesus was dead they were highly vulnerable (Jn.20:19). Confused, bereaved, humiliated and afraid; that was the condition of the apostles immediately following Jesus' death. They did not even take part in the burial of Jesus (Jn.19:38–42). It is not even known whether they knew the location of the tomb, but the women knew (Mt.27:55,56).

Therefore, we would be led to believe by this initial story that the disciples somehow stole the body of Jesus, and knowing that they spread a lie, allowed themselves to be persecuted, hunted, and berated, for the sake of perpetuating that lie. Incredible! This was no band of rebels bent on the overthrow of government. They were not looking for any self-gain in that they would benefit from such a deception in any way. Rather, those men soon suffered nothing but persecution as they continued to expound a simple Truth that they were convinced would save not only themselves but others as well from eternal

damnation. Theirs was not a mission of conquest, but a mission of love.

### The Spiritual Resurrection Theory

Some would say that Jesus rose in spirit only. If so, where was his body? We know from the accounts in the Bible that the tomb was empty; the grave clothes of Jesus still lay in the tomb (Lu.24:12; Jn.20:5–7). Nor can we suspect that the grave clothes could be mistaken, for they would still be freshly impregnated with the mixture of aloes, myrrh, and other spices used for burial (Jn.19:39,40).<sup>94</sup> It was for that purpose that the stone door was rolled away from the tomb by an angel from God; that man could see that the body was no longer there. The angel did *not* open the door to let Jesus out of the tomb. We know that Jesus had the power over matter to pass through that closed tomb door. It was for our benefit that it was opened with power that we may know the truth: "...for he is risen as he said" (Mt.28:6).

The biblical accounts leave no doubt whatsoever that the risen Jesus was *not* a spirit, for when the apostles thought they had seen Jesus' spirit, Jesus said, "Why are you troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Lu.24:38,39). Then, Jesus asked for food, and the apostles gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and a bit of honeycomb (Lu.24:41,42). Can spirits without bodies eat and digest human food? Jesus ate food in front of them as further evidence that when they looked at Him they were looking at solid flesh (Lu.24:43).

### The Coma Theory

Then there are those who say that Jesus did not die on the cross, but merely fell into a coma. Some suggest that Jesus was

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<sup>94</sup> The affluent Hebrews followed a procedure for the mummification of the dead that they had acquired during their time in Egypt. The hollow shell in the outline of a human body would have been apparent where the body of Jesus had once been, but the hollow head wrap was placed nearby in a place by itself. At first glance, John believed that the body was still there, but after Peter went into the tomb, he returned, entered, saw, and believed (Jn.20:4–8).

drugged (perhaps by prearranged plan) by the man who gave Him wine vinegar in a sponge (Mk.15:35,36). Then, say they, the coolness of the tomb awakened Him. For those who know anything of the ordeal of those who die on a cross, that is not possible. Even if Jesus had been in a coma rather than dead, it would have been impossible to remove Him from the cross before death occurred by suffocation. For, death on the cross occurs when the victim is no longer able to breathe by pushing up with the legs. The weight of their body results in suffocation in a very short time. We are told that when the soldiers went to break the legs of Jesus, they found Him already dead (Jn.19:33). One of the soldiers pierced his side; water and blood came out indicating that death had probably occurred as a result of heart rupture<sup>95</sup> (Jn.19:34).

That a man awaking from a coma and barely alive could have convinced the apostles that he had been raised from the dead and had won out over death is not even worth considering. Are those theorists to have us believe that Jesus, having recovered from his narrow escape, went into retirement after his appearance or died and was buried later? Come now! This is not worth any more serious thought.

### **The Twin Brother Theory**

Others would have us believe that Jesus had a twin brother who represented himself as Jesus to the apostles after Jesus' death. To that we must ask, what man do you know that has the power to walk through closed and bolted doors or that can merely vanish from sight in an instant? Wouldn't the apostles who followed Jesus for three years know if a twin brother existed, and for that matter, wouldn't the Pharisees know? Surely such a hoax could not have been perpetuated very long before everyone found out; the Pharisees would have seen to that. Could the apostles be fooled into thinking that another man was Jesus? No, that is not possible since they knew Jesus intimately. We are told that even they did not believe his resurrection at first (Lu.24:11). Thomas said he would not believe until he put his finger

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<sup>95</sup> Medically, this condition indicates that the red and white blood corpuscles had separated which is a sure indication of death.

into the nail prints on Jesus' hands, and thrust his hand into his side (Jn.20:25). When Thomas saw Him, he believed (Jn.20:27,28)!

Some say that another, perhaps a twin brother, actually died on the cross, not Jesus. Even assuming that the Romans could be fooled, the Pharisees would surely have known that, and the apostles would have known of the substitution and that the resurrection was faked. Would they have risked their lives for what they knew was a lie? Furthermore, how could the substitution have been made while Jesus was in Roman custody? Jesus definitely was the one arrested in the garden; Judas made sure of that (Mt.26:48,49). The accounts given in the Scriptures of the crucifixion leave no doubt as to who was hanging on the cross (Jn.19:25,26).

### **The Wrong Tomb Theory**

Another weak story, sometimes heard, is that all of the apostles and the women went to the wrong tomb and found it empty (Lu.24:1,2; Mt.27:55,56). If that were so, why did the Pharisees need to spread the word that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body (Mt.28:13)? All they had to do was produce Jesus' body from the right tomb. That would have ended the Christian movement immediately. Nevertheless, it *was* the right tomb; the burial clothes were still there. Surely, Joseph and Nicodemus knew where the tomb was; after all, they had begun the burial preparations and had laid Jesus' body in the sepulcher (Jn.19:38–40). No, this is no viable hypothesis at all.

### **The Hallucination Theory**

Still others would have us believe that the apostles hallucinated when they saw Jesus (Lu.24:36; Mk.16:12; 16:14). Are we to believe that all of the apostles had the same hallucination simultaneously? What about the testimony of the women who saw Him (Jn.20:16; Mt.28:9)? What of the approximately five hundred people that saw Him over a period of forty days (1Co.15:6; Ac.1:3)? Does it sound reasonable that that many people could have imagined Jesus' appearances? What of the open tomb and the missing body? We know that even the apostles did not believe at first, but considered the story

that the women told as “idle tales” (Lu.24:10,11). However, when faced with Truth, they had no choice but to believe.

### *The Truth*

The apostles became totally convinced of Jesus’ bodily resurrection from the dead by the proofs shown them (Jn.20:20). So should we be convinced (Jn.20:30,31). For what benefit is it to us to doubt what we know to be fact? How can we deny the fact that our very hope rests upon? It is painful for one who knows the Scriptural accounts to even consider the tales that others have devised. Yet, it is necessary that we come to the full Truth, not in shallow belief, but in the full knowledge of the facts. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus did not take place in a dark corner when no one was looking (Ac.26:26). It took place in Jerusalem at the crossroads of human civilization with large numbers in attendance. An historical account of those events was recorded so that future generations could know with absolute certainty that Jesus arose from the dead.

No, there is no serious question regarding the facts; the Bible gives a true account. We certainly know more about the life, death, and burial of Jesus, than any other man who lived two thousand years ago. The records are detailed and accurate. We need not believe in a vacuum. That we, as believers, believe by faith does not detract from the overwhelming evidence that has been provided to us through the Bible accounts. Can any news be better? One representative of the human race has died and returned from the grave; therein is our hope also!

## Chapter 4.7 Jesus' Ascension to Heaven

Christ appeared to his disciples for a period of forty days upon the earth (Ac.1:3). However, He was not to remain with them in the flesh. Having appeared to many fully establishing the fact of his resurrection, Jesus ascended into Heaven before the astonished apostles: And when He had finished speaking with them “while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight” (Ac.1:9). While the apostles stared toward heaven, two men in gleaming white clothing stood next to them (Ac.1:10) and said, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Ac.1:11;cf. Mt.24:30)

It should be apparent that the history of the last two thousand years would surely have been different if Jesus had remained upon the earth, for Jesus would not have died, but remained forever alive upon the earth even to this very day. Nonetheless, it was advantageous that Jesus should return to the Father and not remain on Earth. As the result of Jesus' departure, many benefits were to be received by those who are numbered among his chosen. It is important that we study the ascension and the many things that were accomplished as a benefit of his return to Heaven.

### *That the Son Be Returned to His Father*

We must always remember that Jesus was and is God in the flesh. He was and is the only begotten of the Father: not only begotten in the sense that Jesus was born into the world as the Son of God, but begotten in the sense that God has raised Him from the dead. God had sacrificed his only begotten Son for the sins of the world. Now, all of the work for which Christ was sent to Earth was accomplished.<sup>96</sup> It was necessary that Jesus return to his heavenly home to appear in the immediate presence of his Father. A tremendous breach had taken

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<sup>96</sup>There is yet more that Christ will accomplish at the time of his return. He has yet to put down all rebellion, establish the Kingdom on Earth, and judge all nations. We speak here only of the first advent.

place in the Godhead as God, the Father, had poured out his wrath upon Jesus for the judgment of sin. Even the resurrection had not fully restored that breach. The ascension achieved the reunion that restored full integrity to the Godhead.

We are told nothing of that reunion in heaven as the Son again appeared at the throne of God. We are only told, "...Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col.3:1). Was there a great celebration in which all of the heavenly hosts both witnessed and celebrated? We are left with mere speculation here.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, the reunion of the Godhead must have been deeply personal and was likely a private reunion. Who can understand the intimacy of the Godhead where love itself was first expressed: a perfect love beyond the comprehension of mortal man? Who can understand the deep loss stemming from the separation of God the Father from his beloved Son? Likewise, who could comprehend the restoration of that fellowship?

### *That Christ May Receive His Glory*

The return of the Son to Heaven was nothing like his departure to earth. When He came to earth, a human body was prepared for Him down here in the womb of a human woman. The incarnation forever joined God to man. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (Jn.1:14). Just as Jesus' resurrection was in Spirit, soul, and flesh, He also ascended to heaven in human flesh. That means that there is now a man in the glory of the Godhead: the man, Jesus Christ! However, that flesh with which Jesus ascended to heaven became a glorified flesh; it is still human flesh to be sure, but glorified as is fitting for the Son of God.

At the time of the incarnation, the Son of God set aside all of his prerogatives of deity in the Godhead that He might be made "...a little lower than the angels..." as mortal men themselves were made

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<sup>97</sup>Speculation about things that are not specifically stated in Scripture can be dangerous if we become dogmatic about such speculation. Yet, Scripture at times does lead us to speculate about many things that we cannot fully grasp in order that we may wonder.

(He.2:7,9). Those nearest to Him saw glimpses of his deity in the performance of miracles. Yet, his full glory was masked and hidden in mortal human flesh — flesh that was subject to death.<sup>98</sup> The flesh in which Jesus walked the Earth was not glorified, but was human flesh prepared as an offering to atone for man's sin (Jn.1:29). Even after his resurrection, his flesh was not glorified here on Earth (Jn.20:17). However, upon his return to Heaven to sit at the right hand of God, it was impossible for his flesh not to be glorified. That which was mortal flesh *must* now put on the flesh of immortality (1Co.15:53). The Glory that Christ had set aside had to be restored, and a new glory: the glory of his suffering, the glory of his resurrection, the glory of fallen man's redemption crowned Him anew. The voices of men who have received his salvation shall proclaim that new glory throughout the ages and into Eternity.

### *That Christ May Return to His Place of Preeminence*

It has been shown by many passages of Scripture that Jesus is a King (Is.9:7; Je.23:5; Da.7:14; Jn.1:49; 18:37); more than that, He is referred to as “King of kings, and Lord of Lords” (1Ti.6:15; Re.1:5; 17:14; 19:16). That means that no ruler of this earth is above Him; rather Jesus is above all nations. The Kingdom that belongs to Jesus is not presently of this world in any physical sense (Jn.18:36). However, his subjects are those that have been given the life of this world (Jn.17:14–18). All of the believers (referred to as “saints” in the new testament) are the subjects of Christ. Therefore, Jesus is to receive the honor of the Great King — much more honor than the position of any king on this earth.

It is therefore appropriate that Jesus receive the place of highest honor; Jesus this day rules his Kingdom from a position of honor and power at the right hand of God the Father (Ac.7:55,56). We who remain on this earth are not only to give Jesus honor, but are to

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<sup>98</sup>Peter, James, and John had the opportunity to look past the veil and see the glory of Christ on the "mount of transfiguration" — as Jesus' face shown with the brightness of the sun, and his raiment was as white as light itself (Mt.17:2). Only those chosen disciples were allowed to glimpse the glory of the Son of God at that time.

serve Him as loyal subjects in anticipation of his return to the earth (Mt.25:14). In as much as we are not told of the time of his return, we must daily expect his return and act accordingly by being fully prepared. For “ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Mt.25:13; Mk.13:35). We are not to stand gazing into the heavens, however, but we should work diligently so that we may be ready at his return. Therefore, Christ is as a king that has made a long journey, leaving his kingdom in the stewardship of his subjects and servants (Mk.13:34). We, therefore, serve a King who is above all kings. He must have the preeminence.

### *That God May Indwell the Believer*

In the Old Testament, we read of men being filled with the Spirit for specific purposes, having the Spirit put upon them, being led by the Holy Spirit, and still more often receiving messages from angels. However, Christ was the first to be *fully indwelled* by the Holy Spirit (Jn.3:34). His disciples were guided externally by their association with Jesus although there were occasional flashes of revelation or insight as with Peter (Mt.16:17). However, Jesus had told his disciples that they soon would be “baptized with the Holy Ghost” (Ac.1:5), and that the Holy Spirit would come upon them (Ac.1:8). None of that was to occur until after Jesus’ ascension. “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (Jn.16:7). On the day of Pentecost, his disciples were “...filled with the Holy Ghost...” (Ac.2:4). This was more than the Holy Spirit merely affecting them externally. As the Apostle Paul said, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (1Co.3:16).

It was only after man was glorified in the person of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit could live within mortal men in order to guide them. That constitutes a spiritual rebirth of the one whom the Holy Spirit indwells. It is made possible by the man, Christ Jesus, residing at the throne of God. Jesus would no longer be with his disciples to guide them and to teach them in the flesh. They would no longer be able to seek out his advice in the human sense. Nevertheless,

what Jesus and his Father together sent them in the person of the Holy Spirit was far better. They now had God Himself living within them! They had the mind of Christ as a part of their very being. The relationship of the believer to God is now complete and eternal through the Spirit of Christ who indwells us.

### ***That the New Covenant Church May Be Established***

When the Holy Spirit filled the disciples on the day of Pentecost, they were uniquely separated from the rest of the world, and just as uniquely joined together by the spiritual bond of the indwelling Holy Spirit. They were identified with Christ as an extension of his being. A new group of men and women was created that had never existed before. Those Spirit-filled men and women made up an assembly or congregation of people set aside to serve God here on earth. That was the beginning of what through the ages has been called the new covenant Church. What made them the Church were not flames of fire or the speaking in foreign tongues, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit united them in the body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit living within believers still holds the Church together. The Holy Spirit directs the activities of the Church through the efforts of individuals that make up the Church. It is the Holy Spirit that continually points to Christ as the head in all matters, and sanctifies its members as the physical extensions of the mind of Christ to accomplish all things according to his will and purpose. That is the Church and nothing else is the Church. It is not created with human hands nor can it be directed by human thought. The Church would not have been possible without the ascension of Christ, which made the sending of the Holy Spirit possible.

### ***That the Believer May be enabled to Evangelize***

The Church was not created full-grown. It began with a small core of believers consisting of about one hundred twenty disciples in all (Ac.1:15). If that small number had gone forth in their own strength to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus, they would no doubt have been ignored or silenced, and Christianity would have come to naught. Jesus "...commanded them that they should not depart from

Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me” (Ac.1:4). “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Ac.1:8). The Holy Spirit enabled them to reach lost souls with the Gospel of Christ.

The Holy Spirit equipped them with everything they needed to propagate the Gospel to the nations about them through the many Jews who were in Jerusalem for Pentecost (Ac.2:5–12). We read the first recorded sermon as Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit pricked the hearts of those who had crucified their awaited Messiah (Ac.2:14–40). Through the power of the Holy Spirit three-thousand souls were added to the Church in a single day (Ac.2:41). The indwelling Holy Spirit enables us to reach lost souls. The hearts of the lost are not changed by some clever words that we have devised. It is the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us to speak *his* Words as He also brings them home into the heart of the unbeliever. It is the Holy Spirit that truly evangelizes the world through the Church thus bringing lost souls to salvation in Christ.

### ***That Christ May Daily Intercede for Us***

In Chapter 4.5 Jesus' Agony on the Cross, page 242, we showed how Jesus was offered up as a perfect sacrifice — the unblemished Lamb of God for our sins (Ep.5:2; Jn.1:29). Symbolized by the Jewish priest entering the holiest of holies, with the blood sacrifice of the bull, is the Old Testament picture of Christ (He.9:7; Le.16:30). For Jesus is called a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (i.e. eternal and above the Levitical priesthood); thus signifying that Jesus entered into the presence of God as our High Priest and offered his own blood for our salvation (He.9:12). Therefore, what further use do we have of a priest after the manner of men? Christ, having entered once into the presence of God, has offered that perfect sacrifice *once* and *forever* (He.9:14; 9:25,26)! The proof of the acceptance of that sacrifice is in the resurrection of Jesus (He.9:12; 1Pe.1:3). Therefore, Jesus in ascending to the Father is our high Priest who has made perfect atonement for our sins.

Accordingly, Christ is our mediator before the Father (1Ti.2:5; He.9:15,24). Not only has Jesus paid the full price for us, but He also continues to intervene for us (1Jn.2:1). The Levitical high priest of the old covenant repeatedly entered the Holy of Holies once each year for a short time to make temporary atonement, but our High Priest entered once and *remains* in the very presence of God that the atonement may be continuous and eternal. Since we saints are not perfect before God, we must depend upon continuous intercession on our behalf by Christ Jesus (1Jn.1:8,10). Therefore, when we in our imperfection stumble and fall into sin, we may confess our fault before God calling upon the name of Jesus (1Jn.1:9).

None should think that we should deliberately sin in order to exercise the power of Jesus in our behalf (Ro.3:8)! Rather, it is because our fallen nature still attacks us from without that we stumble into sin. We may lose the battle at times, but the final victory for us is assured through the mediation of Christ on our behalf. A mediator is not ordinarily a mediator of one (Ga.3:20). That is, a mediator is normally separate of the two parties requiring mediation that he may be impartial. However, Christ and God are one (Ga.3:20), and Christ is also the son of man! Our great mediator has fully reconciled the difference between sinful man and a Holy God by uniting the two in his own person. Therefore, we who are now in Christ Jesus are forever justified to God (Ga.3:26).

### ***That the Believer May be Comforted***

It is well that Christ intercedes for us every day since we stumble and fall so often. So much so that we may become discouraged and fail to fulfill the commission, that is ours. The early disciples had Jesus Himself at their sides to encourage and comfort them. When Christ ascended, their comforter had departed from their side. However, Jesus said, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever... for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (Jn.14:16–18). What Jesus was actually saying is that He would not leave them as orphans to fend for themselves after his ascension, but would send the Holy Spirit (his

other self) to comfort them from within their hearts and minds. The Holy Spirit, who at that time indwelt Christ (“dwelleth *with* you”), would dwell *inside* them soon after Jesus' departure.

Believers often wish that they could have been living at the time that Jesus walked the earth in order that they could have known Him, conversed with Him, and heard Him speak as did his early disciples. Yet, we should know that we have something far better. Wherever we go and whatever we do, He is not only *with* us, but also *within* us! Jesus said, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (Jn.14:20). On the day of Pentecost, that realization came to the disciples as the Holy Spirit indwelt them. What a comfort to know that as Christ is inseparable from the Father, so we being indwelt by the Holy Spirit are inseparable from Christ. He is not only in us, but we are within Him, thus insuring our salvation. Hidden in the “cleft of the rock” we are protected from the effects of the trials of this life. Much more than that, we being “in Christ” need never fear that the wrath of God will be directed toward us. Christ lives in us and we in Him.

### ***That the Believer May Be Led in All Truth***

Before his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples there were many things He had to say to them, but that they would not be able to grasp the meaning of them while He was still with them in the flesh (Jn.16:12). “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (Jn.16:13). Jesus taught his disciples when they were present with Him, but it is apparent that Jesus could not be omnipresent while contained in human flesh. Therefore, it was only because of Jesus' ascension, that the indwelling Holy Spirit could be always present to guide each individual believer into all Truth. The disciples were able to fully grasp spiritual things only after the Holy Spirit had come to indwell them.

All that was in the mind of Christ is now available to each believer through the indwelling Holy Spirit: “...he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are

mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (Jn.16:14,15). The Apostle Paul said, “... the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But, we have the mind of Christ” (1Co.2:14,16). The natural man is guided only by his five senses, while the believer has the mind of Christ as his guide and teacher into all things concerning Christ, and into understanding the Word of God as well. The receiving of Truth through the Holy Spirit is possible only because Jesus has ascended.

### *That the Believer May Be Sanctified*

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, when Jesus died, we died with Him that our sin-nature would be destroyed in death. When Jesus arose from the grave, we also arose in Him that we may be justified to God. However, we should likewise understand that when Jesus ascended to the throne of God, we also ascended in Him. Now, it is apparent that we are still upon the earth in our fleshly bodies. Yet, when Jesus ascended in human flesh, He also took the flesh of all that was his within Him. Even as we have yet to die physically, so we are not yet ascended into Heaven. Nevertheless, those of us who are in Christ have already attained that *position* in Heaven, which is yet unrealized. We are even now *positionally* sanctified by the ascension of Christ.

Just as we should reckon ourselves dead and raised again to newness of life (Ro.6:11), so should we reckon ourselves to be sanctified in the ascension of Christ. Day-to-day living in this world would seem to postpone the reality of physical sanctification to the future just as physical death and resurrection is in the future. Yet, as Paul said to the Corinthians, “...but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1Co.6:11). We are sanctified both *in* the “name of the Lord Jesus”, and we are sanctified *by* “the Spirit of God.” While total purification of the believer is yet future, because we are far from perfect, sanctification is something that the Holy Spirit works out in us

in the present.<sup>99</sup> It is by means of the indwelling Spirit of God that we are increasingly sanctified in this life as we live each day. We need not give in to sinful living, because the Holy Spirit who lives within us washes us daily.

### *That Christ May Prepare a Place for Us*

Jesus said that in his Father's house there were many "dwelling places." "I go to prepare a place for you. And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn.14:2,3). It was necessary that Jesus ascend to Heaven in order that He might both pave the way for us and prepare a place for us to live with Him in the presence of God the Father. Not only are we saved from our sins, justified, and sanctified, but we are also given the authority to live as sons of God in God's very presence. "As many as received [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God..." (Jn.1:12). We are not to merely see Heaven with our eyes, nor are we to be mere guests there, but we are to fully live there as family members in the place that Jesus has prepared for us by his return.

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<sup>99</sup>This day-to-day sanctification is often referred to as "practical sanctification" as opposed to "positional sanctification." A full discussion of sanctification can be found in Chapter 7.1 of this book.

## **Chapter 4.8 The Second Advent of Christ**

Christ will one day return personally out of Heaven to stand again upon the earth. This event is commonly known as the Second Advent wherein the word advent means “desirously awaited arrival.” The Second Advent is a major and essential doctrine of the Christian faith as well as it being a future event of great consequence upon the earth. Jesus Himself spoke of his return many times to his apostles through words that are also recorded in Scripture (cf. Mt.26:64; Mk.14:62; Jn.14:28). Furthermore, the apostles themselves spoke of his ultimate return in their own writings having a sense of certainty and expectation.

At the time appointed, Jesus will return from Heaven in the same manner that He ascended — cloaked in the bright clouds of Heaven (Ac.1:11; Mt.24:30). It is important to note that we have not been given any rigid timetable for his return such that it can be determined on any human calendar. When Jesus’ apostles asked for a specific date, He told them that it was not for them to know, and in fact only his Father knew the time (Mk.13:32). While there will be observable signs leading up to his return for those that are spiritually awake so that they need not be caught unawares, His return will appear to be quite sudden and unexpected for most of the inhabitants of the earth.

It will be like it was in the day of the Noachian flood wherein the inhabitants of the earth went about their daily lives in total ignorance of the massive destruction that was about to take place (Ge.6:17). “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Mt.24:37–39). Just as Noah and his family remained secure in the ark, in the day of Jesus coming, some will be taken away in a flood of judgment and others will remain safely behind in the ark of his protection (Mt.24:40,41). When He descends from Heaven it will be as sudden as lightning that when striking without warning in the east

will be immediately seen reflected in the western sky: “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be “(Mt.24:27).

It was quite necessary that Jesus should ascend to the throne of God as we saw in the previous chapter to further his work on Earth through the Holy Spirit. In addition, however, He also ascended in order that He might obtain the title deed to all the earth that He may rule over it. This is a book of authority currently in possession of his Father that will give Him the right to preside over all the affairs of the earth. “And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne” (Re.5:7). After having received the express authority to do so from his Father, Jesus must one day return to Earth in order to accomplish three major tasks of great significance. The first of these is that He will joyously call up his bride to be, the true Church of the elect, consisting of both the living and the dead, to be with Him in Heaven where she will then become his eternal wife. Then, He must judge the corrupted earth that has persecuted his bride and rejected Him. He shall cleanse it of all its iniquity and unrighteousness as He breaks open the seals of the book. Finally, having accomplished that, He must establish the Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth’s soil in preparation for the day when Heaven and Earth shall be rejoined together as one during the eternal ages.

### ***To Take His Bride to Heaven***

We, as Christians, should be and indeed claim to be “one with Christ Jesus.” To be truly one with Christ is to be “conjoined” to Him inasmuch as we are “...members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (cf. Ep.5:30;Ge.2:23). Our ultimate desire should be to achieve full unity with Christ even as in human marriage the husband and wife are made one flesh. However, while we are still in the mortal corruptible flesh of this life, our relentless sins keep us separated from complete communion with our Lord. In this life, then, we are not yet married to Him but only betrothed to Him, as is a bride to a groom before they are joined in holy matrimony.

Scripture itself speaks of elect believers who collectively make up the true Church<sup>100</sup> metaphorically as the bride of Christ implying a feminine gender (Mt.9:15;Re.21:9). Yet, in Scripture the elect are also referred to individually as “sons” of God for there will be no difference of status in Heaven between the sexes of those who have lived on earth. Both men and women shall inherit eternal life together in the equally exalted position of *sons*. Note that though the elect are referred to as sons (plural) the Scripture says “bride” not “brides,” since all true believers combined make up a single body that is his bride, the elect Church. When Jesus returns, He will take his Church to Himself much as a husband does his wife. There shall be nothing that is not shared between them. There will even be a great “wedding feast” in Heaven in which all believers will share in his glory (Mt.22:2;Re.19:7–9).

In days of old, it was the custom for a groom to pay a goodly price for his bride before he could take her to be his wife. Jesus Himself has paid the bride price for us as He wrested her from the clutches of Satan — He purchased her with his own blood, and has sanctified his betrothed declaring her spotless and without wrinkle and defect (cf. Mt. 13:46; Ep.5:27). He, having found her in the miry filth of sin, has lifted her out, cleansed her, and dressed her in the white linen of His own perfect righteousness. The elect are individually and collectively the betrothed of Christ — the bride for which He will someday return.

### **The Bride’s Song of Redemption**

Redemption has a romantic aspect to it as we read in the book of Ruth. Ruth who found herself in a land where she had no privilege or place was redeemed by her kinsman-redeemer, Boaz, much as the believer is redeemed by Christ. Scripture also relates the marvelous relationship between Christ and his Elect in a still more intimate way in a song of songs: “The Song of Solomon.” In that little book of canticles is a human portrayal of Christ and his Church. Jesus is first

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<sup>100</sup> The doctrine of the Church is discussed in detail in Section 11 of Book II of this work.

depicted as a humble shepherd that loved a Shulammitte girl and later returned in glory as the king (represented as Solomon) to claim her. Metaphorically, the Shulammitte girl can be seen to represent the Elect and the humble shepherd represents Christ in his first advent. It is indeed true that our humble Shepherd will one day return as the King of Kings to claim his elect Church and to rule over all the earth.

Some first reading that book find the language and metaphors rather shocking. Yet, the mature Christian who has met the Shepherd, who awaits the return of his King, and also awaits the joy of his ultimate union with Christ and reunion with God, the Creator, sees far beyond the mere human portrayal of this canticle. The mature believer already has within his own soul a song that echoes the song of the Shulammitte girl: a Song above all other songs — the song of saving grace, of redemption, of faith, of hope, of overwhelming love — the Song of Christ.

### **Christ's Joyful Love for his Bride**

Moreover, love is not one sided in a true marriage, but is reciprocated. So it is that Jesus will joyously welcome his bride, the Church, with open arms. What a glorious celebration that will be as God and mankind are again fully united — Joy beyond all comprehension! The hosts of heaven will sing, and all of creation will join in with its own voice! Every heart will melt with exaltation as Jesus brings his own into his Father's house. Christ's deep love for his redeemed bride is portrayed so well in the following poem that was written by an unknown author:

**“Rise up, My love, My fair one  
And come away with Me;  
As I arose from out the tomb  
In radiant victory!  
Enclosed within My flesh, you were  
My precious bride-to-be,  
Released from Me in crimson stream  
I paid to make you free!  
The corn of wheat has fallen deep  
Into the earth and died;**

**But life anew has sprung from tomb  
To blossom at My side!  
In cloak of mortal I was slain  
On cruel Calvary;  
In robes of heaven I arose,  
In immortality.  
As from the side of Adam sprang  
His Eve, more fair than he,  
E'en so, My side (the smitten Rock)  
Brings forth again to Me.  
So come to Me, My fair one,  
Draw closer to My side,  
That we as one may ever be;  
Come, second Eve, endowed by Me  
With bracelets, staff, and signet ring;  
With scepter, throne, and palace fair;  
Your place is by the King of kings  
For all eternity.”**

(Author Unknown)

If a young man who is well loved by his father takes a bride, will not his father come to consider the bride as his own daughter for the sake of his son? Even so, when Jesus takes his bride as his own, God, the eternal Father, will look upon his elect, the Church, as a man would his own daughter. Those who once had no inheritance of their own, but were condemned to be cast out as unworthy, have been cleansed and clothed with the glory of Christ and acknowledged as his dearly beloved.

Jesus has so overwhelmed us by his love for us, for what He has done for us, and has so astonished us by his glory, that we have willingly and joyously consented to be his betrothed. Even as Ruth said to Naomi, "...Whither thou goest, I will go; and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:" (Ru.1:16). As his betrothed, Jesus has brought us forth to be welcomed at the very throne of God, his Father, where we are recognized as his holy wife-to-be.

Truly, that which God Himself has joined together neither man nor any other thing can tear asunder. Therefore, our glorious hope rests in the unchangeable faithfulness of God toward us, not just in our own wavering faithfulness toward Him. When in that wondrous day we are joined to Jesus in the household of God, no man or no thing can ever separate us from Him. Therefore, what have we to fear in this life wherein we have the express promise of his faithfulness? Jesus will surely take us to Himself as He has promised. Nor will any being whether in Heaven or earth be able to pluck us out of his hand (cf. Jn.10:28–30).

**“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”**  
(Ro.8:35,38,39).

Therefore, we find that it was absolutely necessary for Christ to ascend into heaven and take his place at the right hand of God that He may later return for us. While we long for his physical presence with us, it cannot be so now. However, Christ has not left us without his comfort during that time. Though we do not enjoy his physical presence, we have received the “Comforter” which Jesus said He would send in his place (Jn.14:16,26). Even though Jesus is in Heaven, we are made one with Him through the inward-merging of his Spirit with ours (Ga.3:27; 1Co.12:13). Therefore, we have the Spirit of Christ living within us. With certainty, we know that Jesus will be with us always and will never leave us but will continue with us forever (Mt.28:20). So intertwined are we that He can no more forsake us than He can forsake Himself!

### ***To Judge the Earth***

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (Jn.16:8). As the result of Jesus’ ascension, the Holy Spirit of Christ was sent among sinful men as He

indwells believers. By that means, the earth is being prepared for judgment as mankind is convicted of the unforgivable sin of unbelief. “Of sin, because they believe not on me” (Jn.16:9). The world is further convinced of the righteousness of Christ because He has ascended into the very presence of God (Jn.16:10). The world is also being warned that in as much as Satan, “the prince of this world,” is judged, they shall surely not escape the judgment of God if they remain in his encampment (Jn.16:11).

Christ will one day return personally out of Heaven to judge the earth; both the living and the dead are to be judged at that time. Jesus will one day personally and systematically direct the judgment of the earth as He breaks open the last of the seven seals of the scroll that He has received from his Father (Revelation Chapters 6–18). That will occur on earth in the time following the period of “Great Tribulation” and immediately after the transport of the Church, Jesus’ bride, into the air to be with Him out of harm’s way. Christ will first judge those that are living on the earth in the day of his wrath. Later, the unregenerated dead will also be restored to life in bodily forms and will be judged individually before the “great white throne” where all of the great multitudes of the lost must appear before Him (Re.20:11–15).

### ***To Establish His Kingdom on Earth***

Lastly, Jesus must return to the earth in order to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. This is the kingdom that the Jew had long anticipated centuries before their Messiah appeared upon the earth. Because they had rejected their King when Jesus stood before them, that kingdom was not established on the earth at that time. Instead, it was necessary that the King lay down his own life for the benefit of his subjects lest they all perish in their sins as even their own high priest had predicted as they together plotted to kill Jesus. “Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered

abroad” (cf. Jn.11:50–52). As Jesus’ told Pilate when He was being interrogated, his kingdom was not to be of that age (nor yet of this age), but of a future age. Jesus also encouraged his disciples to pray for the ultimate coming of that kingdom in what is commonly referred to today as the Lord’s Prayer (Mt.6:10). When the Kingdom of Heaven arrives, God’s will shall be done on earth precisely as it is presently done only in Heaven.

Though a very important subject, the discussion of the three major events of Jesus’ Second Advent have been kept brief here only as an introduction because they are to be discussed in great detail later in this work. For a complete discussion of the Doctrines of the Last Days, including the return of Christ to the earth, see Book III, Section 20.

## Chapter 4.9 The Christ of Prophecy

The Old Testament is rich in prophecies<sup>101</sup> concerning the coming Messiah. The birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ are fully foretold in the Hebrew Scripture in some detail. It would be well that we examine some of those prophecies concerning Christ to follow the same road that the apostles trod to prove to both Jew and Gentile alike that Jesus was truly the awaited Messiah. In so doing, we will enrich our understanding of the New Testament events as well. Much of the New Testament accounts relate to those Old Testament prophecies; without realizing that, their significance could be missed.

We are only able to summarize a few messianic prophecies here. However, many additional references will be found throughout this work as various doctrines are discussed and we have already referred to many of those prophecies in this section. The student would find it beneficial to study the prophecies that make it absolutely clear and certain in their own minds that Jesus, whom the New Testament proclaims, is both Christ and Lord. Jesus has fulfilled all of the Law and the Prophets (Mt.5:17). There is not a single prediction concerning the Messiah that has not been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>102</sup>

### *Jesus Alone is the Messiah*

Some could suggest that Jesus merely fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets through fortuitous circumstances. Because of the many details and permutations often contained within a single prophecy, the likelihood of even one of them being fulfilled by one individual throughout history is mathematically quite high. Because of various interpretations given those details, the following statistics can only be approximated based upon best evidence from context. Be that as it may, the mathematical probability against an

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<sup>101</sup> Biblical prophecy means a prediction or foretelling of future events through revelation or the divine inspiration of God.

<sup>102</sup> We must understand that there are future prophecies concerning Jesus' second advent that include the calling up of the Church, the judgment of the earth, and the thousand-year reign on earth that have yet to be fulfilled.

“accidental” fulfillment of all the prophecies by any one person in history or even yet in the future is staggering.

If we *conservatively* state that only sixteen Old Testament statements are predictive of the coming Messiah, then the likelihood of any one person fulfilling *all* of them in every detail would be approximately one in  $10^{45}$  which is the number 10 with 45 zeros following it. Certainly, that alone is enough to uniquely confirm Jesus as the Messiah. If, however, we also include many of the other prophecies which, given the first sixteen, also clearly apply to the Messiah we could come up with forty-eight or more prophecies. That would decrease the likelihood of an “accidental” fulfillment of all prophecies in minute detail to one in  $10^{157}$  or 10 with 157 zeros following it. Most mathematicians would declare that against such overwhelming odds for nonoccurrence, the event would never take place. We must assert, however, that since God alone is in full control of the universe and He alone knows the end from the beginning, those prophecies could only apply to the one whom He, in his sovereign power, had preordained as the Messiah. Therefore, Jesus is the *One* that the Hebrew Scriptures predicted would come, and no other was, is, or shall come in his place.

### ***The Genealogy of Jesus Christ***

The Messiah would be born in the line of Abraham (Ge.18:18; 12:3). That promise is seen as fulfilled in the first verse of the New Testament: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Mt.1:1). That Jesus is a descendent of Abraham is also shown in Luke’s genealogy of Jesus (Lu.3:34). Further prophecy saying that the Messiah would be the descendent of Isaac and Jacob (Ge.17:19; Nu.24:17; Ge.28:14) is also found fulfilled in Luke’s genealogy of Jesus (Lu.3:34) as well as in the genealogy given by Matthew (Mt.1:2).

### ***Jesus Was Born a King***

Jesus fulfilled the prophecy saying that the Messiah would descend from the Kingly tribe of Judah (Ge.49:10). Again, that is seen in Luke 3:33 and Matthew 1:2,3. The coming Messiah would be heir

to the throne of David: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever” (Is.9:7; cf. Is.11:1–5; 2S. 7:13). That is seen fulfilled in the genealogy of Jesus given by Matthew (Mt.1:1,6).

### ***Location and Time of Jesus’ Coming Foretold***

The place of Jesus’ birth is also a fulfilling of prophecy. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Mi.5:2; cf. Mt.2:1; Lu.2:4–7). The time of Jesus’ ministry was predicted by the words of Daniel: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks...” (Da.9:25). Using the generally accepted concept of “weeks-of-years” principle (every seventh year was a Sabbath year), the seven weeks times seven equals 49 years. To that we must add sixty-two (threescore and two) times seven that is 434 years. Combining 434 and 49 we get 483 years. When that is added to 457 B.C., which was the date of the major decree to rebuild Jerusalem, we arrive at A.D. 26 that is the exact year that Jesus began his public ministry at the age of 30.

We must mention that due to various calendar errors, Jesus was most likely born in 4 B.C. In addition, because of inaccuracy in the exact accounting for time and specific dates, many have calculated that same 483 years to coincide with Jesus' birth, the triumphal entry, or the crucifixion. Regardless of which calculation is correct, we must realize that they all confirm that Jesus is the Messiah since the calculations never point to anyone else.

### ***The Virgin Birth of Jesus Foretold***

As we have previously discussed, Jesus was to come directly from the seed of a woman (Ge.3:15; cf. Lu.2:7; Re.12:5). We have seen that since woman was a part of the fall, in that she tempted Adam, she also would play a part in the ultimate salvation of man by

bringing forth the Messiah. “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is.7:14). The Christ was to be born of a virgin as was Jesus. “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Ghost” (Mt.1:18). “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Mt.1:22,23).

Also, note the account in the Gospel according to Luke Chapter 1, verses 26 through 35. Not only is the virgin birth an historic fact, it is also a matter of predictive prophecy that has been fulfilled. The coming Messiah was to be virgin-born from the seed of a woman without the agency of man (Ge.3:15).

### ***Christ to Be a Nazarene Called from Egypt***

Jesus was called from Egypt according to the prophecy concerning the Christ: “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (Ho.11:1). At first glance, this verse would seem to apply only to the infant nation Israel being called out of Egypt during the Exodus. However, God also saw in the Exodus a future event in which the major descendant of Israel, the Messiah, God’s own Son, would be similarly called out of Egypt. When Israel left Egypt, God’s own Son actually left with them in their midst as their future descendent.

That prophecy was fulfilled when Joseph, with Mary and Jesus fled to Egypt to escape Herod’s attempt to slay the newborn king (Mt.2:16–18; cf. Je.31:15), and later returned to Galilee. “And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel ...being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene” (Mt.2: 21-23).

*The Area of Jesus' Earthly Ministry Foretold*

Isaiah predicted Jesus' ministry to those in Galilee: "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (Is.9:1,2). After John's work of preparation was completed (Mt.4:12), Jesus left Nazareth, his hometown.

**"And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Mt.4:13–16).**

*Jesus Foretold as the Great Prophet*

The Christ was to be the greatest of the prophets: Moses said concerning him, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (De.18:15). As a prophet, Jesus spoke the Word of God with full authority as the Son of God, not as the prophets that had come before him. (He.1:1,2). That prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus as those who saw his miracles and heard his teaching said, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world" (Jn.6:14). And Peter said concerning Christ, "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you" (Ac.3:22).

*Jesus Seen as the Ultimate High Priest*

The Christ would not only be a great prophet, but a priest with inherent, eternal glory requiring honor, as did the mystical priest-king of Salem<sup>103</sup>, Melchizedek in the days of Abraham (Ge.14:18). The psalmist spoke of the Christ thus: “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Ps.110:4). The writer to the Hebrews reiterated this: “So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest: but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec” (He.5:5,6).

Therefore, the man, Jesus, did not elevate Himself to that office, but inherited it by birthright being the Son of the living God. Jesus was not a priest according to a ceremonial law, that is, for a time as the Levitical priests, but remains an everlasting priest whose honor, glory, and power stems from his eternal being. The writer to the Hebrews stated it this way: “And it is far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (He.7:15–17).

*Jesus the King of an Everlasting Kingdom*

In addition to Jesus being a great prophet and great high priest, He was also to be the king of an everlasting Kingdom. “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever” (Is.9:7). During his ministry, Jesus spoke often of his Kingdom, and when He was before Pilate, He said, “My Kingdom is not of this [age]...” (Jn.18:36). His Kingdom was an everlasting kingdom, not a temporal one. Jesus is therefore the “King of kings and Lord of Lords”

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<sup>103</sup>According to Jewish writers Salem is another name for Jerusalem; however, Jerusalem did not yet exist with that name in Abraham’s time.

(Re.19:16) as He rules in majesty from the right hand of God, the Father (Col.3:1).

### ***Jesus' Rejection by His Own People Foretold***

Jesus was rejected by the Jews; that was predicted in the Old Testament book of Isaiah: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Is.53:3). The fulfilling of this prophecy of course is seen throughout the New Testament. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (Jn.1:11). "But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation" (Lu.17:25). "And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man..." (Lu.23:18). Their rejection extended even to his death on the cross: "...they cried, saying, crucify him, crucify him" (Lu.23:21).

### ***Jesus' Triumphal Entry Pictured***

His triumphal entry into Jerusalem was predicted by Zechariah: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zec.9:9). When the people of Jerusalem saw Him that had performed many miracles and had raised Lazarus from the dead coming into Jerusalem, they "Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt" (Jn.12:13-15).

### ***Jesus' Betrayal Foretold***

Jesus was betrayed by a friend (Judas) and sold for thirty pieces of silver. "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Ps.41:9; cf. Mt.26:23). "And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them" (Mk.14:10). "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they

weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver” (Zec.11:12). “And, [Judas] said unto them, what will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver” (Mt.26:15).

The field near which a potter worked was usually filled with broken and unusable pottery that he had discarded. As a result, the field was virtually useless; the broken pottery shards allowed nothing to grow in it. “And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD” (Zec.11:13). When Judas Iscariot, in his remorse, returned the silver to the priests, and then took his own life, “... the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took council, and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in” (Mt.27:6,7).

### *Jesus’ Trial Foretold*

Many false witnesses accused Him: “Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty” (Ps.27:12). “Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea though many false witnesses came, yet found they none [that could agree]. At the last came two false witnesses and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days” (Mt.26:59–61). However, the Words of Jesus that they misquoted were: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn.2:19). “But he spake of the temple of his body” (Jn.2:21), not the building of which the Jews accused Him.

Jesus was silent before his accusers. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Is.53:7). “And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace...” (Mt.26: 62,63). He was struck and spat upon: “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to

them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Is.50:6). When Jesus was before the high priest: “...some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands” (Mk.14:65).

### *Jesus Hated by Man without Cause*

Jesus was hated without cause, having done nothing to incur anyone’s wrath, but had only done good works to their benefit, having spoken the Truth to them, having cured their sick, and even having raised their dead loved ones to life. Jesus said:

**“He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But, this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause”** (Jn.15:23–25).

Moreover, the Old Testament Psalmist said, “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head...” (Ps.69:4).

### *Substitutional Atonement Foretold*

Not only was Jesus hated without cause, but He also bore great suffering on our behalf, not as a consequence for his own deeds.

**“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed”** (Is.53:4,5).

As Paul said, speaking of Jesus: “Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Ro.4:25) “...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;” (1Co.15:3). He “...cast out the [evil] spirits with his word...” (Mt.8:16), bearing our illness, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Mt.8:17). That spoke of his atoning death on the cross.

***Christ to Be Chastened in Our Stead***

He indeed was chastened that we might have peace with God. Jesus was numbered with those who transgressed God's Word and He was identified with the worst of them as He was crucified between two thieves. "Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left" (Mt.27:38). "And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors" (Mk.15:28). Isaiah continued: "...and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Is.53:12). His hands and feet were pierced as the Psalmist foresaw: "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps.22:16; cf. Jn.20:25). He was mocked and insulted as He died for our sins: "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him" (Ps.22:8; cf. Mt.27:43). "...Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Mt.27:40).

***The Bitterness of Mankind's Iniquity Symbolized***

Jesus was given vinegar to drink when He cried out with thirst on the cross (Jn.19:28). "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps.69:21). "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth" (Jn.19:29). In Jesus' high priestly prayer, He had prayed to the Father that this terrible cup of iniquity that the vinegar symbolized would be taken from Him, but He bent to his Father's will and drank to the dregs on the Cross as He was made sin for us (Lu.22:42; 2Co.5:21).

***The Crucifixion and Burial Foretold***

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm tells of the soldiers gambling for his clothing. "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (Ps.22:18). "And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take" (Mk.15:24). "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken"

(Ps.34:20). “But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:” (Jn.19:33). Jesus was buried with the affluent of this world. “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth” (Is.53:9).

**“When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus’ disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock...”** (Mt.27:57–60).

### *The Resurrection of Christ Foretold*

The psalmist, David, saw that the flesh of God’s anointed could not perish: “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Ps.16:10).

**“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But, they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have”** (Lu.24:36–39).

### *The Ascension Foretold*

Jesus’ ascension into heaven was also foretold: “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them” (Ps.68:18). The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians Chapter 4 verses 7 and 8, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” That refers to the ascension about which we read in the Gospel according to Luke: “And he led them out as far as to Bethany,

and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Lu.24:50,51).

Therefore, all of the Old Testament prophecies and that which was pointed to by the ceremonial law were fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus (Mt.5:17). That was the Scripture that the apostles proclaimed proving that Jesus was the Messiah. We can see that this news must be proclaimed first to the Jews, because they held the Old Testament ceremonies and the prophecies contained in the Scriptures (Ro.3:1,2). Then, after all of the Jews that would believe had been brought into the new covenant, the Gentiles must be brought in (Ro.1:16,17). It was God’s purpose to bring all to Himself (2Pe.3:9; Mt.18:14); the Jews were God’s chosen means to that end (Ro.3:29; 11:30). For, through Judaism the Messiah came.

As we conclude this section, we can see that both the predictive prophecy of the Old Testament as well as the historical accounts related in the New Testament leave no doubt that Jesus was (and is) the long-awaited Messiah and Christ of the Jews. In fact, no other could have been the Messiah. If we reject Jesus, as did the first-century Jews, there is not (and shall not be) any other offer of salvation through any other (Ac.4:12; He.2:3). Since Jesus, many false prophets and false “christs” have come into the world, and they have deceived many (Mt.24:24). False religions abound in the world today which deny Jesus as Christ, and each one proclaims some man, other being, or thing as the ultimate authority and purpose for man’s existence. However, such deception is based upon fallacies that are all too apparent when we carefully study biblical truths. Be not deceived, Jesus is the Christ!

## **Section 5, The Holy Spirit**

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**The Holy Spirit Identified**

**Preparing the Heirs of Salvation**

**Evidence of the Holy Spirit**

**The New Birth of Man**

## Chapter 5.1 The Holy Spirit Identified

As we studied Jesus Christ in the previous section, we were greatly aided in our understanding of Him by his human nature, which we could relate to our own, since we have a common physical attribute of flesh and bone. It was only when we began to probe into Jesus' spiritual nature that we encountered any difficulty. This first chapter of this section includes introductory material that, though somewhat technical, is essential to a right understanding of the substantive nature of the Holy Spirit and ultimately the role that the Holy Spirit plays in the redemption of mankind that we may inherit eternal life.

### *Seeking a Substantive Definition of Spirit*

We immediately discover that we can no longer depend upon any physical commonality to aid us in the study of the Holy Spirit and are left with trying to define "spirit" as a supernatural substance which in essence has no physical attributes at all. As elusive as that definition is, we must at least try to determine what we really mean by the word "spirit" before we can properly study the Holy Spirit. English dictionaries give us many definitions for "spirit" that scarcely help in our search at all. The word "spirit" we find can even be applied to alcoholic beverages or other volatile liquids. Closer to the mark is the definition "supernatural, incorporeal being." However, that latter definition is too often used as a synonym for an apparition, phantom, ghost or even a "spook." A spirit, by that broad definition, can even be an imaginary non-existing creature such as a fairy or an elf.

Unfortunately, the English word "ghost" was used to translate the word for "spirit" when it applied to the Holy Spirit in the *King James Authorized Version* of the Bible. That translation, though technically accurate, is most unfortunate because the word "ghost" in the modern mind suggests the soul of a dead person that haunts the living with the intent of bringing forth fear and terror. Such ghosts are most commonly summoned forth in the imagination and therefore are not real in substance. The Holy Spirit, as we shall soon discover, is not the imaginary ghost of a dead man, nor is it the purpose of the Holy Spirit to torment or terrorize the living. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is of

genuine substance — though that substance, not being natural but instead supernatural remains beyond our mental comprehension.

As far as the spirit of man is concerned, it is commonly defined as the “non-physical part of man” to which we often relate the invisible mind or the soul. Spirit is seen to define a man’s feelings, mood, temper, disposition, or religious motivation for which there seems to be no physical basis. Therefore, we find that men often define spirit as something that primarily or solely exists within human emotions. So much so that many seek to sense or experience the presence of the Holy Spirit through various physical and mental rituals that are specifically designed to heighten emotion. Some temporal churches today encourage the release of decadent feelings with great abandon as a part of their worship service, and in doing so they erroneously believe that they are worshiping God through the Holy Spirit.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, spirit is much more than a human emotion or a sensory feeling.

Such attempts at attaining a perfect definition merely dance around the real question, “what exactly is spirit in actual substance.” As physical beings, we always seek to define substance in terms of the physical world about us as experienced through our five physical senses. Spirit is invisible and unheard, and we can neither feel nor taste spirit. Our natural senses through which we gather information to define all other things are useless when we attempt to define anything outside of the physical realm.

### ***Spirit is the Breath of God***

The word in Scripture that is rendered “spirit” in English is actually the Greek word *pneuma* that means, “wind” or “breath.” Rather than seeking a definition for spirit, then, we actually need to first discover what is meant in Scripture by the use of the word *pneuma* or “breath.” When God created Adam, He breathed spirit or the breath of life into him such that Adam became the first living soul

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<sup>104</sup> See Section 14 of Book II of this trilogy wherein we discuss various delusive rituals and practices.

(Ge.2:7). For that reason we find that “spirit” can also be defined as the “breath of God,” who is not only the source of life, but life Himself.<sup>105</sup> From the earliest days, man properly equated spirit with life. Even so, that equivalence barely helps us to perfectly define spirit inasmuch as life itself is so difficult to define. Life is commonly defined by mankind only in various physical terms such as animation, metabolism, growth, adaptation to environment, and reproduction. All of those definitions seek to separate living organisms from dead organisms and from various inanimate objects such as rock. Spirit in that sense is the invisible component of a man or woman that merely sustains his or her human existence within the physical body.

However a much greater question of life arises when defining human life. Because man alone has a living soul, which plants and animals do not have, human life requires a much higher definition. Life is not only a matter of animating a physical body, but is moreover a state of being that expresses itself in self-awareness and contemplation of existence, which leads to seeking out the true purpose of life — a purpose that man cannot fully define for himself. That purpose can only be found in the mind of the living God who created him in order to implement His own eternal design.

Though the body is necessary in order that man can affect and respond to the physical world, flesh in itself does not represent or sustain human life. The Scriptures clearly state that the life of the *flesh* is in the blood (Ge.9:4); however, the life of man’s *soul* that constitutes his being is to be found only in the spirit. When Adam was first created from the elements of the earth, he had no life in him until God breathed the breath of life into his nostrils. When the spirit leaves the physical body, it ceases to function and physical decay immediately sets in. Therefore, true life is much more than the mere physical animation of flesh and bones, the flowing of blood, and the operation of various body organs. The essence of human life is actually present only in a man’s spirit, not in his flesh. The physical

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<sup>105</sup> See Chapter 2.1 , page 94 wherein Life is listed as the first of God’s communicable attributes that emanates from his eternal Spirit.

animation of the body is only the visible effect of the workings of the spirit.

Even before man understood the mechanics of the human body, breathing would have been the unmistakable sign of life in both animals and men. Life was received and maintained by that spirit through a process of repeatedly breathing it into the body. If breathing stopped, the spirit was seen as having departed the body with the last breath. (This is why we still often hear that a person has “expired” (breathed out) when his or her body has died). Though invisible, the life giving spirit was perceptible by observing the “wind” that was the effect of breathing.

Jesus gave us further insight into the meaning of “spirit” or *pneuma* in general when He said, “The *wind* bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth...” (Jn.3:8; emphasis added).<sup>106</sup> Spirit is much like the air that we breathe, which in its purest essence cannot be seen, heard, felt, tasted, or even smelled. Yet, air is quite real and very necessary to the maintenance of our physical bodies such that we would quickly die without it.

When air is set into motion, we call it wind. Though we cannot actually see the wind, we can observe the effect of the wind on trees and grasses. We can also hear the effects of wind as it blows its way through trees and buildings thus creating audible sounds. We can even feel the wind as it presses against us when we walk. Spirit is as real and necessary to life as the air we breathe. Nevertheless, we do not sense spirit in any way except by the outward physical action it produces.

Having ascertained that man has a spirit that God Himself breathed into him, we must certainly consider that man’s spirit originally came out of God’s own substance since all life originates in

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<sup>106</sup> Jesus used this allegory when He spoke to Nicodemus concerning the necessity of being born again of the Holy Spirit in order to breathe in everlasting life as opposed to the carnal life received when he experienced the first breath of physical life. This matter is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.4 The New Birth of Man, page 323.

God. We may therefore conclude that in the beginning, Adam had the breath or spirit of God living within him. However, man's soul is a coalescing of his spirit and his flesh. When man, in his *soul*, disobeyed God, the spirit of man became corrupted by that action, and as a result, it fell from its state of common substance and communion with God. Man's spirit was no longer capable of sustaining life indefinitely and his body must eventually die. In God alone is life and exhaling from Him is the living spirit that creates and sustains all life in his creation.

### *The Holy Spirit*

Having examined spirit in general and discussing its ability and purpose in sustaining physical life, we must now introduce and identify the Holy Spirit so often mentioned in the New Testament. The prefix "Holy" immediately separates the Holy Spirit from mere spirit in general carrying with it the immediate implication of deity. Inasmuch as spirit can be equated with mortal life, the Holy Spirit can be equated with eternal life. Unlike the mortal spirit of life, we find in Scripture that the Holy Spirit is actually a person that can be lied to (Ac.5:3), grieved (Ep.4:30), and blasphemed (Mt.12:31). Therefore, we absolutely must use personal pronouns such as he and him when we refer to Him. It is most unfortunate that the much-revered *King James Version* of the Bible gave rise to the neutral gender "it." For example in Romans 8:26, the Holy Spirit is referred to as "itself." Technically, the Greek word, *pneuma*, which can also be translated "breath" or "wind" as well as "spirit" required a neutral gender pronoun. However, other verses such as John 14:26 and 15:26 clearly use the pronouns "whom" and "he" when referring to the Holy Spirit.

### **Titles Given to the Holy Spirit**

Although we generally speak of the Holy Spirit by that singular title, the Holy Spirit is also referred to by many other titles in the Bible; all are the same person. Below is a long list of those titles from which much is implied. The Holy Spirit (Ep.1:13; Ps.51:11) is also referred to as:

- The Comforter (Jn.14:16)
- Eternal Spirit (He.9:14)

- Free Spirit (Ps.51:12)
- Power of the Highest (Lu.1:35)
- Spirit of Adoption (Ro.8:15)
- Spirit of Christ (1Pe.1:11)
- Spirit of Council (Is.11:2)
- Spirit of Glory (1Pe.4:14)
- Spirit of God (Ge.1:2)
- Spirit of Grace (Zec.12:10)
- Spirit of Holiness (Ro.1:4)
- Spirit of Judgment (Is.4:4)
- Spirit of Knowledge (Is.11:2)
- Spirit of Life (Ro.8:2)
- Spirit of Might (Is.11:2)
- Spirit of Prophecy (Re.19:10)
- Spirit of the Father (Mt.10:20)
- Spirit of the Son (Ga.4:6)
- Spirit of Understanding (Is.11:2)
- Spirit of Wisdom (Is.11:2)
- Holy Ghost (Mk.12:36)

### **Essential Attributes of the Holy Spirit**

We see, from the list of titles given above, that the attributes of the Holy Spirit are in complete harmony with God the Father; further scrutiny will reveal that the Holy Spirit must be of the same substance as God the Father, since both are called Holy and both are spirits in common. Furthermore, since there is only one God (De.6:4), the Holy Spirit Himself must be in complete unity with the Father. The Holy Spirit is plainly referred to as God in the Scriptures (Ac.5:3,4).

We must realize that the Holy Spirit is, as is spirit in general, of incorporeal essence; that is, the Holy Spirit is not of an earthly material substance. No one has actually seen the Holy Spirit any more than anyone has seen God the Father (Jn.1:18), except through Jesus Christ who alone is the express image of the Father's person (Jn.14:9; He.1:3). We must also realize that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, but a real person. That is not to imply that the Holy Spirit is a corporeal being any more than God the Father is corporeal. Spirit is

spirit, but the Holy Spirit is a conscious living person, not some mere force of mind or of nature.

The Holy Spirit was seen to have taken upon Himself a visible “form” at the time of Jesus’ baptism when the Holy Spirit descended in a “bodily shape like a dove” (Lu.3:22). We cannot conclude from this text that the Holy Spirit actually became a physical being any more than we can assume that He is actually a bird. The significance of this verse is found in the gentle way the Spirit of God came to rest upon Jesus much as a bird gently comes to rest on the branch of a tree. “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased” (Mt.3:17). The Holy Spirit first filled human flesh only when He entered the body of Jesus.

### *Relationships of the Holy Spirit*

We must now explore the characteristics of the Holy Spirit, through His relationship with the Father, and Jesus Christ as we observe it in Scriptures. (This relationship within deity, which we refer to as the “Godhead”, will be discussed more fully in the next section). Then, we must also come to an understanding of the extended relationship of the Holy Spirit with fallen mankind and ourselves as the believing elect of God.

#### **His Relationship with the Father**

We find in Matthew 10:20 that the Holy Spirit is referred to as the “Spirit of the Father.” Furthermore, we find that many of the attributes of God that we discussed in Chapter 2.1 The Eternal God, page 80 of this book apply equally to the Holy Spirit and the Father in Heaven. For instance, the Holy Spirit is Holy (by definition), eternal, and omnipresent. That relationship is so close that it is often difficult to determine when we are speaking of one or the other. In the first two verses of Genesis, we read that God created the heaven and the earth and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. We could mistakenly think of them as the same person except that Scripture makes it quite clear that they have a distinct relationship with each other that denies that possibility. One attribute of the Holy Spirit absolutely distinguishes Him from the Father. The Holy Spirit came

down to earth to indwell human flesh; first within Jesus Christ, and afterward within his elect. God the Father is always spoken of as being in Heaven.

### His Relationship with Jesus

In our study of Jesus the Christ, we have already had occasion to mention the Holy Spirit in connection with his work. We saw that Jesus was born of Mary, conceived of the Holy Spirit, yet was rightly called the Son of God (Lu.1:35). Later, we saw that Jesus was “anointed” of God at his baptism by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him (Jn.1:32). Furthermore, John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mt.3:11).

Jesus Christ, being born of God and not of man, had within Him at his birth the uncorrupted Spirit of God inasmuch as Jesus is God’s spiritual offspring. While Jesus’ flesh was fully man by means of inheritance from the human race through Mary, his Spirit was fully God being inherited from the Father through the conception brought about by the Holy Spirit (Lu.1:35). Therefore, the Spirit of Christ was not corrupted as is the natural man’s spirit, but was from his birth fully identified with the Holy Spirit of God (Is.42:1; 61:1). For that reason, the Holy Spirit is often referred to as the Spirit of Christ (1Pe.1:11).

### His Relationship with the Elect

Admittedly, the precise relationship between the Holy Spirit and mankind is difficult for us to understand, but nothing is more important to those who believe, for we have an absolute and continual relationship with the Holy Spirit. Jesus, when He ascended, sent the Comforter (his Spirit) in his place to dwell within his elect on earth (Jn.14:16,17,18,26). This Comforter is the same Spiritual being that also dwells within Jesus Christ (Jn.14:20). Jesus even spoke of the Comforter or Spirit of Truth as Himself, or as his “other self” when He said, ...ye know him; for he dwelleth *with* you...” (referring to Himself) and then “...shall be *in* you” (referring to the indwelling Holy Spirit) (Jn.14:16,17; emphasis added). Therefore, we find that the believer undergoing regeneration actually has two spirits dwelling within him: the old corrupted spirit, and the Spirit of Christ.

Just as the spirit of man knows man to his innermost being, the Spirit of God knows Christ to his innermost being. A dialogue develops between mans' spirit, and the Spirit of God as the two are in the process of being merged into one. The old corrupted spirit of man is over a lifetime made to conform to a likeness of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the "candle of the LORD" that is the spirit of man (Pr.20:27) can be seen as being "relit" by the "flame" of the Holy Spirit. By that means mans' fallen spirit is immersed in the Holy Spirit, and it is fully joined once again to God the Father through the Spirit of Christ.

During our lifetime, we stumble and fall painfully and often. Yet, each day we are repeatedly assured of the inevitable victory, for we have within us the "down payment" of eternal life to come by the Holy Spirit of eternal life who indwells us.

### **His Relationship with Fallen Mankind**

The Holy Spirit contends with all of mankind in that He convicts men of their sins in order that they may seek redemption in Jesus Christ. This conviction takes place directly through human conscience and indirectly through the witness of the elect whom He indwells. Moreover, He has inspired the writing of Truth to be found in the Holy Scriptures, which have been preserved and made available for any who can and will read it. Through those means, He continually woos unregenerate mankind to accept salvation from the bondage of sin without condition, even as He prevents those who stubbornly reject it from destroying the earth through their perverse acts.

Even today, men and women are being chosen to receive the wondrous grace of God out of a depraved generation in order that they may be saved from eternal destruction — spending an eternity in the darkness of Hell. Inasmuch as man is appointed first to die, the judicial decision regarding man's eternal destiny has been deferred until their physical life on this earth is over and the Holy Spirit has completed his work (He.9:27). For those who will seek his guidance, He offers knowledge of the things of Christ to make them real and vibrant thus bringing peace to their souls. The means by which chosen men and

women are led to that moment of acceptance is the subject of the next chapter of this work.

## Chapter 5.2 Preparing the Heirs of Salvation

In this chapter, we shall study various ways that the elect are prepared for the Holy Spirit's coming. Some have erroneously seen the many tribulations that we suffer on earth as a "trial" or "testing" by God to see who can withstand them in order to determine who is worthy to receive salvation. If that were so, none would be found worthy, and God surely knows his creation without such testing. Furthermore, God does not directly mandate those events; all of those eventually come our way because of our sin nature. Nevertheless, God makes use of those tribulations to guide us to the moment of our awakening to Truth and still later to chasten us and keep us close to Him.

God considers our individual personalities as He reaches down to save us. He carefully leads each man or woman to the perfect time, bending, molding and readying him or her for the proper moment of full realization during which that wondrous gift of the Holy Spirit is given. In the nineteenth century hymn *God Leads Us Along* written by G.A. Young, we find these words in the chorus, "Some through the waters, some through the flood, some through the fire, but all through the blood." Some of the chosen are indeed led through quiet waters, others through a flood of difficulties, and still others through the fiery trials of life to prepare them to receive deliverance through the blood of Christ.

### *Some through the Waters*

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters" (Ps.23:2). Though no man seeks after God because of his fallen nature and the sins that so easily beset him, some are more easily reached than others. They require only the gentle day-to-day wooing of the Holy Spirit to bring them to the moment that God requires. Those who are born into Christian families are especially blessed in that way since from the moment of their birth they are destined to hear the Gospel and will have many occasions to observe the love of God demonstrated in their parents and grandparents (2Ti.1:5). Those have a more gentle and kind disposition

that was gained by example through the loving upbringing of their parents. The most effective means of evangelism therefore is simple one-on-one conversations with family, relatives, and friends as the Holy Spirit moves us to speak to them of spiritual things in response to various situations they may be experiencing in their lives. The Word mixed with our consistent concern for them often reaches deep into their soul since they sense the peace and joy that we experience in telling them about our own conversion as we relate the Gospel to them.

Others are often prepared by what the Apostle Paul called the foolishness of preaching (1Co.1:21). Preaching as opposed to merely imparting the Gospel message is infused with great exhortation to evoke an immediate emotional response in the hearer. In the human sense, preaching *is* foolishness since we can save no one by merely preaching to him or her. Yet, God often uses our foolishness to impart his wisdom that is contained in his Word (1Co.1:24). God works through frail human preaching to reach the lost with the Gospel and prepare the ground for the work of the Holy Spirit. If God is already at work in the hearer, the Gospel that is preached will be the long awaited “good news” that saves his soul (1Co.1:18). Cornelius was told by God in a vision to seek out Peter (Ac.10:3–5). While the initial contact was through revelation, the saving Truth was preached to Cornelius by Peter (Ac.10:38–43). Even while Peter was still speaking, the Holy Ghost was given to Cornelius and his entire family (Ac.10:44). Therefore, we observe that the Holy Spirit was given during the hearing of the Gospel message (Ro.10:17).

“...Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Ac.2:17; Jl.2:28). How many have been readied to receive the Gospel by means of a direct revelation about their lost condition through a dream or vision cannot be known with any degree of accuracy (Ac.9:3,4). Many have flatly stated that God does not ever work in that way today, but always uses other believers to reach the lost. The valid concern is that Satan can also manipulate the dreams and minds of the unsaved as is evidenced by the fact that dreams and visions have been instrumental in the creation of various cults.

However, we are not talking about receiving a unique revelation that defies Scripture and alters sound doctrine, but only a strong sense that God is calling us to Himself. There are far too many personal accounts of God using that means to ready the minds of the lost to deny it categorically. Some ethnic groups, such as Native Americans, seem more predisposed to dreams and visions than others, and we quite often hear of Muslims seeing a vision of Jesus that begins their quest for knowledge and their eventual conversion to Christianity. It should be made clear that salvation itself does not come through having dreams or visions; they are merely another means that God sometimes uses to get our attention in order to lead us to that moment. Those experiences often open the door of the mind to those who preach the Gospel message.

Still others have been readied by the direct reading of the Word of God in the Bible, for between the covers of that old book is the complete truth of the Gospel. Philip imparted the Gospel to the Ethiopian Eunuch who had already been diligently studying the Scriptures, and faith sprang forth within him (Ac.8:35). Many have read the Bible over many years, perhaps even memorized various verses in their youth. Ofttimes those exercises seemed more of a chore than a joy, but later in life, we find the true value in them. God has drawn many to Himself through the reading of his Word, and He has opened their eyes by giving them the Holy Spirit of Christ that it may be understood.

We must be quite clear in stating that salvation cannot be passed down from parents to their children, relative-to-relative, friend-to-friend, or preacher to hearer. None of us is born a Christian, nor do we become saved by mere association with other believers. Nor is it possible to attain salvation through rote reading of the Bible. It is necessary for each of us to go through the individual process that God has prepared for us in order that we may eventually come to a personal knowledge of Christ as our savior and gain assurance of our salvation through faith in Him at the moment that God has chosen to impart the Truth to our minds.

*Some through the Flood*

We have all seen how that a rich man can hardly come to Christ, while the poor seem more close to Him by nature (Mt.19:23). That is because the poor struggle every day just for the bare necessities of life. Satisfied with establishing his own worth, well-being, and riches, why should the rich man think about God? Nevertheless, the rich are not out of God's reach since riches are often an even greater curse that brings forth its own bag of troubles. Rich or poor, it is by the many difficulties of life that God molds and prepares many of us.

Man may not be able to see his way out of the forest of trouble as he wanders deeper and deeper into it, but because of his trials, he may soon begin to see Jesus as the only one who knows his way through and out of the vast wilderness. As the Holy Spirit confers with man's spirit to convict him of his sin, man begins to see the redemptive blood of Christ as the answer to his vain wandering. Rather than attempting to withstand or even to understand those vexations of the soul in his own limited strength, a man needs to mature in them by growing closer to God. When he finally draws near to God in his desperate need for love and mercy, he is at last ready to receive the wondrous gift of redemption.

The chosen may not always be led to the moment of redemption through personal loss, but instead they may be led by general disappointment with their lives and the resultant tribulation of their soul. We often find that we continue on day after day, doing as we have done for years, in a meaningless repetition of events that leads nowhere. What then is the purpose of our life, how much time do we have left to find out and then what shall we do? The pleasures of this life begin to fade as those questions begin to increasingly occupy our mind.

What is it really all about since everything in life seems to be meaningless as we asked the question, What is Man without God? page 102 of this book (cf. Ec.1:20)? Of all the means through which God prepares his own, perhaps this is the most common. As some wag has put it, "the big problems I can handle, it's the little things that get me down!" It may not be the big trial, but the sum of all the many

small tribulations of life pressing in on us that eventually causes us to turn to God for help.

*Some through the Fire*

For some, a leading through the gentle streams of life or even through the roaring waters of a flood of difficulties is not enough to ready them. It takes much more than that to break the hold that the obstinate pleasures of sin have on them. Those must be prepared through severe personal loss as was Job of old. That may entail the loss of a large fortune, loss of a career, loss of mobility, blindness or deafness through injury, loss of freedom through imprisonment, or a host of other things including the devastating loss of a spouse through divorce. Unfortunately, that loss often only results in bitterness and further alienation from God by the reprobate. The chosen, however, tend to draw closer to God in search of his grace and comfort.

One common means by which men are readied through personal loss is by the sorrow and grief he experiences at the loss of a loved one through death. So many times that seems to be the trigger that causes one to believe what he could not even consider before. The mind, suddenly broken away from the day-to-day material world, is brought face to face with death and loss through death as we are also confronted with our own mortality. Since life does not go on forever in this world, we begin to be concerned about how and where we will spend the vast eternity stretching out beyond it. Through that means, God has prepared many to receive the gift of eternal life.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me...” (Ps.23:4). Many times, it is through our own personal illness and suffering that we are made ready. We feel the pains of death in our own bodies, and we begin to envision our own life span in days, hours, and minutes. We are no longer sufficient to ourselves; we are mortal, and we are being made to know it. We know with certainty that our life will end and if not at that very moment some unknown time in the future.

That future hour does not then seem so distant nor does eternity seem as abstract as it once did. We now know the dreadful fear of death through personal experience. Even if our life is spared,

we will still have experienced the pain signaling eventual death, and we cannot forget it as the vast reaches of eternity looms over us. In that vast span, we hang by a weakened thread over the fires of Hell. Others, in prolonged and severe pain from which there is no escape, begin to look longingly for a life beyond this life where they can live free of pain, preparing them to receive redemption on their deathbeds. By that means too the clay is made ready.

### ***All Through the Blood***

Regardless of the means that God chooses to lead us to the moment of salvation, we must understand that we do not earn redemption as a consequence of that which we have suffered along the way. Therefore, we cannot say that those who were led through the quiet waters somehow deserve salvation less than do those who were led through a flood of difficulties or those that were led through the firestorms of great tribulation and suffering. It is not because of our own suffering that we are saved, but by the suffering of Christ through which we have received full atonement for our sins. At the end of the way, we all are led to the foot of the cross where we find that our own sufferings were as nothing compared to His. Jesus carried our iniquities in his own body on the tree that He might suffer the full wrath of God in our stead and that He may endure the pangs of eternal death for us all. It is through the blood of Christ that we are saved.

### ***Necessity of Preaching the Gospel***

Some then may reasonably ask why we should need to preach the Gospel to any of the heirs of salvation at all since they are already elected and ultimately will be led to salvation by God. Even as we go forth, we know that the Gospel will at times fall on rocks, be snatched up by vultures, and be sown amidst thorns. For that reason, many grow discouraged because few seem to listen to the message of life. Yet, as God calls forth his own, it will be sown on fertile soil (Mt.13:4–8). The faith that God freely gives to his own cannot spring to life until the Truth contained in the Gospel is clearly preached.

Moreover, faith cannot grow until the Word of God is heard, read, studied, and absorbed by the chosen soul. God has not saved men

to remain in a state of blindness, leaving them ignorant of the source of their salvation but has merely chosen to initially open their eyes to light through the Gospel. Therefore, the simple preaching of the Gospel is *imperative*, as Paul made quite clear in his epistle to the Romans. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Ro.10:13). This speaks of the necessary human response of the elect to the Gospel. Moreover, the next verses ask, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent” (Ro.10:14,15)?

Nevertheless, we have no right to ownership of either the Gospel or the saved. We are merely stewards of the Gospel of Grace that God has entrusted to us (1Co.9:16,17). We do not bring the increase, God does (1Co.3:6,7). As God has freely given us the Gospel, so we must freely dispense it and invest it in his power, not through some false hope that our own clever ability can convert anyone. We are but the instruments of God; we are under a *holy mandate* to preach the Gospel plainly to any that will listen. We find that God has chosen the means of hearing as well as the chosen themselves.

As stewards and not as owners, we must not limit our efforts to groups or places where *we* may think that the Gospel will be heard since God has often chosen the most unlikely people from the most unlikely places to receive the gift of eternal salvation. We cannot clearly discern in advance the person whom God is preparing to receive it. God is no respecter of persons or of nations (Ac.10:34,35). “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1Co.1:26). Therefore, we must reach out to every creature, to both the wise and the unwise. It is not intellectual ability to understand the message of salvation that will save them, but the Spirit of God working in them, regenerating them, bringing forth both faith and eternal life by the will of God.

**Errors of Contemporary Evangelism**

Although the Apostle Paul spoke of preaching as foolishness in the human sense, contemporary evangelism is quite often more than just a little foolish. That neo-evangelism would seem to indicate that a man can save himself by either coercing himself to believe in Christ or by merely submitting himself to some outward ritual such as reciting a prescribed prayer, attending or joining a church, or engaging in ritual baptism. Today's evangelism places a great emphasis upon eliciting a "personal decision for Christ" from the lost. The unsaved are often preached to, pleaded with, and perhaps worn into submission with one hundred verses of "Just as I am" in an evangelistic meeting. All they need to do (they are told) is confess their "faith" in Jesus Christ and they will be "saved." However many of those may never know what salvation really involves or even why they need it. The "faith" they confess is meaningless.

Therefore, many unbelievers make a "decision" for various reasons not in any way related to true faith in Christ. Often the decision is made while they are experiencing an emotional high with the mind completely disengaged. Still other decisions are made with the same conviction that one has when choosing what to eat for lunch or other mundane decisions that have no long-term consequences. Still others view it as joining a club or organization from which one can always resign if it doesn't work out or if something better comes along. Some others are merely making a purely social decision while still others merely give in to the desires of Christian family and friends just to "get them off their backs."

We must understand that an act of public pronouncement is not a means by which salvation can be automatically attained, only confessed. While it is true that we must respond to God's salvation in order to receive it, the human decision must be brought about through an internal act of faith that is the result of God's redemption already at work in us through the Holy Spirit. The decision is God's; only the response is ours. A man who has no faith cannot create faith within himself by exercising his corrupt will since his natural inclination

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tends toward rejection. There is none that seeks God of his own will (Ro.3:11).

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is not given to men as a reward for their profession of or belief in Christ as some appear to believe. Rather, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we have been brought to that belief through God-given faith. Lost in sin, we were helpless to see spiritual Truth and were totally blinded of our lost condition by our own fallen nature. Therefore, both our conversion and our regeneration are in every way brought about by God, not through any of our own efforts.

We should be deeply saddened that any man should perish, and against that end preach the Gospel diligently and clearly. However, we must continue our efforts with great care lest we should fall by the wayside like those merely called to service. Like he that is not chosen, we may also be cast aside as not beneficial to his work (Ph.2:12,13). As God uses us, we may soon find that our personal pride is being elevated in what we may come to see as our personal successes forgetting that they are all the result of God's works, not our own. We could even find ourselves resorting to trickery and falsehoods just to get someone to confess a belief in Christ. Worse, yet, in our anxious desire to reach them by any means, we may even find ourselves participating in their sins (Jude. 23).

While we need never fear the loss of our salvation once received, personal pride can result in the loss of integrity and with it our usefulness to Christ in reaching the lost with the Gospel. Therefore, let us seek to run the race well. Let us keep our eyes on the prize, lest we not finish the race set before us. As Paul said, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly... But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1Co.9:26,27). We must keep our eyes on Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith.

## Chapter 5.3 Evidence of the Holy Spirit

Many may say at this point that we have avoided answering the central question: in what manner is the Holy Spirit put into us? *God, by invisible and imperceptible means, which we cannot understand, imparts his Holy Spirit to dwell within us.* Since that takes place on the spiritual plane, we must understand that we cannot actually sense the Holy Spirit moving into our being. For that reason, we can only seek evidence of His presence after He has come to live in us.

### *Mistaking Emotion for Evidence*

Just as we cannot sense his coming, we also cannot sense the presence of the Holy Spirit through any of our physical senses. Nevertheless, many would argue that they can “feel” the Holy Spirit within them. They may site warmth, a tingling, or a thrill that goes through them when they think about some truth that God has revealed to them, or when they pray, or receive comfort from the Holy Spirit. However, we must realize that we are only feeling a human emotional *response*, not the actual *presence* of the Holy Spirit. Our emotions as well as our intellect *do* respond to the work of the Holy Spirit within us. That is all very natural and right. However, we may also have a somewhat similar emotional response when we see our nation’s flag, are warmed by the generosity of men, experience human love, or become stimulated by a multitude of other things some of which may even be in opposition to Christ.

It is therefore very important that we make a necessary distinction between emotional response and the actual presence or receiving of the Holy Spirit. Failure to do so may lead a person to think that he is “spirit filled” while he is actually being ruled by his own faulty emotions that emanate from a soul that remains in bondage to sin. Most certainly, the experience that many recall at the moment of conversion is associated with an emotional response that we felt deeply at the time. Perhaps we may recall the emotion we felt when we simply called out to God to “save me!” or we recall the emotion we

felt when we went forth at an evangelistic meeting, a church invitation, or when we were baptized.

Our intellect is awakened, we believe God, and we respond to that knowledge. We are convicted of our sinful lives, and we turn to God in repentance. What we could not believe before now becomes reality. That is a genuine change in direction that we cannot feel with our emotions or even fully understand with our minds. The change is true whether we feel it or not; it is even true whether we understand it or not since God's ways are so far above our own. Certainly, emotion and intellect are a part of us, and we should respond to our calling with both as the Holy Spirit enables us, but neither is the evidence we seek of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Many who have the Holy Spirit indwelling them and who deeply love the Lord and serve Him are often discounted as not being real "spirit-filled" Christians by some merely because their mental makeup does not tend toward emotionalism. That is really too bad, for many such persons are the backbone of the Church. Those are the stable, reliable, consistent believers that are often the solid rocks in the middle of a sea of turmoil. One cannot determine the authenticity of a believer by their emotional responses or by the lack of them. Some of us were born with more of an emotional bent than were others.

Unemotional Christians are often led to wonder about their own salvation because they lack the emotional experiences of others. They should not be concerned about that lack of emotion. We must trust in God, not fickle emotions or sensational experiences, simply believing as God has given us understanding and letting the Holy Spirit continue to work in us as He wills. Then, we should freely respond to God's work in us in the way that our emotional makeup dictates.

### ***Observable Evidence of the Holy Spirit***

After we are redeemed, what tangible benefits does the Holy Spirit bring about in us that may be observed by ourselves or by others? How can we separate imagination and fancy from fact to reach a sure conclusion? The Holy Spirit cannot be detected by our physical senses as we have seen, yet, He is just as real as the air we breathe.

The reality of the Holy Spirit can only be seen indirectly just as air can only be sensed indirectly as wind when it is put into motion. Though there is no sensory evidence that the Holy Spirit indwells a person, we are soon able to observe the result of that indwelling by a change in that person's attitude toward God and toward other men. From that attitudinal change, we also notice a change in activity as well. Emotions may come and go in all of us, but the true evidence that we seek must be more substantial, perpetual, and rational.

### **Conviction of Sin**

The first and most evident thing that a new believer receives is the light of Truth (Jn.14:17) by which our sinful state is clearly revealed to us (Jn.16:8–11). To some this can be a shocking awakening, to others a gradual growing awareness. In either case, we soon realize that our own sins keep us from communion with our Creator who loves us. The unbeliever, though often miserable because of sin, is not yet convinced that his miserable state is actually a result of his own sinfulness. While there may be much wailing and crying, there is only a tendency to blame others, circumstances, or even God for the fault that is his own. When the Holy Spirit comes, specific acts of disobedience come to mind and certain of our habits are revealed as sin toward God. The Ten Commandments suddenly rise up like a mountain to condemn us (Ex.19:12; 20:1–19; Ro.7:11); we can see how far we are fallen from that nature that God intended for us.

With conviction comes much sorrow (Jl.2:12; Ac.2:37). Surely, that sorrow is proportional to the extent of our sin (Lu.7:37,38). That is, those who have committed particularly vile acts are struck down the harder. Yet, we *all* are shown how certainly we are condemned by our sins, for even the least of them is open and hostile rebellion against God and must carry the same dreadful eternal penalty (Mt.5:19). The sorrow that comes with such knowledge dashes any hopes we may have had of achieving reunion with God or of earning eternal life through our own efforts (Is.59:2). Our sorrow becomes even greater until we are humbled into submission to God's only way, the way of the cross. Our pride is broken down by the power of God's Law under the massive weight of our own sins (Ro.7:21,24).

Yet, in the midst of our sorrow, we find that God has opened our eyes for a beneficial purpose. It is necessary that we see ourselves as sinners, even as God sees us (Ge.6:5; Ro.3:10–18). We must know the truth about ourselves. Only by receiving Truth can we be set free from the bondage of sin (Jn.8:32). The Holy Spirit has been given to us not to condemn us, but to convince us of our sinful nature that we were too blind to see before that we may embrace Christ.

### **Repentance toward God**

The second mark of the presence of the Holy Spirit is in a turning of our soul toward God. Only God, whose law it is that condemns us, can save us (Ro.7:25) as we beg for mercy, not justice (Is.55:7). It should be apparent that we were turned inwardly only to our own corruption before the coming of the Holy Spirit (Jb.15:16; Ps.52:3). In many texts, that turning to God is referred to as repentance. For, what else does the word “repent” mean except that we abandon our old sinful ways as we turn toward God?

Our sins, in which we once reveled, now become vile in our sight; we are like one who drank a pleasurable tasting drink that was later revealed as poison. Even when we dash the cup away, the poison is still within us, killing us. Where can we find the remedy? At the same time that the Holy Spirit makes our sins visible through the illumination of our soul, the path of redemption is illuminated to the eyes of our spirit — a path leading us to the cure for the poison of sin that consumes our soul (Ps.16:11). In that light, we turn and walk the path that the Holy Spirit has shown us, and that path leads us to the cross of Jesus Christ (Jn.14:6; Mk.8:34).

### **The Realization of Grace through Christ**

In the cross of Christ, we behold the grace of God and in it, we experience his mercy (Ro.3:24), for God has not worked to condemn us, but to save us (Is.12:2). We have now been justified to God through the death of Christ and by his vicarious atonement — offered up to God on our behalf. By the works of Jesus Christ, not through our own efforts, the remedy for the poison of sin is received (Ro.5:9–11; 5:18). We were ignorantly dead in trespasses and sin (Ep.2:1), yet God

has given sight to the blind and life to the dead. In the body of Jesus, our sins were bound up; the poison of our soul was taken to the tomb with Him and there a solution found for our hopeless condition as evidenced in his resurrection. He has returned with the keys to the grave and to death itself (Re.1:18).

By his stripes, we are healed of the disease of sin (1Pe.2:24); however, we must understand that we are no less poisoned by the sin that we have already committed, so that the natural consequences of past sin still lingers in our flesh long after the sin that caused it is forgiven. That is, the drunkard often suffers from liver damage; the fornicator may suffer from AIDS, the thief may serve a sentence in a jail cell, the murderer may suffer death at the hands of the executioner. While God can overrule such consequences, they most often remain as a thorn in the flesh even when the soul has been liberated. When evil is sown, pain and suffering is the inevitable harvest.

While the lingering effects of the poison of sin are still within our flesh, the blood of Christ protects our soul through his Spirit. We see that we are now justified to God through Christ so that the poison does not follow the dictates of God's law to destroy our soul along with our flesh. That same Holy Spirit, which has been given us in this life, will also raise us up in resurrection in the same manner as Christ has been raised (2Co.4:14). "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co.15:56,57).

### **The Desire to Obey God**

Before we were redeemed, we were rebellious toward God, but now we desire to please Him by obeying his commands. Before, even if we sought to obey God in our flesh, we always failed; God's Law only meant judgment and condemnation resulting from our failure to comply. From that continuous failure and the continuous mocking of Satan, we became hostile and rebellious until we hated God's Law. The flesh was always stronger than our fallen spirit, and our flesh ruled over us.

When we served the flesh, we followed the commands of the flesh. Now, being given the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are free to

follow the prodding of our awakened spirit. Our conscience is no more our enemy, but has become a constant helper. We clearly see that we cannot serve both masters (Lu.16:13). If we serve the spirit, our old master, the flesh, must go. Being the servants of Christ, we are then free to serve the Spirit of God and are no longer the servant of the flesh through which we ignorantly served Satan's purposes.

Since in God is all that is good, and serving the desires of the flesh only brings forth evil, why then should we continue to serve the flesh? Now we seek to serve the commandments of Christ that we may live abundantly (1Jn.3:22–24; Jn.13:34; Ac.10:42; Mt.22:37–39). Therefore, we find that we no longer find the commandments of God grievous (1Jn.5:3; Ps.119:41,45,47). We now have an inner desire to obey God. Yes, we still fail to comply fully, but in Christ, the condemnation of the Law has been removed. Our failures are completely overshadowed by God's grace. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Ro.8:1)

### **Love toward God**

The Holy Spirit speaks to us of Christ and his love for us. He witnesses how that God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son (Jn.3:16). Christ while we were yet sinners and his enemy laid down his life for us (Ro.5:8). What great love is revealed to us through the atoning work of Christ! That same love is being instilled in us by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ro.5:5). Not only are we no longer rebellious toward God, but also we now in turn love God for what He has done for us. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1Jn.4:19). Not that we are only "giving God his due" in some legalistic way, but we love in true and open love from the depths of our being (1Jn.4:16). We love God not only for what He has done, but also for who He is without any reservation. While we had often before trembled at the power of God, we are now transformed by his mercy. Fear has been turned into the fullness of love (1Jn.4:18).

**Love of Neighbor**

Even so, we now see other men and women in a different light as well (1Jn.4:20). We observe in that light not only our friends, but our enemies also (Mt.5:44). For, if they have sinned, so have we. If they are evildoers, so have we done evil things. If they have wronged us, so have we wronged them. If they stand condemned before God, so were we. Moreover, if we have received mercy, *so may they!* Therefore, we can no longer harbor hatred for our kinsmen after the flesh. We once shared the same condemnation of sin and the same need of redemption inasmuch as we were all fallen from Adam, our common ancestor. Rather than hating them, we pray that as many of them as God has chosen will be saved from the terrible wrath to come (1Th.1:9,10). Therefore, the Holy Spirit destroys hatred within us; for, of what possible benefit to a child of God is hatred? We now see hatred as irrational behavior; how can we possibly hate those for whose sins Christ died (1Jn.2:2)? Therefore, we must love our kindred after the flesh, for we can see them only as we see ourselves.

**Brotherly Love**

If we are to have love for all men, desiring their salvation, we are to have a special love for fellow believers. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (Jn.13:35). “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you” (Jn.15:12; cf. Jn.15:17). That love cannot be limited to members of our immediate church or even to members of a denomination. Moreover, it must not be limited to our own city, state, or nation. We may hold great theological differences to that of some other believers, and we may certainly disagree on matters of method and practice, but none of those differences should diminish our special love for those who also love and serve the Lord.<sup>107</sup> We may not

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<sup>107</sup>This does not mean that we should have this special love for cult members or others who deny the basic tenets of the Christian faith. We must love them as unbelievers. It also does not mean that we must cooperate with those whose methods or practices are vastly different than that which our own conscience

even speak the same language as other believers living elsewhere in the world. However, if we have the Holy Spirit living within us, that special warmth and benevolence for all others in the body of Christ must develop, because Jesus Himself commanded it. That command is not engraved externally in stone tablets, but deep within our hearts.

### A Desire to Know God's Word

No longer does a man who has the Holy Spirit walk in spiritual darkness, but in the light as Truth is revealed to him by the Holy Spirit (Jn.1:17; 3:21; 4:23,24). Therefore the Bible, which was once in our minds merely a dusty book with leather covers, a book with indecipherable sentences, an ancient book of no value for today, suddenly springs forth as a book of light as by the teaching of the Holy Spirit all things are made known to us (1Jn.2:27). The Scriptures are opened before our eyes. The indecipherable is made clear; the **Word of God** leaps from the Bible's pages and finds its place in our heart as the wondrous story of God's work on our behalf is clearly revealed. The Word of God finds use and application in our everyday life. More than that, our future life beyond the grave is made certain by the irrevocable promise of God (1Ki.8:56; 2Pe.1:4; 1Jn.2:25)!

As we study God's Word, we see that by that means we can intellectually get to know and understand God Himself. A hunger is generated by the Holy Spirit to read and study the Bible in order that He may use the written Word to bring us closer to the Living Word, which is Christ.<sup>108</sup> If we love God and seek to obey Him, if we accept salvation in Christ and seek to serve Him, we will want to know what God has to say to us regarding such things at every turn. It is not enough for the Child of God merely to be saved; he will want to know increasingly about the one who through great mercy and love reached down to save him. While the Holy Spirit can speak many things to

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will allow. It does not mean that we should compromise Truth and our own faith in order to obtain some simulation of false unity.

<sup>108</sup>It would appear that this hunger for Scripture is more easily satisfied in some believers than in others. Perhaps it has to do with the individual purpose that God has for that person or the intellectual makeup with which they were created.

comfort our spirit directly without words, our minds are left in the dark. The Holy Spirit needs to apply the written Word for the regeneration of our minds. As we read and study the Bible, the Holy Spirit uses those Words of Truth to enlighten our intellect in the same manner as He has enlightened our souls by his very presence.

### **Knowledge of Truth**

Therefore, the Holy Spirit regenerates us making us a new person in Christ who no longer walks in darkness, no longer wanders about in vague generalities, but walks as children of light in the Truth of God. Living in error and thinking wrongly about God and our fallen state had kept us under the power of Satan until the Spirit of Truth had come to enlighten our souls and minds. The Holy Spirit wants us to know the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth. With knowledge of Truth, comes great personal assurance. The fear of the unknown is now replaced with a sure hope for a bright eternal future as we place our trust in God. Faith is no leap in the dark, but an attraction to the light of Truth. For with certainty, “*We know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1Jn.5:20 emphasis added).

### ***The Law of God Fulfilled in Us***

Since we are transformed through the workings of the Holy Spirit so that we love God and our fellow men — knowing that they are even as we are — we shall fulfill the law of Christ (Ro.13:9,10). In so doing, we have also conformed to the essence of the whole law of God (Mt.7:12; Mk.12:28–34). That is, we have fulfilled the Law in the spirit, though not in the letter. We must agree with God that his Law is right and perfect; not because we can now do the things contained in his Law perfectly, but because we now desire to please God and to have love, through his love, for our fellow man. Nevertheless, we should look closely at this wonder. We have not fulfilled the Law at all, but have only received that which the Spirit of Christ has *given* us. The fulfilling of the Law is *imparted* to us as a completed work, not

something that we have accomplished or must yet accomplish through our own efforts. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law in our stead (Mt.5:17,18)! Therefore, any sense of pride or any boasting of our accomplishments is totally eliminated. We must learn to humbly accept that which God has freely given us by his grace.

Therefore, there is ample evidence that the Holy Spirit indwells us by the many changes and benefits that He makes in our lives. Such evidence is not only apparent to us, but also observable by others. We need not cling to some magic moment of emotion or ritual. Those things are fleeting and not trustworthy in the end. Rather, the day-to-day working of the Holy Spirit in our lives proves his presence beyond all doubt. Of course we cannot sense a spiritual being with our physical senses. Why should we ever think that we could? The Holy Spirit is a spirit and transcends any mortal concepts of existence or form. Nevertheless, He is more real than any human measurement of reality that can be registered by our physical senses. He is as real as God Himself, and He lives in us.

## Chapter 5.4 The New Birth of Man

We have seen how the Holy Spirit works within men and women to regenerate both the spirit and mind of the one who is indwelt. The result is the creation of a new being that is spiritually minded rather than carnal minded. If then a new being is created, the old creature exists no more. That translation is often referred to as the “new birth.” This is a battered and worn term in common usage today and may be construed to mean a variety of things. For that reason, it is important that we discuss the new birth of man here in an attempt to dispel any cloud that surrounds the subject.

We find the basis text for the “new birth” or “spiritual birth” in the Gospel of John Chapter 3, verses 3 through 8. Jesus has just told Nicodemus that a man must be “born again” to see the Kingdom of God (Jn.3:3). We must first realize that the word for “again” in John 3:3 is *anōthen* in the Greek which really means “from above.” Therefore, a man must be “born again” in the sense that the first or physical birth brings him into this world, while a second birth “from above” prepares him for entry into God’s eternal Kingdom.

### *The Second Birth*

We know that the things of God are not seen by the carnal mind, and that man’s being is spiritually blinded by his fallen nature. Therefore, it is not surprising that Nicodemus took Jesus literally and asked Him how a person can be born again: “...can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born” (Jn.3:4)? Nicodemus, as we can see, apparently could not discern the spiritual implication of Jesus’ words. Although, he may have understood Jesus to say that one needed to be born “from above” in the spiritual sense, he may have understood that to mean occurring at the time of physical birth. The physical birth of a Hebrew automatically qualified him as being a member of the Davidic Kingdom, of the generation of Abraham, and under the Mosaic Law. If a man must be “born from above” at the time of physical birth, there would be no hope for a man who is merely born of the flesh to see the Kingdom of God unless he could be *physically* born all over again.

However, Jesus answered Nicodemus by saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Jn.3:5). We must understand that Jesus is relating carnal with spiritual things in this verse to help Nicodemus along. Nicodemus is still thinking in carnal terms, and Jesus is speaking of spiritual things. That is the reason for the reference to “water” in this verse; water as it is used here is the metaphorical equivalent of the Holy Spirit. A man can cleanse his outward being with water, but the Holy Spirit cleanses the inner being. As the flesh is “renewed” by the partaking of water, so the inward man is “renewed” or “regenerated” by “drinking in” the Holy Spirit.<sup>109</sup>

Jesus goes on to explain in the next verse: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn.3:6). Then, we perceive that “water” refers to the birth of the flesh, and “spirit” refers to the birth of an incorporeal existence. There are two births being spoken of here: one is physical, and the other is spiritual. Therefore, Jesus said, in effect, that we should not be shocked when He says that we must be “born again”; for He speaks of a spiritual birth not a second physical birth (Jn.3:7).

### **A New Being is Created**

We must understand how radical that spiritual birth really is. It is not merely that the “old man” or the “old creation” is patched up or somehow made to conform to God’s standards. In the words of Paul, we must “put off... the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created...” (Ep.4:22–24). When we are born from above, we must recognize that the old nature, which once was our manner of life, is now dead — not just reformed or cleaned up, but stone cold dead! “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Ro.6:6). If our old man was

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<sup>109</sup>John 3:5 does not directly relate to ritual baptism in the sense that it is necessary for entry into God's kingdom as has been commonly supposed by some.

crucified with Christ, He along with our sin nature has received the full penalty for sin, which is death. To attempt to live in the old nature after being born into the new is like dragging a corpse around with us. It is better that we bury it along with our sin once and for all. Likewise, as new beings, we must now reckon ourselves "...alive unto God through Jesus Christ or Lord" (Ro.6:11).

Because of the separation from our old sinful nature, we are no longer under bondage to sin. If, indeed, our old fleshly nature is separated from us, it is as good as dead because we no longer look to it for life (which it could never supply), but to our new nature, which God has given us in the spirit. Therefore, we can see that our "old man" indeed has been put to death: crucified with Christ. What remains for us to fully understand is what that means in a practical sense and then to respond to that accomplished act of God in our daily lives. We no longer need to serve the law of sin, which still exists in our members; we are now free from that evil servitude.

Being born again does not mean that the old personality is annihilated and that we are replaced with a new person. The person is the same, but the person's nature is entirely new. Otherwise, we could not talk about salvation of the soul if the soul lost its identity in the new birth. When spiritual enlightenment comes through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are immediately translated from the old creation into the new. We still have all our memories intact — often painfully intact; we are still the same person. But, just as when we shall be physically resurrected with a new body in the future, and our bodies shall be translated "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" into glorified flesh, so we are translated from the old carnal man into the new spiritual nature when we are born from above. The old nature is regarded as crucified with Christ as the spiritual awakening takes place.

We are awakened out of a dark slumber that is akin to that which preceded our physical birth while we were yet in the womb. During that time, we were alive, but we were unaware of our physical surroundings in any cognitive sense. At birth, the physical world came crashing in on our being as we gulped in our first breath of air. In like manner, the new birth results in an awakening to a spiritual sphere of

existence as we breathe in our first spiritual breath as a newborn child of God. Just as our physical birth was a significant day in our lives, so is the day of our spiritual birth as we breathed in our first breath of eternal life.

We must understand that the new birth is not only a reality in the way in which we react to the indwelling Holy Spirit, but also in the way that God sees the newborn as his child. Not only are we born to a newness of life, we are also born to full acceptance in the beloved of God the Father in his Son, Jesus Christ. Our old man, who was created in Adam, no longer lives in the mind of God, but it is replaced by a new creation in the likeness of Christ. The new being thus created receives the righteousness that is Christ's both by means of Jesus' birthright (as the Son of God) and by his obedience of the Law and the suffering of the Cross.

The infant Christian is declared innocent in the mind of God just as a newborn babe is declared innocent in the mind of the world. Nevertheless, a newborn babe is not innocent in the eyes of God, as the world declares, but brings into the world with it the full depth of Adam's sin. Under Adam, we were declared guilty because of our participation, by imputation, in Adam's sin. Under Christ, we are declared innocent because of our participation by imputation in Christ's perfect righteousness.

We can plainly see that the new birth is truly a spiritual birth out of the bondage of time into the far reaches of eternity for that man or woman who receives the Spirit of God. Though the natural man may be living and breathing in the physical sense, his hold on life is tenuous and lacks any eternal dimensions. It is necessary for a carnal man to be born from above in order to enter into that eternal dimension (the Kingdom of God) where he must then live on a spiritual plane.

That is exactly what we have been talking about in previous chapters when we spoke of man receiving the Holy Spirit. The act of regeneration by the Holy Spirit immediately creates an entirely new being: "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Co.5:17). At the time of physical birth, carnal life begins; at the time of this second birth, a new spiritual life begins. No longer is our soul

identified with the flesh, but with the spirit. God says “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Eze.36:26).

We already know from our previous studies that this new birth is given us through God’s mercy and not by any attempts of our own to gain it. The Apostle Paul said that it is “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Tit.3:5). Further, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him” (1Jn.5:1). Firm belief and even faith itself comes by means of the new birth through the Holy Spirit (Ep.2:8). For, by the Spirit of God we are “Being Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1Pe.1:23). Again, we see that this new birth is in the full will and purpose of God, for we “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn.1:13), are born anew in the spirit (Ja.1:18).

### **The Newborn is an Infant Christian**

However, that rebirth does not immediately manifest itself in a “mature” Christian. When we are born in the flesh as infants, we are not immediately mature and suddenly capable of instant knowledge. Infants do not immediately eat solid food (1Co.3:1,2). They must first grow teeth and develop a digestive tract that can digest solid food. Furthermore, the infant must be taught and corrected until he is capable of mature understanding. In like manner, the newborn of the Holy Spirit does not immediately take on the stance of a mature believer.

We must understand that the Holy Spirit immediately translates us from the old nature to the new nature. Therefore, we cannot be more saved than we are at the instant that conversion takes place. However, the mind, which affects our manner of life, and holds mature understanding, requires our lifetime for the Holy Spirit to regenerate it. Changes come about gradually as the Spirit of Christ

confers with and shapes our being as He leads us toward ultimate spiritual maturity. Even the Apostle Paul did not immediately begin his ministry after the revelation of Jesus Christ in his new birth (Ac.9:3). A time passed during which he was taught by the Holy Spirit in the desert. For Paul said, “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Ga.1:11,12).

When Paul was called by the grace of God, he stated it in this manner: “to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus” (Ga.1:16,17). Therefore, for a time Paul was taught by the Holy Spirit in the wilderness of Arabia before he spent time with the disciples at Damascus and preached Christ in the synagogues (Ac.9:19,20).

If Paul, having a great zeal for God, and being one who surely knew the Hebrew Scriptures like the back of his hand, required a period of time for the Holy Spirit to teach him, how much more must a new born in Christ who knows nothing of the Scriptures and the things of God? So, even as an infant must begin with milk, so we must begin with simple knowledge, often related in carnal terms, and progress upward toward full spiritual knowledge as the Holy Spirit continues to teach us.

### **The Maturing of the New Born**

How often have we heard it said that a person has “gotten religion,” but no change in the person’s character has been observed? First, “getting religion” is not the same as the “new birth” for, the former term is too general to be useful. That is often the term that the unsaved uses when describing a person who has become interested in any religious system. The implication is that one is trying to clean up his act by means of a religious facade. A new birth through the indwelling Holy Spirit is not a concept that can be understood by the unsaved. Religion, as a term, is merely the outer shell of a system of beliefs. It is not in itself “faith in the one true God and Jesus Christ

whom He has sent.” There are many religions in the world, but only one Truth. We who are born of the Spirit do not believe in some system of beliefs that man has discovered or devised whereby in observing certain rituals and moral codes we may come to an understanding with a mysterious “god” or with the “universe” or with “destiny” (Ga.1:12).

However, even if the Holy Spirit is working in a person, we should not expect to see immediate outward results. We know that “...flesh and blood can not inherit the kingdom of God...” (1Co.15:50). That does not mean that we cannot enter into that spiritual kingdom in this life in order that we may walk on the spiritual plane in our innermost being, but that we cannot inherit all things until our mortal bodies are changed and raised incorruptible (1Co.15:52,53). Therefore, we should not expect perfection while we are yet in the flesh of this life. Though the old man is truly dead, we still walk in mortal bodies.

Though changes will and must occur in the soul who has the Spirit of Christ, as the Holy Spirit teaches him, changes in character must occur by God’s established timetable, not ours. We are often inclined to rush the Holy Spirit to turn an infant believer into a mature adult Christian. We seem not to understand that spiritual maturity takes time.<sup>110</sup> That is why the witness of a newborn in Christ can often be so disastrous in matters of doctrine. While it may be true that he can testify of his conversion in an experiential way, to expect mature doctrine is like expecting a baby in the crib to explain the meaning of life or for that matter even the details of his own birth. Not only is understanding and wisdom lacking, there is the problem of communication itself. The newborn in Christ is likely to speak spiritual “baby talk” (1Co.13:11).

For that reason, a novice in the matters of doctrine should not be put into a position of teaching or counseling others (1Ti.3:6). Not only is there the danger of feeding incorrect doctrine to the flock of believers, we also abuse that newborn child of God by pushing him

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<sup>110</sup> The process of Christian maturity is discussed in further detail in Chapter 7.1 of this book.

forward too soon. We must give him time to mature so that his faith is not shipwrecked through error and pride. Immediately putting too much responsibility upon a new believer may very well stunt his spiritual growth.

### **Assurance of the New Birth**

If you truly believe within your heart — your innermost being — that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and seek to walk in the spiritual plane beyond this carnal life, discerning spiritual matters above the things of this world, you are surely born again. The evidence of that fact is living within you. The unsaved man does not live by faith in Christ, nor does he seek to walk on a spiritual plane, nor does he seek to serve God. Therefore, there is no need to look for some supernatural sign that you can hold to; rather, cling to the inward reality that is many magnitudes greater than any outward sign. You have the witness of salvation within you. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Ro.8:16). For, how can one know that Jesus is the Son of God except that the Holy Spirit tells him (Mt.16:16,17)? Therefore, continue the path that the Holy Spirit has shown you, never doubting or fearing, for by this Spirit you know that you have passed from death into life (1Jn.5:10–13).

## **Section 6, The Godhead**

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**Emmanuel**

**Christological Errors**

**The Doctrine of the Trinity**

**The Triune God Revealed in Scripture**

## Chapter 6.1 Emmanuel

As we begin this section, we must state at the outset that to study the Godhead is to probe directly into the very personal being of God. It goes beyond the study of God's attributes and delves into the intimate divine love relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. For that reason, this study must be approached with great care and reverence.

The word "Godhead" is used only three times in Scripture<sup>111</sup> (Ac.17:29, Ro.1:20, Col.2:9). In Acts Chapter 17, the Apostle Paul is speaking of the singular deity of the One God to those who, in their blindness, worshiped many false gods. In Romans Chapter 1, Paul is referring to the divine being and authority of God, which is revealed to fallen man through God's act of creation.

In Colossians Chapter 2, the Apostle Paul describes the ultimate revelation of the complete divinity of God as it is to be seen in Christ. Therefore, it is appropriate that we start this study of the Godhead by beginning with the incarnate Christ, and through that means, glimpse the true Godhead in a "bodily form" or in human flesh, which is for us much more approachable than any attempt to understand the Godhead in the habitat of Heaven. For, in Christ "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col.2:9).

### *Difficulty of Studying the Incarnation*

If the Godhead is most difficult for mortal man to understand, the incarnate Christ is surely second in difficulty. The word Immanuel as it is used in Isaiah Chapter 7 verse 14 or Emmanuel in Matthew Chapter 1 verse 23 means, "God is with us." That definition has a much greater significance than that which is often accredited to it. It does not merely mean that God came down to earth to walk among us in the human form of Jesus, but that He actually became one with us through an eternal fusion of God with man, which we refer to as the

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<sup>111</sup>Reference is made here to the Authorized or King James Version. Other translations may use the word "divinity" or "divine being" instead of "Godhead".

incarnation. When we use the term incarnate Christ, we are speaking of Jesus who is the soul that is the product of that incarnation.

There are two dangers in the present study that we must seek to avoid. First, is the danger that we may see the incarnate Christ as impossible to understand and so miss the blessings to be found in beholding the wonders of Christ's person. That we must not do, for our very salvation is based not only upon what Jesus Christ did, but also upon *who He is*. Conversely, the second danger that we must avoid is in our zeal to understand the incarnation we may oversimplify Christ's person and so embrace error that neither benefits us nor accurately portrays Christ in all his glory.

We tread on dangerous ground here to be sure, for many have attempted to express an understanding of the incarnation but in doing so have only conjured up error. Many modern religious cults have sprung up because of errors concerning Jesus' person. Furthermore, confusion over the incarnation has separated true believers by tangling them in a morass of fruitless theological argument. Even in this present age, many churches hold many false ideas about Jesus' person. The religious liberal makes Him out to be a mere man who had great thoughts while still others see Him as unapproachable deity.<sup>112</sup> Neither extreme describes the incarnate Christ of the Bible with which we have to do.

### *The Nature of Man*

Until we see Him face to face, there will always be those things concerning the incarnate Christ that escapes our mental grasp because of our limited perception. Still, some understanding may be ours if we begin with the nature of man with which we can more easily relate. We should make it clear that the analogy that follows is not an attempt to drag God down to man's level, but through our own more familiar human nature to gain some insight into the divine being who created us in his image.

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<sup>112</sup>The Roman Catholic sees Christ as unapproachable deity. So much so, that it is necessary for them to establish intermediaries through human priests, saints of old, and even the Virgin Mary.

Each natural man is a unique being created with two distinct natures. First, man is a physical being that is able to move about in a physical world and interact with a physical universe. Secondly, man is also a spiritual being with a capacity for heavenly thoughts that completely transcends the physical. When Adam was created, God breathed the breath of life (the Spirit of Life) into him (Ge.2:7). Only then did man become a living soul. The soul is neither physical nor spirit, but it is a unique quality of man's being that was brought about through God breathing his Spirit into lifeless flesh. The soul is what gives man his unique individual identity and defines who we are.

A man is most often referred to as one singular and unique being that is a reference to his soul (Ge.2:7), which is derived from both his body and his spirit. Man therefore has a three-fold quality whereby one characteristic of being can be easily distinguished from the other, but they cannot be separated from each other without destroying the identity of that unique person. That is because the soul of man is the merging of both his spirit and his flesh into one being.

Christ taking the form of a man in the incarnation also has a similar triune distinction. Jesus has a physical body in which to move about and a spiritual nature that, when combined into one soul, is uniquely Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, Jesus, as does any other man, has the same three characteristics of his being that are distinguishable from one another, yet are inseparable.

### ***Fully God and Fully Man***

From our analogy of man's composition, we can comprehend Jesus as fully man in his flesh with a unique soul. However, when referring to his spirit, the analogy with common man breaks down. Jesus' spirit is not the fallen spirit of Adam, but the Holy Spirit of God. When we speak of Jesus in the sense of his person, stressing his individuality, we refer to his soul. When we speak of Jesus as God, we fully speak of Jesus' deity through his Spirit. When we speak of Jesus as a man, we speak of Jesus' humanity in the flesh. What we must understand, however, is that those distinctions do not make Jesus three separate beings any more than we could think that any man is more

than one being merely because he is also a unique soul that is comprised of flesh and spirit.

In Chapter 4.1 The Birth of the Messiah, page 212 of this book, it was made clear that Christ needed to be both man and God at birth in order to be the perfect substitutional sacrifice acceptable to God. To reiterate, He needed to be man, because only the flesh of man could provide the sacrifice that God's holiness required. However, that man needed to be a perfect man in order to meet God's requirements for an unblemished sacrifice. Only God is perfect; therefore, only a man with all the attributes of God Himself would be acceptable to God as atonement for man's sin. Only God Himself could provide the sacrifice by coming to earth in the likeness of sinful flesh and taking on his person the full carnal being of a man.

As Jesus is one with God, so is He now, through the incarnation, one with man. God and man are forever united in that one person, Jesus Christ. That fact is at the very foundation of our salvation. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Ro.8:3). Mankind died to pay the penalty for sin when Jesus died. Furthermore, mankind rose to newness of life when Jesus was raised from the dead. The "broken image" of the human race has been fully restored in that one man who now represents before God all who receive Him as their Savior. It is as Jesus Himself prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us..." (Jn.17:21).

### *Jesus' Deity*

The uniqueness of the incarnate Christ that distinguishes Him from other men is not to be found in his birth, his life, or in his death, but in his conception. Adam was directly created, Eve was indirectly created from Adam, and every other man was born through natural reproduction as an extension of Adam's nature by the will of man — except Jesus! Jesus was directly conceived by the Holy Spirit through supernatural means rendering his spirit holy from birth (Lu.1:35).

Here we must also be very clear in understanding that Christ was *not* created in the womb of Mary, but it was through that means

that He was brought into the physical world. Jesus was and is an eternal being, the Christ. Jesus not only came to earth by the will of God, but his physical body was *conceived* of God in the womb of Mary for Him to occupy (Lu.1:35). Jesus inherited all of the physical traits of human man through Mary, but *not* the fallen spiritual nature of Adam.

### Unity of the Father and Son

There are some today that assert that Jesus never claimed to be deity. That assertion simply will not hold up in the light of Scripture. Jesus Himself referred to Jehovah God as his “Father” a concept not known to the Jews, and in fact, thought to be blasphemous by them. They clearly understood that when Jesus referred to God as his Father, He also referred to Himself as God — as God’s true offspring. Since his Father is unquestionably deity, it follows that the Son of the Father must also be deity (Jn.8:38; 10:30; 14:7,9; 17:21,23, etc.).

Jesus most commonly referred to Himself by the title “son of man,” in which many see as him claiming to be only a mortal man (Mt.8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8; 16:13, etc.). However, “Son of Man” is a title of unquestionable deity and eternal dominion that is clearly revealed in the prophecy of Daniel as those Jews about him knew full well.

**“ I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed”** (Da.7:13,14).

We must therefore go further in our understanding to see that Jesus was not only the Son of God, in that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary (Lu.1:35), but that Jesus is also the eternal *Spiritual* offspring of God (Lu.3:22; Jn.1:14). That is, Jesus shares fully in common that very same eternal substance that is God the Father. To the human mind, this is nothing short of astonishing

since God is infinite in his being. How can God be in Heaven and yet walk the Earth in the limited confines of human flesh — simultaneously at that?

Infinity cannot be divided, because any division would result in two infinite substances each with infinite attributes that of necessity would negate each other. Therefore, we must conclude that the two infinite substances are one and the same! Since there is one God, the Son and the Father are one in substance each with the *same* infinite attributes. As Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (Jn.10:30), and “...I am in the Father, and the Father in Me...” (Jn.14:11). While we may have much difficulty understanding that infinite oneness of the Father and the Son, Holy Scripture makes it very plain that it is so.

### **Jesus, the Essential Being**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn.1:1; cf. Ge.1:1).<sup>113</sup> Three times the word “Word” is used in the opening verse of the Gospel of John. “Word” is the English translation of the Greek word *logos* that existed in the Greek language long before John used it here. To discover its meaning in the context that John used it, it is necessary to look back to 500 B.C. and a Greek philosopher by the name of Heraclitus.

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus envisioned a common structural element of all natural objects that determines their behavior. We must understand that he was not referring to a physical element such as the atom; the reference is to a philosophical, not physical, structure. That “logos,” as he called it, determined the rhythm and order of change. It is identifiable with fire in the sense that fire consumes material (fuel) and in exchange emits smoke and flame. Even though the physical world undergoes change, he envisioned a “unity” by which the diversity in this world is regulated. Therefore, though night and day are different and opposites, he saw a “unity” in both by the common substance of the “logos.” Change (or time) then, is regulated by that “logos.” If that “logos-element” ceased to exist in

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<sup>113</sup>When John speaks of the beginning here, he speaks of a beginning which had no beginning since the Word was (and is) eternal with God.

material objects, natural order would fail and the very universe would dissolve. That “logos” was envisioned by the Greek as the “glue” that held the earth and the universe together by its regulating power. All reality existed by its “command.”

John compared Jesus with that Greek concept of the “logos”, or “Word.” John is using the Greek philosopher’s term “logos” here to explain the deity of Christ in much the same way that the Apostle Paul explained to Greeks about the One God using as an example their altar to the “unknown God” (Ac.17:23). Paul was not embracing the Greek altar as a valid way of offering praise to God; likewise, John is not embracing Heraclitus’ philosophy here. Those were merely vehicles that were being used to explain that which was not easy for the Greeks of that day to understand.

This analogy of Jesus with the logos is not inappropriate, since God created the heavens and the earth by his **Word** alone, and all that was created, even light, was created by his Word or command (Ge.1:3). However, John, in so doing, goes beyond the Greek concept of an impersonal logos to the reality of the voice of a personal God. Not only was the logos in the beginning *with* God, that logos *was* God. Jesus is the essential being that holds everything together. If when man sinned against God, no redeemer could have come forth, the earth, the universe, and man himself would have flown apart in an instant. The writer to the Hebrews while speaking of Christ put it this way, “...upholding all things by the **word** (Gr. *rhema*) of his power...” (He.1:3). Therefore, what John is saying is that this “logos”, even Jesus Christ, existed in the beginning. Jesus was in the beginning with God, for Jesus *is* God. Jesus is the **living Word**.

“The same [Word] was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Jn.1:2,3). Since all was created by God, all was created by the same God, even by Jesus. Jesus is truly the light of the world not only in the spiritual sense, but also in the physical sense since the earth would be in complete darkness without Him (Jn.1:4,9). No life could exist apart from the essential being of Christ. Yet, when He came into the world, man did not receive Him; he who lives in spiritual darkness does not see the light of Truth (Jn.1:5). “He was in the world, and the

world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Jn.1:10,11).

### *Jesus’ Humanity*

In Chapter 1, verse 14, of his Gospel John makes it very clear that he is not talking about an impersonal “logos” or force. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” The “logos” was made *flesh*. The essential element that holds everything together was made *man*. Jesus is God made flesh through the incarnation at Bethlehem. Nevertheless, as we have pointed out earlier, God, the Father, is of incorporeal substance: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is *in the bosom of the Father*, he hath declared him” (Jn.1:18, emphasis added). God is fully revealed to a sinful world through Jesus Christ.

Some may wonder if the fact that Jesus was conceived of God through the Holy Spirit means that Jesus’ flesh was unique and different from that of other men. “Yes,” in the sense that Jesus’ flesh grew out of a conception that was supernatural. That makes his flesh unique in the sense that it was unblemished in its conception by Adam’s sin. However, the answer is “no” in any sense that the physical makeup of Jesus’ body could be distinguished from that of any other man. If a modern day physician had examined Jesus’ body as He walked this earth, he would have found it to be quite normal. Jesus’ body was flesh and bone, with blood flowing through veins and arteries. It was composed of arms and legs, a brain, a heart, lungs, and all of the common organs that any man possesses. Jesus also experienced hunger, thirst, heat, cold, pain, and ultimately death just as any natural man.

We find that Jesus not only suffered as does man, hungered and thirsted as does man, but he also had human thoughts, as does any man. Jesus can fully understand and sympathize with us because He has felt our pain, thought our thoughts, and has walked in our shoes. Jesus knew sadness, anger, and joy. Jesus also suffered terrible anguish and died on the cross. Jesus prayed earnestly to his Father

before his crucifixion (Jn.17:1–26; Mt.26:39,42). Jesus Christ was (and is) *fully man* in every respect.

We find that God, the Father, protected Jesus in his youth as He grew into manhood. “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Ps.91:11). That is, of course, the verse that Satan twisted out of context as he made the vain effort to tempt Jesus in the wilderness (Lu.4:10–11). The true implication of this verse is that God the Father protected Jesus in thought and action (as any human father would protect his child) until the physical body and brain had developed. There was no need for Jesus to gain spiritual maturity since He was completely and perfectly God at the moment of conception. Jesus did **not** “grow up” to be God.

Nevertheless, the human body did place limitations upon the incarnate Christ until such time as it had fully reached maturity. That was a necessary consequence of the incarnation that God willingly lowered Himself to accept (He.2:7). The perfect sacrifice must go through all of the normal stages of human development. He must be a true representative of the human family. As we read in Hebrews, “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me” (He.10:5; Ps.40:6). That body was to be the final and perfect sin offering to God.

### **The Incarnation Tested**

After Jesus had reached physical maturity and after his anointing by the Holy Spirit, He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tested by Satan for forty days (Mt.4:1–10). It is necessary that we distinguish the two natures of Christ on this point. God cannot be tempted by evil (Ja.1:13). It was the person of Jesus as a mortal man (i.e. in human flesh) that Satan attempted to lead astray just as he had Adam in the beginning. However, Satan utterly failed in his attempt, because Jesus was not the naive Adam, but the righteous Christ that was fully indwelled with the Spirit of God. Satan tempted Jesus as a human man through the flesh, which was distinguishable from his Spiritual equality with deity. In response to Satan, Jesus

replied as the “God-man,” inasmuch as both natures are inseparable in his unique person.

### *The Eternal Being of Christ*

Jesus said, “Before Abraham was I am” (Jn.8:58). We may easily see that Jesus is eternal in the Spirit in as much as He is one in substance with the Father. However, Jesus did not leave his carnal body upon this earth, for God raised it and glorified it (Ac.1:9). This very day Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father not in Spirit only, but in the glorified flesh of his body that will see no corruption (Ac.7:55). Therefore, we find that Jesus must be eternal in all respects. Jesus existed before the beginning, outside of our physical dimensions, within the Spiritual substance of God and continues to exist as the Eternal Son of God at the Father’s right hand. Since, by definition, eternity can know no past or future, we perceive that Jesus has always existed.

Some would see Jesus as preexisting only in the foreknowledge of God before he was born in Bethlehem. However, we have already shown that God created and controls the entire dimension of time in which we live (cf. Time is God’s Creation, page 142); therefore, the foreknowledge of God is fully equated with the will of God. More than that, we must see that Jesus did not merely exist in the mind of God, but has always existed in true unity within the deity of the Godhead before the creation of all things (Jn.1:1–3). Christ was *not* created in a beginning, nor did He merely come into existence in the process of time through his incarnation. *For* Christ, all things were created, and *through* Christ are all things (Col.1:16,17). Jesus not only existed before the beginning of all things, all things were actually created through Him by Him and for Him. He has existed and does exist forever more; therefore, Jesus is both God and man eternally.

We should not therefore be surprised when the Hebrew Scriptures speak of God appearing in the form of a man long before the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem (Ge.18:1; 26:2; 32:24; 35:9,10; Da.7:13; cf. Re.1:13). In as much as Jesus lives outside the dimension of time in eternity, time is no barrier for Him. He is free to appear in his human form in the past, present, or future. He was seen to appear

to men (as God, or as the “Angel of God”) in the Hebrew Scriptures even before the times of his redemptive work on earth as the eternal Christ in the flesh (Jos.5:14). That is a much more suitable explanation than the views of some that would suppose that Jesus appeared in Old-Testament times as a disembodied voice only (as a “logos” which is translated “word” in John 1:1; 1:14), or as a mere projected image of the coming Christ who did not yet exist in human flesh.

### *Summation*

Christ is God in the Spirit and man in the flesh forever joined into *one* being who is Jesus as a consequence of the incarnation. Though his Spirit and flesh are clearly distinguishable from each other, they are not separable. Though Jesus’ flesh is the flesh of man as inherited through Mary, his flesh is also holy because He was supernaturally begotten of God and was not conceived by man. Humanity and deity are forever fused together into that one unique person. There can never be a time that Jesus is not fully man, or a time when He is not fully God. While Jesus was fully God come to dwell in human flesh as He walked on Earth, so is He the glorified man that today sits at the right hand of God, the Father. Inasmuch as Jesus was made subject to death by virtue of his human flesh, so is He made subject to eternal life by virtue of his deity.

He was born of a woman in human flesh by the supernatural intervention of God. He was fully man that He might die for all humanity and fully God that He might be the perfect sacrifice. He was fully man that He might know our trials and troubles and fully God that He might forgive our sins. He was fully man that He might share our mortality and fully God that He might give eternal life. We must have a clear understanding of Jesus Christ as being both *fully God* as well as *fully man*, for without that understanding we cannot completely appreciate the work that God has done for mankind or the wondrous love of God that it expresses.

The triune nature of the Godhead will be discussed later in Chapter 6.3 The Doctrine of the Trinity, page 356 of this section, but the basis for the study begins here; it is significant to notice that in Jesus, Himself, the concept of that triune nature is seen: the unity of

Christ as one infinite being, his nature of flesh, and his spiritual nature. In Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Father's person, we get a clear glimpse of the full nature of the Godhead bodily (He.1:3; Col.2:9).

## Chapter 6.2 Christological Errors

In the last chapter, we went to great lengths to show that Jesus was and is both man and God as a consequence of his incarnation. If that is not true, our salvation is fraudulent, our religion is meaningless, and our hope of life to come is without reality. Yet, today, there are those who would deny the deity of Christ, deny his humanity, or deny the unity of the two in one being and still claim to be Christians. Rather than attempt to understand what is, for them, the incomprehensible, they try to reason it away. The hope of eternal life does not come from vain reasoning, but only from Truth. To that end, we will delve more deeply into the subject of christological error as it pertains to the incarnate Christ and compare it with Scripture.

### *Philosophical Allegories*

In the early third century B.C., Alexander the Great not only conquered much of the Middle Eastern world including Palestine, he also brought along with him the teachings of Greek philosophy and the Greek way of life. He saw himself as a missionary to spread Hellenistic<sup>114</sup> doctrine everywhere he conquered. During that time, the Jews were greatly impacted with various teachings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle. In Alexandria in particular, Jews were sorely tempted to assimilate themselves into the prevailing Hellenistic pattern of thinking while at the same time they were fully resolved to remain true to the historic Jewish faith. Religiously they saw themselves as Jews, but they also believed that they were heirs to the culture of Greece. Many of their traditional Jewish ordinances began to lose hold on them as the Greek culture gained sway.

The solution was sought through harmonizing Scripture with Greek philosophical thinking in such a way that the literal sense of Scripture only became a vehicle for a secondary philosophical sense that was regarded as more spiritual and profound than the plain meaning of the text. Allegorical interpretation became so subjective that if the literal sense of Scripture even suggested something that was

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<sup>114</sup> Pertaining to the Greek thought and culture.

deemed unworthy of God for any reason, one must look for a “hidden” allegorical meaning instead. In that way, traditional Judaism became highly liberalized.

It was only natural that this form of allegorizing would find its way into the interpretation of New Testament Scriptures as well and that it would negatively impact early doctrines derived from them. That is particularly true of the many erroneous doctrines concerning the person of Christ. In this instance, however, allegorizing often gave way to purely extra-biblical speculation that favored philosophical thought.

### *Gnosticism*

Therefore, we should not think that error regarding the person of Jesus Christ is only common to today’s world. There were those in the first century who also attempted to reason away God’s full and complete incarnation in the flesh as the man Jesus. Those were generally referred to as the Gnostics. Gnosticism, in general, means that special spiritual knowledge is attained by a select few through mystical and/or philosophical means. Furthermore, the Gnostics were also not of one mind, but had many different concepts regarding the person of Christ that conflicted one with the other because of the speculative nature inherent in harmonizing text with Greek thought.

### **Arianism**

Some early Gnostics believed that Jesus was a “creature” that God had created and that He was not consubstantial (not of the same substance) with the Father. In so believing, Jesus was considered only a creation of God, not actually God incarnate.

Though that error began early in church history, a fourth-century priest at Alexandria developed the erroneous doctrine after which it is named. Arius argued that God would not share or communicate his substance with any other being lest God would become divisible and subject to change, which is impossible. Therefore Jesus must have been a created being lest God, who is a spirit being, be reduced to physical properties. Jesus must have had a

beginning as a mortal man, but having an empty soul, in which the spirit of God was placed at the time of Jesus' baptism.

The radical doctrine of Arius was disputed in the church of that day and was soundly rejected. It is easily refuted by reading John Chapter 1 verse 1 where it is stated that the Word was not only with God, but was God. In verse 14, it becomes apparent that John was referring to Jesus when he said that the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us.

### **Logos Error**

In the Prologue of the Gospel of John, Christ is referred to as the "Word" or "logos." An early error considered Christ as a being merely having "the mind of God" or "the wisdom of God" (logos), which, as an impersonal force, indwelt Christ. The implication here is that Jesus was merely a man (or other creation) that was given the mind and wisdom of God, but was not actually God.

This error is not to be confused with the Apostle John's use of the term. In fact, John exploded that erroneous doctrine when he said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God" (Jn.1:1, emphasis added). "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (Jn.1:14). *This* "logos" (Word) of whom John wrote is a personal being who was God from the very beginning. The "logos" is not a mere force in John's Gospel, but God Himself who took on human flesh as Jesus who is the Christ.

### **Docetism**

Still other Gnostics did not consider Jesus a man either — not flesh and blood. Those Gnostics generally believed that all matter including flesh was evil. That spiritual creature, that they supposed God had created, did not actually die on the cross. His death was only in appearance (known as Docetism). His entire manhood, life, suffering and death were a mere illusion. We recognize this philosophy in the doctrines of many of our cults and (sad to say) even in some of our "main-line" churches as well today. In particular, too

many modern churches look upon Jesus as a super-human creature that merely came to earth to set an example for us to follow. His resurrection was in spirit only, which considering the absence of his body on earth, must also logically conclude that his death was only in appearance as well.

That teaching is refuted in John's Gospel Chapter 1 verse 14 wherein John said the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us. This is also reinforced in the book of Hebrews Chapter 2, verse 16 and 17 where it is said that Jesus took on Himself the seed of Abraham and was made like unto us in his humanity.

### **Theophany**

As an extension of the Gnostic error that Christ was not human, came the hypothesis that Jesus was merely a medium through which God temporarily visited mankind (a theophany). That made Jesus a mere messenger from God, which made Him more an angel than a human being. If Jesus was an angel or other spiritual creation of God, He could not have physically died on the cross. If his death is denied, He could not have been resurrected (Re.1:18). There could be no atonement for mankind, and there would be no deliverance from sin. The holiness of God would not be satisfied, and man would still need to pay the full price of sin through eternal death.

One of today's cults still holds that Jesus was an angel. In fact, they say, He was actually the angel Michael. The obvious direction of this error is that Jesus did not really die on the cross; He only *appeared* to die. We notice the similarity in reasoning here between the early Gnostic and a modern cult. The Apostle John however made it very clear that Jesus had human blood as well as human flesh. John Chapter 19 vs. 34: "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." From 1 John Chapter 5, verse 6 we read, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." That testifies that Jesus was not just Spirit, but living flesh.

**The Demiurge**

Another variation of the Gnostic theme is found in what is known as the Demiurge. This notion held that God created a creature just below Him who in turn created another creature who created another until finally one of the creatures created the universe in which we live. Far from being God, Jesus was merely one who emanated from God as one in a string of his creatures. The Apostle Paul attacked such error that had developed in Colossae when he wrote, "...by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible...all things were created by him, and for him" (Col.1:16). There is no succession of created deified intelligences; Jesus Christ, "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature" created all (Col.1:15).

"Firstborn" as used in Col.1:15 has been jumped on by a few cults in an attempt to prove that Jesus was merely the first being that God created. However, "firstborn" here merely states Jesus' first position (preexistence) "over all creation" (see the NIV translation). The very next verse, Col.1:16, makes that very clear when it says, "...all things were created by him and for him." Again we find in John Chapter 1 verse 1 that Jesus was not a creature at all, but was and is very God of very God inasmuch as John said that the Word was not only *with* God, but *was* God.

***Monarchianism***

Monarchianism developed in the second and third centuries A.D. over concern for the absolute unity or "oneness" of God in which it was deduced that God is the one and only divine Monarch and ruler. Therefore, Jesus could not have been God in essential substance unless He was identical in all respects with the Father. There are two contrasting solutions proposed by Monarchianism to that paradox. One is that Jesus was only an aspect of God (Modalism) or that He was only a manifestation of God in human flesh (Adoptionism). While Modalism upholds Jesus' deity, Adoptionism does not.

**Modalism**

The error of Modalism that began with one such faction, known as the Sabellians, is still quite common today. The error is that of assuming Jesus was not in any way distinct from the Father, but was merely a *mode* of the same person. In this perspective, the Father also suffered death on the cross inasmuch as both the Father and Son are modes of the same person. In addition, Modalism can be viewed as being either sequential or parallel.

In **Sequential Modalism**, it is alleged that Jesus was merely one aspect of God. That is, that Jesus embodied all that was God when He walked on the earth in the flesh. Col.2:9 is often misinterpreted to support the view of Modalism. This is a verse that we earlier used to demonstrate a view of the Godhead that we can more easily comprehend by analyzing Jesus person in allegory with mankind in general. It does not mean however that the Godhead was fully contained within Jesus in every sense. To assume that would be to conclude that Heaven was vacated, as the infinite God made Himself finite in human flesh. Jesus Himself must have been unaware of that, since He consistently referred to his Father as still abiding in Heaven.

To avoid the problem of the Father vacating Heaven, others purport a form of simultaneous or **Parallel Modalism** that implies only a means of acting or a function within a fully united Godhead. In that way, the Father, and the Son, exist simultaneously as modes of the same united Godhead whose functions are different but consistent. That would appear to move Modalism back toward the mainstream of Scriptures. However, Parallel Modalism still denies the existence of any difference of personalities between the Father and the Son through which they may be distinguished one from the other — a fact that Scripture clearly substantiates.

**Adoptionism**

Another error espoused by another group of Monarchians was that Jesus was the Son of God only as pertaining to his divinity and that Jesus, the man, was adopted in the flesh as the Son of God at the time of his baptism by John. This denies the incarnation, since Jesus

was thought to be an ordinary man up to the time of his baptism at which time the Holy Spirit was placed within Him and He became a manifestation of God. As we can see, the doctrine of the virgin birth is not in any way relevant to this theory. This error ultimately denies that Christ, the Son of God came to earth in the flesh, but that He only inhabited the flesh of a mortal man later in order to offer it up as a sacrifice.

Still others state that Jesus did not receive the attribute of deity until his ascension. In this view, Jesus' perfect works on earth as an ordinary man justified him before God. God then presented him as a human sacrifice, after which He raised him from the dead. The perfect man was then rewarded for his righteousness by receiving deification and the privilege of God's throne.

As we have discussed, Christ is God who came to indwell human flesh. The converse, however, is *not* true. Christ is *not* a man who elevated Himself to become God! This type of error is to be found most notably in Mormonism today. Such error places great emphasis upon works in order to attain a state of eternal godliness. That is why Mormons are almost universally admired for their dedication to family and to humanitarian efforts. To them, Jesus was merely a god among many gods; what Jesus attained, any man may attain by self-effort. As we can see, merely saying that Jesus is "a Man-god", instead of "the God-man" makes all the difference in the world. Again, Satan's lie echoes forth: "...ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Ge.3:5). This is not such a new error after all.

### ***Unitarianism/Universalism***

All of the hypotheses discussed thus far directly oppose the doctrine of the Trinity that shall be discussed at length in the next chapter. That opposition to the concept of the triune nature of God is the basis for modern-day Unitarianism. Though both Unitarianism and Monarchianism espouse a belief in a unity or monadic being that excludes any possible division, Unitarianism differs from Monarchianism in that it denies the deity of Christ and the divinity of the Holy Spirit outright. At the very best, Jesus is seen as merely a

good man through whom God manifested his will. Unlike Adoptionism, God never actually indwelt Him.

That would make Jesus nothing more than another prophet assuming that God existed as a substantial entity at all. However, today's liberal Unitarian denies the existence of a personal God altogether leaning instead toward Universalism in which all religions have equal spiritual value. At best, God is seen as some impersonal mind-form or force that works its way through the thoughts of man to elevate the significance and purpose of mankind. That concept was quite clearly seen in the movie *Star Wars* where this concept was referred to as "the force."

### *Duality Errors*

There is a danger of some seeing Christ as some strange being who is half-man and half-God. That error originates from making the necessary distinction between Jesus' human nature and his eternal nature (deity) without recognizing that the fusing of the two into one soul makes one inseparable being who is Jesus Christ. Jesus is *not* half man and half God, but both *fully* God and *fully* man integrated forever into one person. Jesus is also not a schizophrenic who swings in his mind from being God at one moment to man and then back again. Jesus is a consistent homogeneous being with two distinct natures of deity and humanity.

Another type of duality error also needs to be addressed here as well. Jesus told of a time when He would return to the earth, which we refer to as the "second coming" or "second advent" of Christ that is still future. Some have sought to claim, through intentional fraud or self-delusion, that they are the manifestation of that "second coming." That is, that they are the other "half" of Christ. We recognize this heresy today in some of the oriental cults, such as the "Moonies." In every case, Christ is reckoned to be "completed" by a second person.

One of the early cults embracing this type of error in America was the Shakers that was a cult that had broken off from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in seventeenth century England. The Shakers came to America from Europe, led by a woman who was known as "Mother Ann." She claimed to be the female half or female

counterpart of Christ which completed the earlier male coming of Christ in the man, Jesus. The group was named “Shakers” for their strange dancing and other charismatic activity during their “worship.” That cult stressed communal living, but with strict separation of the sexes. Due to their self-imposed rules of celibacy, this cult died a natural death in the hills of Kentucky.<sup>115</sup>

Even Mohammedanism (more correctly referred to as Islam) that recognizes Jesus as a prophet or fore-runner seeks to “complete” the first advent in the person of Mohammed. The consistent erroneous implication is that Jesus left the earth before He could complete his work, and that another was required to finish his task. Of course, that notion is to completely misunderstand the purpose of Jesus’ first advent (Jn.17:4; Jn.19:30). His sacrificial death to deal with sin *was the purpose* of his first advent. Furthermore, the “same Jesus” that ascended to heaven will likewise return to earth at the Second Advent, *not* some other “Christ” (Ac.1:11).

### *The Record in Hebrews*

The epistle to the Hebrews addresses many of those christological errors in a most direct manner, showing the reality, necessity, and purpose in Christ being both fully God and fully man. It is well, therefore, that we conclude this chapter with a brief study of the first chapter and parts of the second chapter of Hebrews.

**“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,”** (He.1:1)

- Jesus is not merely another prophet of God; He is contrasted with the prophets.

**“Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”** (He.1:2)

- Jesus is directly referred to as God’s Son.
- Jesus is the heir of all the things of God.
- Through or by Jesus the entire universe was made.

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<sup>115</sup> Occasionally one can find small and isolated groups of people still practicing the Shaker principles of communal living and celibacy today.

**“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” (He.1:3)**

- Jesus is the express image of God’s person.
- By the powerful voice (Gr. *rhema*) of the Son, all things are sustained, upheld, and kept together.
- The Son has purged us of our sins.
- The Son has sat down on the right hand of God’s majestic throne along side Him.

**“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (He.1:4–6)**

- Jesus, by inheritance, being the “Son of God”, has a more superior name than the angels, and is therefore elevated above them (verse 4).
- God did not at anytime refer to any of the angels as his Son (verse 5).
- When Jesus was brought into the world, all the angels were to worship Him (verse 6).

**“And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire” (He.1:7).**

- The winds blow mightily, and then subside; the flames flare hot, and then die out.

**“But unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom” (He.1:8).**

- The Son is referred to here as God by God (the Father)”

Therefore, the Son of God *is* God. We may well ask ourselves, who can take his place at the right hand of God, but God Himself.

Jesus, being the express image of the Father is one with Him (He.1:3; cf. Jn.10:30).

**“Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows”** (He.1:9)

- Jesus, even as has God (the Father), “loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.”
- Jesus is anointed by God with his Spirit (cf. Ac.10:37,38).

**“ And, thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.”** (He.1:10)

- Jesus was one with the Father in the beginning
- He is referred to as God and Lord of all by God the Father and as one with Himself.
- Christ is the Creator that laid the foundation of the earth and spread forth the heavens with a wave of his hand.

**“...the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.”** (He.1:10–12)

- Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, is eternal even as God, the Father, is eternal.
- All of the ages to come, which are without end, are put in subjection to Jesus (cf. He.2:5).

**“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; ... For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham”** (He.2:14,16).

- Jesus was fully a man as well as God.

The study of the person of Jesus Christ in this and the preceding chapter brings us headlong into the specific subject of the next chapter and the general subject of this section, which is the study of the Godhead. Though we have focused on studying the person of

Jesus thus far, it has been impossible not to refer to the other persons of the Godhead at various times. As we shall see, the study of the person of Jesus Christ in this and the previous chapter also prepares us to understand the Godhead through Him.

## Chapter 6.3 The Doctrine of the Trinity

In Chapter 2.1, we discussed the many attributes of God the Father. In Section 5, as we studied the Holy Spirit, we found that He is also God. In the previous two chapters, we discussed the person of Christ with respect to his humanity as well as his deity. Therefore, we must conclude that the Father is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.

Inasmuch as the Scripture clearly states that there is only one God, however, we are faced with a serious dilemma in which we find that human language immediately fails us. The basic problem is that we have no word to describe a distinct being that is wholly integrated into a greater infinite cosmic being. Yet, the only way to reconcile the dilemma is to attempt to understand a singular Godhead that is composed of three distinct self-conscious identities that in no way divides the Godhead into three.

### *Assigning Special Context to Words*

While we may communicate with God through “thoughts that can not be uttered,” we must communicate with fellow believers and with the unsaved through human language inadequate though that may be at times. Our spirit can understand those things with thoughts that cannot be fully expressed in words. Nevertheless, we still need to use human words, however weak, to communicate to other mortals the wondrous concept of the Godhead to attain at least some level of understanding. Just because we cannot adequately describe a truth in human terms, does not make it false. Since even God’s methods are in every way beyond our understanding, why should his nature and being be fully understood by the likes of mortal men?

The writers of the New Testament books chose to fully explain the events that occurred, for the most part, without grappling with simplistic words in summation. Even so, we must admit that the Scriptural word “Godhead” is an effort to sum up the total nature of God in one word (Ac.17:29;Ro.1:20;Col.2:9). John’s use of the word “Logos” translated “Word,” when referring to Jesus Christ, must be considered in much the same way (Jn.1:1). Therefore, we must often

utilize common words to describe the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To justify the use of an imprecise word, we must assign a special context to it when we use it with respect to deity. That is precisely what has been done with the two words, “trinity” and “person.”

### **Trinity**

The word “trinity” in the common sense means a summation of three individual things, or three separate individuals that act as a unit (i.e. a troika). Neither of those definitions is applicable to the divine relationship. Therefore, we must recognize a special application of this word to describe the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit into one undivided Godhead. For that reason, some have chosen to use the more clearly descriptive term “triune.” The early church devised the term “Holy Trinity” to describe the divine relationship in order not to be mute regarding the existence of the relationship altogether. By prefixing the common word “trinity” with the word “holy,” the special application of the word in the context of deity was expressed. Today, the word “holy” is often omitted and the first letter of “trinity” is capitalized instead to designate its special context.

### **Person**

In trying to explain the ways in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinguishable from each other as is clearly demonstrated in Scripture, a special application of the word “person” was derived from the word “hypostasis.” In theological terms, the word “hypostasis” means one of three subsistences each having identical attributes that are fully integrated within the one substance that is God. Augustine wrote, “On account of the poverty of human speech in so great a matter, the word ‘hypostasis’ had been forced upon us by necessity, not to express what it is, but only not to be silent on how Father, Son, and Spirit are three.”

Unfortunately, the common definition of the word “person” implies complete individuality and even implies a human corporeal being. As we see, a different definition must be accepted in the special context in which we use the word. When the word “person” is used for

man, it signifies one finite being. However, when “person” is used to describe the Godhead, we are describing an infinite and omnipresent being whose nature is quite different from that of men. Because God is infinite, each “person” described in the Godhead cannot be a singular finite being apart from the other two, but rather, an individually distinguishable identity within an omnipresent unity of substance.

### *Defining the Doctrine of the Trinity*

At first, it would seem that the doctrine of the Trinity is contradictory. That is, we are saying that God is one and at the same time saying God is three. However, what we are actually saying is that God is one in one *sense* and three in *another sense*. He is one in substance, essence, and being, but three in persons. For that reason, the doctrine of the Trinity is actually a paradox, not a contradiction. A contradiction cannot be resolved, while a paradox only seems to be contradictory on the surface because it expresses a profound truth that is very difficult for our minds to grasp.

To use a readily understood example of a paradox, we have one book, the Bible. If someone lifts it up and says, he is holding sixty-six books in his hand that would appear to be a contradiction. However, it is sixty-six books in one sense as well as one in a different sense. If someone reads from the book of Isaiah, he is also reading from the Bible. If someone reads from the Bible, he is also reading from one of the sixty-six books. In fact, we cannot say that the Bible is the Bible if any one of its books is missing. So we observe that the Bible is one, but not in every sense.

In attempting to simplify the paradox of the Trinity however, we could easily fall into a trap by making too close an allegory with the above example. In the example we just used, we could also say that the Bible is *divided* into sixty-six books, but we *cannot* say that the Godhead is divided into three persons since each person *is* the Godhead *fully* (Col.2:9). Again, by using the word “logos” from the Gospel of John Chapter 1, we can see that the three persons of the Godhead fully share the same incorporeal substance totally and without division: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God” (Jn.1:1 emphasis added). While

Jesus Christ was *with* God in the sense of his person being distinguishable from the Father, He also *was* God in substance and thus inseparable from his Father (Jn.10:30).

Since God is eternal, and infinite in his being, how could He be divided in any way? If an infinite substance were “divided,” would not each "part" still be infinite? If so, then each must of necessity be one in the same substance since it is impossible for more than one infinite substance to exist at the same time. Therefore, if the eternal and infinite “logos” is the one and only incorporeal substance that is God, all three “persons” of the Godhead must be of necessity *one and the same God*. Again, we find that we come up against our lack of knowledge regarding that essence which is the “logos”, the “Word”, the “substance” of God. We cannot hope to fully understand that paradox, but we can clearly see written in Holy Scripture the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; we know that they are of the same substance, which is one God because each are clearly referred to as God.

The truth is that few professing Christians today can give a definitive description of the doctrine of the Trinity. However, the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* gives a wording that is simple and to the point and is therefore a useful definition for this study:

**“There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.”**

This is as accurate a definition as the finite mind of man is likely to develop and is basic to what we read in Scripture. For that reason, let us study this statement in more detail.

### **Individuality of Persons**

**“There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...”** Here we view three individual “persons” making up the Godhead whom we refer to as the “Father”, “Son”, and the “Holy Spirit.” At times when we speak of God, we speak of the “Father,” that awesome spirit who dwells in the Eternal Heavens; whose being is of such magnitude that the earth is his footstool. We speak of God who is invisible and without physical form. We speak of

God who is not even in our physical dimension and who exists apart from time. We speak of God, whose uniqueness is such that no image, whether real or merely imagined, can possibly do Him justice, but can only offend Him.

Still at other times, we speak of God as “the Son,” that unique man (and yet God), Jesus Christ who walked with men and died on the cross for our transgressions against God. Jesus is fully man, and fully God — the son of man and the Son of God. God performed that awesome miracle when He interceded for us.

Again, we speak of God as the Holy Spirit who dwells within us and is the same Spirit that is in Jesus Christ. He is the one whom Jesus sent to comfort and guide us in his physical absence. The Holy Spirit is the One who is not only *with* us, but also *within* us so that we can never be separated from Christ.

From that obvious distinction, we recognize the necessity for individually describing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as we view them in Holy Scriptures without suggesting disunity; thus, the term “persons” is necessary.

### **The Unity of the Trinity**

**“These three are one God.”** In the beginning of this work, we saw that God was Spirit, not existing in our physical dimension and, yet, was a real being with personality (Chapter 2.1). The Holy Spirit is a “Spirit” as is the Father and is also referred to as God and by other names (see Titles Given to the Holy Spirit, page 298) that leave no doubt that the Holy Spirit is not only *from* God, but *is* God. Further, we showed how the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus and that Jesus received the Holy Spirit without measure and in Him was the full power of the Godhead (essential being and nature of God) bodily (Col.2:9). While natural man has a spirit of corruption, Jesus had the uncorrupted Spirit of God from his birth, because He was begotten of God through the Holy Spirit (Lu.1:34,35).

Therefore, we can clearly see that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all three share fully that same divine substance that is God. While there is a clear distinction of persons, there is no difference in substance. For Jesus is heard to ask, “Believest thou not that I am in

the Father, and the Father in me” (Jn.14:10)? Furthermore, Jesus said, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Jn.14:9). We cannot rightly speak of God without speaking of all three identities. Jesus, as we saw earlier, existed even before his coming here on earth in the flesh (Jn.1:1). How can that be except that we are speaking of Jesus as the One God of incorporeal substance? Even further, the word “Emmanuel” from Scripture literally means “God with us” (Mt.1:23). Therefore, the Father is that One God, the Holy Spirit is that One God, and Jesus is that One God — not each in part, but each fully!

### **The Substance of the Godhead**

“**These three are one God, the same in substance...**” In this work, the word “substance” has been liberally used in describing that which is the indivisible essence of God. It is not that “substance” is a more accurate term than are any other, but that word is probably more clearly understood today. When we say that the three persons of the Godhead are all of the same substance, we mean that they are all the same identical being. Jesus does not obtain his deity from the Father, nor does the Father derive his deity from the Holy Spirit. Each person defines all of God in such a way that the Godhead is in no way divided. Each person is of the same identical substance with the other two.

### **Equal in Power and Glory**

“**These three are one God... equal in power and glory**”. Another common error (even among those who are sound in the faith) is to rank the members of the Godhead as the Father who is the boss, Jesus the son who is inferior in rank under Him, and the Holy Spirit as the worker who is inferior both to the Father and to the Son. However, there is no hierarchy of glory, power or authority within the Godhead. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit never differ in opinion, just as they do not differ in substance. Therefore, such phrases as referring to Jesus as the “number two person in the Godhead” are misleading since they imply inferiority of substance. Surely, when we use such phrases as “the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” we do not see a ranking of substance, power, or glory, but merely a willing subordination of

function and order to the task at hand. That is why Jesus could say that He "...came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." (Jn.6:38) and also say, "I and my Father are one" (Jn.10:30). In the sense of Jesus' human nature, He did not come to do his own will, but in the sense of his deity his will never differed from that of his Father — hence he came to do the will of the Father in order to complete his work of redemption (Jn.4:34).

The subordination of function and order is seen only in the act of redemption, and it does not imply Modalism. The Holy Spirit strives with all men on Earth and dwells within redeemed man; the Son of God became man on earth, made atonement for our sins, and by means of the Holy Spirit was glorified by the Father and now sits again at his right hand. The Father at all times was in heaven and ruled over all. In this, the three persons were acting in concert as one being, not three. There is full unity in God, and by such unity, our salvation is made secure since through our unity with Christ we are fully accepted in the beloved.

### *Anti-Trinitarianism*

Many, when faced with Trinitarian doctrine, consider it far too complicated and impossible for anyone to understand. For that reason and still others that we shall now discuss, they reject the doctrine out of hand or search for alternatives to using the word "trinity" or "persons."

### **Misinterpretation of Special Context Words**

As long as the special context of such words as trinity and person are fully known, they can be of much value when discussing matters related to the Godhead, since full details will not have to be gone into each time. However, there is always danger in doing that, since the special use is not always clear to many. Therefore, when those or any words are used to describe God, it behooves us to be certain that all who hear them are aware of the special context we attach to them.

Some may see the word "trinity" as meaning three separate and distinct gods, ruling as a council of three, sitting about a table and

voting on their next move. That clearly is a misinterpretation since “trinity” is being used in the special context that is exclusively applicable to deity. For that reason, some have thought to substitute the word “triune” to describe the Godhead — avoiding the word trinity. The common meaning of triune is “three in one” that as we can see does more properly describe the Godhead than does the word “trinity” in contemporary usage. When we consider the special context of the word “trinity” however, we find that the two terms Holy Trinity and Triune God have the same basic definition.

The word “person” could easily be construed to mean that God is a carnal being, not divine, if it is taken out of its special context. Moreover, we often see a “splitting” of the Godhead taking place today by the use of such phrases as: “God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.” This phraseology does sound like reference is being made to three “Gods” with three different names and is often enough to derail the novice in Christ.

Furthermore, we often hear the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit referred to as “members” of the Godhead. The word “member” in contemporary usage would imply that the Godhead is divided into three discrete individual beings that when added together make up the Godhead as a whole. Since there is only one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit must all be the same God in substance that differ only in personality. It is much better to say, “God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” thus signifying all three persons in full unity as one indivisible God and to avoid designating them as “members” of the Godhead.

Nowhere in Scripture is the word “person” used in describing the Godhead, many are quick to point out. That is certainly true, unless we consider such verses as Hebrews Chapter 1, verse 3 where God’s “person” is mentioned in regard to Christ’s unique relationship to the Father in the *King James Version* (the NIV reads “being”). Surely, some descriptive word must be used. John Calvin said, “Now although the heretics rail at the word ‘person,’ or certain squeamish men cry out against admitting a term fashioned by the human mind, they can not shake our conviction that three are spoken of, each of which is entirely God, yet that there is not more than one God” (*Calvin’s Institutes*).

1.13). Surely, we cannot deny that the word “Father” is used in the New Testament to refer to God in Heaven, the “Son of God” is used in reference to Jesus the Christ, and the “Holy Spirit” or “Holy Ghost” is used to refer to the indwelling Spirit of God in saved man. Therefore, Scripture makes a certain distinction between the three as having individual identities or centers of consciousness (i.e. persons), and yet, God is *never* referred to as three “gods.”

### **The Modality Alternative**

Some in an attempt to avoid that tangle of words have sought to describe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as mere modes of the one Godhead as we mentioned in the previous chapter. To do that however blurs the characteristics of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together in such a way that we can find no real distinction between them at all. We could not even properly refer to them as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which Scripture clearly does, because they would be one in every true sense. For instance, we must even concede that the Father and the Holy Spirit also died on the cross when Jesus died and that Jesus spent considerable time praying to Himself. That defies reason as well as the text of Scripture.

Inasmuch as we are told that God is love (1Jn.4:8), one must wonder how that love could have been expressed prior to creation. Yet, all of God’s attributes are eternal thus requiring a love relationship within the Godhead. If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were merely modes of the same person, it would be impossible for there to be an object of God’s love. Self-love is not truly love. God’s love requires a relationship that is eternal; else God is not truly love.

Moreover, we could merely choose to worship God through only one of his three modes. The worship of the Father and Son would become unnecessary if we concentrate all our worship on the Holy Spirit, since He is God. Those of the modern Pentecostal Oneness persuasion commonly referred to as “Jesus Only” place a strong emphasis upon the indwelling Holy Spirit over the Father and the Son in practice if not in doctrine. For that reason, it is hard to believe that most Pentecostals do not see the Holy Spirit as the “final mode” of

God though they insist that they are not holding to Sequential Modalism, but Parallel Modalism only.<sup>116</sup>

### **Rejection of High-Church Tradition**

Many Protestants today associate the doctrine of the Trinity with many other erroneous traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. For that reason, if none other, they are suspicious of the term Holy Trinity and protest the use of it to explain the divine relationship within the Godhead preferring to toss it out with other “high church” ideas. Therefore, it is most often not the doctrine itself that many rebel against, but the use of the word “trinity.” If the doctrine of the Trinity were explained to them without using the word “trinity,” many would agree that it is exactly what Scripture teaches.

While the Roman Catholic Church has perpetuated many errors through its numerous traditions, it is a false assumption that all doctrines of the Roman church are in error. Some fundamental doctrines have been carried through the tradition of Romanism from the early Church and they remain in full agreement with Holy Scripture — the doctrine of the Trinity being one of them.

### **False Representations of Trinitarianism**

The word “trinity” can be used in a way that a believer may be led to think that reference is being made to the Holy Trinity or the Triune God when in fact it refers to something else entirely. One of our cults, for instance, refers to faith, hope, and love as the trinity. In that way the language that they use sounds mainstream until one realizes that the special context of the word trinity is not being adhered to.

In the same way, many Protestants suspicion that the Trinity of the Roman church is not the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Rather, in practice, it seems to be the Father, Mother, and Son (Father, Mary, and Jesus). That injection of the female principle into the Godhead would make the Roman tradition quite similar to the Babylonian concept of

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<sup>116</sup> Sequential and Parallel Modalism was discussed in the previous chapter.

Pentecostalism will be discussed more thoroughly in Books II and III of this work.

deity in which Tammuz displaced Jesus Christ, and Isis was worshiped rather than Mary. This same concept also showed up in Egypt where Tammuz became Osiris and in Greece where Tammuz became Adonis. Those are all pagan corruptions of the triune nature of the one and only true God. However, the fact that those corruptions of God expressed as a trinity exist, even in abundance, does not prove that the concept of the Trinity is false when it applies to the one true God. In fact, it may only prove that Satan has used the traditions of men in an attempt to corrupt and discredit Truth.

How many false doctrines masquerading as Trinitarianism have been accepted or rejected by individuals and churches is hard to know. Those false doctrines range from outright polytheism (belief in more than one God) to the denial of the deity of Jesus or the relegation of the Holy Spirit to a non-identity (i.e. an impersonal force). Unitarian churches have been quick to toss out the doctrine of the Trinity along with biblical authority and infallibility as insulting to man's intelligence. Of course, if the Bible is not honored as the Word of God, all sound doctrine is subject to endless revision that drifts farther and farther away from Truth. Other churches, perhaps in over-reaction to Unitarianism and Modalism, seem to shy away from speaking of the absolute unity of the Godhead, thus leaning toward Tritheism (three gods).

In closing, any who have doubts about the use of the word "Trinity", or "person," must realize the need for such a word, at times, when teaching doctrines contained in Scripture without prejudice. Nevertheless, those words of usage are never a replacement for full disclosure of their special context at any time that confusion may arise.

## Chapter 6.4 The Triune God Revealed in Scripture

In the previous chapter, we used the sixth question of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* to define the concept of the “trinity” or the “triune nature” of the singular Godhead. Useful though they may be, such statements in themselves do not provide proof for that which they say. It is only Holy Scripture that has the final word regarding the accuracy of any statement that man may make, no matter how sincere the attempt to express Truth.

The purpose of this chapter is to delve directly into Scripture in order to check the validity of that statement or, for that matter, any statement that describes the Godhead as three distinct persons subsisting as an undivided being. The effort to extract Truth from Holy Writ is at times tedious and technical. It is often necessary to examine the translated text critically in order to get a sense of the language of the original manuscripts. Yet as we shall see, the evidence in this case is so overwhelming that even a cursory study, such as this must necessarily be, is very convincing.

Peter called Jesus the Son of God; Thomas called Him God (Mt.16:16,17 and Jn.20:28). Jesus denied neither, but implied the truth of both titles by not correcting either of them. The inescapable conclusion we must come to is that the Father is God, Jesus, the Son, is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Not separate Gods, but *one God* of singular substance revealed to us as three distinct persons as is his will and his nature.

That concept seems strange to us, but only because of the long separation of man from God resulting from the fall of Adam. God is unique, and since we have nothing else in our mortal experience with which to compare Him, we cannot fully understand how He can exist in three persons. While this reluctance to accept that for which we have no human parallel is understandable, the whole of Scripture leaves us no alternative but to accept the fact of the Trinity if not the word “trinity” itself.

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### *Proof Found in the Old Testament*

The evidence in the New Testament concerning the trinity of the Godhead is actually overwhelming. As we shall soon see, we need not doubt that God has been revealed to us as three persons during the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, many hang back in fear, perhaps doubting because they not only can not understand the triune nature of God conceptually, but also because it seems to conflict with the old Hebrew Scriptures. Certainly, the Jews stumbled over that when Jesus claimed to be God and even later as the disciples circulated the Gospel after his resurrection. Nonetheless, does the Old Testament truly teach that our one God exists alone and only as one person? That is the question to be first answered.

Throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, God consistently needed to remind Israel that there was only one true God as when He said to Moses, “I Am that I Am.” The difficulty in that day was not that man did not believe in God, but that he believed in a multitude of gods. Because they did not know the true God, they created their own gods with their own minds and fabricated idols of them with their hands. God was not making any comment about his internal nature in stressing that there was but one true God, but about his unique being aside from the possibility of any other gods.

### **The Plurality of the Godhead**

*Elohiym* is the name found for God in the very first verse of the Old Testament. “In the beginning God [*Elohiym*] created the heaven and the earth” (Ge.1:1). It is very important that we realize that *elohiym* is a plural noun in the Hebrew. In this verse, as well as others, the English translation is singular though the noun itself suggests a plurality. The same word, *elohiym* is also found in other verses referring to false “gods” (plural). For instance, we read in the Decalogue, “Thou shalt have no other gods [*elohiym*] before me” (Ex.20:3). In Deuteronomy 13:2, we also find the word *elohiym* making another clear reference to false “gods.” In both instances, the word translated “gods” is the same word used in other verses to refer to the *one* true God.

*Elohiym* was translated by the singular noun, “God,” in our English texts primarily because the verb that followed the plural noun was singular. For instance, in the text of Genesis 1:1 the Hebrew verb used is *bara* that literally means, “**he** created.” (In other instances, a singular article may have required a singular rendering of the noun). That is most conclusive because the combination of noun and verb suggests a plurality acting and existing as a unity.

Nor can we merely assume that the word *elohiym* had to be used because there was no singular noun in Hebrew for God. The singular form of *elohiym* is *eloahh* and is also translated God in various Scripture texts such as in Deuteronomy 32:17: “They sacrificed unto devils, not to God [*eloahh*]; to gods [*elohiym*] whom they knew not...” Notice that in this text, both God and false gods were mentioned together in one verse. Thus, God was singular in relationship to the many false gods.” Other instances can be found in Ge.20:13; 35:7; 2Sa.7:23; Ps.58:11 and many others. In fact, God Himself, who is the author of Scripture, chose the plural form of the noun to be used nearly 2500 times or ten times as frequently as the singular form when referring to Himself as the one true God.

If we were only talking about a few isolated verses in Scripture, we could assume that some translation error existed early on in the Hebrew texts. However, there are so many instances that there cannot be any room left for doubt about its intentional use. Nor does the evidence of that plurality in the Godhead stop with the use of the word *elohiym*. God also refers to Himself as “us” and “we.” The plurality of those pronouns was not changed in our translations because there was no good textual basis for changing them. “And God said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness...” (Ge.1:26, emphasis added). Here the words “us” and “our” are quite clearly referring to a plural Godhead. Of course, some would suggest that God could have been conversing with his host of angels when He spoke, but the rest of Scripture makes it very clear that man was not made in the image of angels, nor was he in any way created by them.

Two other instances of plural pronouns are found in Genesis 3:22: “And the LORD God said, Behold the man is become as one of **us**...” and in Genesis 11:7, “Go to, let **us** go down, and there confound

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their language...” In still another verse, we have a mixture of singular and plural pronouns: “Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *us*” (Is.6:8, emphasis added)?<sup>117</sup> The mixture of the pronoun “I” which is singular with “us” which is plural again strongly indicates the plural nature of a singular being.

There are also other verses found in Scripture that, if translated literally from the Hebrew, would at least suggest that God has a plural nature. For instance, in Ecclesiastes 12:1 the word “creator” is literally “creators” (Hebrew *boreacho*). In Isaiah 54:5, the word for “maker” is more literally translated “makers.

### The Unity of the Plurality

In Deuteronomy 6:4, we read “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.” The Jew refers to this verse as the *Shema* (meaning “hear!”). On the surface, this verse in English seems to tell us that God is singular in every respect. However, the word for “God” in Hebrew is *elohiyim*, which is plural. Therefore, the verse could have been translated, “...The LORD our ‘Gods’ is one LORD.” What about the Hebrew word *echad* that is translated “one?” Well, the word *yachid* could have been used, which means absolute singularity and unity. Nevertheless, *echad* was used which means one in a compound sense. In Genesis 2:24, we read that a man shall “...cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one [*echad*] flesh.” In this instance, the word *echad* was used to refer to both the husband and wife as a compound unity existing in two persons. Therefore, this very verse, the *Shema*, which is often used to refute Trinitarianism only describes the plurality of the true Godhead as being unique from all other (supposed) gods.

### God is Three in Persons

While we must reject polytheism in favor of monotheism, we must also reject the absolute oneness of God in every sense. It is

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<sup>117</sup>When the word "LORD" is seen in Old Testament text in all capital letters it means that the original text used the Hebrew tetragram "YHWH" (or "JHWH") which means "God" not merely "lord" in some temporal or limited sense. In other instances "JHWH" was transliterated as "Jehovah."

apparent that Hebrew Scriptures describe God as a unique and singular being apart from all other gods that man may invent and yet existing in more than one person. One may be led to wonder if the Old Testament ever tells us how many persons are in the Godhead. While not directly stated, three are definitely suggested by the verse, "...Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts..."(Is.6:3). Why not one "holy" if God exists in one person since the word "holy" means uniqueness in an absolute sense? Why not four "holies" or even an infinite number of "holies" if the number is not significant but is merely to place emphasis upon God's absolute holiness? The reason seems to be quite clear: the seraphim cried out to a thrice-holy God indicating that God is a triune being.

We find the three persons of God mentioned throughout the Old Testament as Jehovah God, the Spirit of God, and the Angel of God (sometimes the Angel of the LORD). Jehovah, of course, refers to God the Father. The Spirit of God refers to the Holy Spirit. There can be little doubt that Jehovah was involved in the creation account of Genesis. However in Genesis Chapter 1, verse 2, we also see that the "spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Other references to the Holy Spirit are found in Jb.26:13, Ps.51:12, Ps.139:7, and, in a clear prophetic reference to the coming of Christ, in Isaiah 11:2. Christ is clearly alluded to in Genesis 3:15 as the "seed of the woman," in the book of Job as the Redeemer (Jb.19:25), in the Psalms, and in many other places as well. Admittedly, for a clear statement of the Lord Jesus' place in the creation, we must refer to the New Testament revelation of Him (cf. Jn.1:1-3; Col.1:16), although the plural noun *elohiym* clearly does not exclude Him from the Godhead in the Old Testament account.

### **The Angel of God**

In the Old Testament texts, "the Angel of God" or "the Angel of the LORD" refers to the preincarnate Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Obviously, not every reference to an angel in the Old Testament refers to Christ but must be determined by the context in which the word is used. In our English texts the reference to the preincarnate Christ is preceded by the article "the," where a general reference to an angelic

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being is preceded by the article “an.” A specific reference to “*the* Angel of God” in the Old Testament definitely refers to a being who is unique from all the angels. In Genesis 22:11–12, we find that the Angel of the LORD stayed Abraham’s hand against Isaac, and then referred to Himself as God in verse 12 as he said, “...I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only son from *me*.” The Angel of the LORD does not refer to God as “Him”, but as “Me.” We also find “the Angel of the LORD” in Genesis 18:1–33. In verse 1 and 33, one of the three men is referred to as “the LORD”. In Genesis 19:1, we clearly see that the other two men were angel beings.

In Exodus, we view the preincarnate Christ as the Angel of God who led Israel. “Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him” (Ex.23:21). When Joshua was near Jericho, a man confronted him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua asked if he was with them or against them. And the man answered, “Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant” (Jos.5:14)? This “man” called for and received the same reverence and worship that did God when He spoke to Moses from the burning bush as He said to Joshua, “Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy...” (Jos.5:15; cf. Ex.3:5).

Angels are never to be worshiped as was made very clear to the Apostle John: “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant... worship God” (Re.22:8–9). The “Angel of the LORD” is clearly much more than an angelic being in the Old Testament texts since worship was not only received but also commanded.

### *The New Testament Revelation of the Trinity*

Therefore, we find that the Old Testament clearly reveals the triune nature of our one true God. So much so, that it seems almost unnecessary to delve into the New Testament. Yet, it is actually indispensable, because when Christ came to earth nearly two thousand years ago, the Godhead was suddenly *fully revealed* to the eyes of men. God took upon Himself human flesh, and the human name of

Jesus. The full triune nature of God and of the Godhead was made visible and was demonstrated in the person of Christ.

### Three Persons Revealed

The first place in the New Testament that the triune nature of God is made evident is found in the Gospel of Luke when Mary asked the angel how the virgin birth could come about in her. “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Lu.1:35). Here we see the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost), God the Father (“the Highest” and “God”), and the “Son of God” with differentiation being made between the three.

Again, we see the Trinity revealed at the time of Jesus’ baptism:

**“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”** (Mt.3:16,17).

We encounter in this one place the Holy Spirit (“Spirit of God”), God the Father (“voice out of heaven”), and the Father referring to Jesus as “my beloved Son.” John the Baptist said regarding Jesus, “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand” (Jn.3:34,35). In Acts 10:38, Peter also referred to that event when he said, “...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost...” In all of those verses, we clearly see the three persons of the triune Godhead being mentioned in close relationship with each other.

Matthew repeated God’s (the Father’s) Word from Isaiah’s prophecy when he said, “Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles” (Mt.12:18; cf.

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Is.42:1). Here we witness God, the Father, putting the Holy Spirit upon his beloved Son, Jesus.

In the verse commonly known as the “great commission,” Jesus told his followers to “...teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mt.28:19). Notice that “name” is singular (one God), and that the three persons are clearly named. Not only are we to believe the doctrine of the Trinity, we are to teach it to all nations in order that all may know that the Father is God, the Holy Spirit is God, and that Jesus Christ is God, and all of the same substance — one God.

Jesus spoke of a coming “Comforter” who would come to indwell his followers after his ascension. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth...” (Jn.14:16,17). “...the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in *my name*, He shall teach you all things...”(Jn.14:26, emphasis added). “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of *me*” (Jn.15:26, emphasis added). Jesus told his apostles to wait for the Holy Spirit; He commanded them saying, “that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father which, saith he, ye have heard of me” (Ac.1:4). Here Jesus clearly spoke of the Holy Spirit as a different person. Nonetheless, unity of the three persons is also stressed by Jesus saying that the Holy Spirit would come in his name, and would be sent by the Father and by Him in the very same verse (Jn.15:26).

In addition, there are many passages of New Testament Scripture where one of the persons of the Godhead is referred to by a personal pronoun (i.e. “thee”, “he”, “him” or “whom”) thus making a distinction between the other “persons” and the one of which the writer is directly speaking. For instance, in John 17 verse 3, Jesus makes a distinction between Himself and his Father, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Jesus did not say that He had sent Himself, but that his Father had sent Him.

We read in Mark 12:29, that Jesus echoed the *Shema*, “The first of all the commandments is Hear O Israel: The Lord our god is one Lord.” Jesus had just claimed to be the “Son of God” in a parable (Mk.12:6), and then He said emphatically that there is one God. That may have confused the Jews in that day, but it should no longer confuse us. For, we know the *Shema* merely stresses the uniqueness and unity of the Godhead with respect to false gods, and does not deny a distinctive relationship of persons within it.

Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, made the distinction of persons clear when he said, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this...” (Ac.2:32,33). Jesus, his Son, was raised up by God, the Father, to sit at his right hand, and the Holy Spirit was sent to comfort, teach, and guide his followers.

Likewise, Peter also used distinctive language with regard to the triune Godhead when he wrote, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you...” (1Pe.1:2). And again, in the same letter, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:” (1Pe.3:18).

The Apostle Paul echoed those words in his letter to the Romans. “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, ...concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,... and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead...” (Ro.1:1–4). Here we perceive both the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit as a witness to the truth of the Gospel.

Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth said, “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2Co.1:21,22). God, the Father, establishes us along with other believers in Christ and seals us by sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. Paul again mentions the three persons of the Godhead when he

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signed the same letter: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all” (2Co.13:14).

In the letter to the Galatians, Paul said, “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, ...God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts...”(Ga.4:4,6). Here a definite distinction is made between God (the Father), the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Spirit of Christ). In his second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul makes a distinction between the Son and the Father, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace...” (2Th.2:16). In his letter to Titus, Paul refers to God (the Father) as “our Savior” who saved us by the “washing of regeneration” and renewal of the Holy Spirit which we received abundantly through Jesus Christ (Titus 3:4–6).

The writer to the Hebrews made a distinction of persons as he said, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience...”(He.9:14). Here we glimpse Christ, as our high priest, offering his own blood through the Holy Spirit to God, the Father, to make atonement for our sins.

### **Unity of the Three Persons in One Godhead**

We could have continued for some time listing verse after verse, but the total context of all New Testament Scripture echoes the truth of the three persons of the Godhead. Yet, in studying the distinctions made between the persons of the Godhead, we must not fall into error by thinking that we are somehow referring to three separate Gods. To avoid that error, it behooves us to look at the way that Scripture also establishes the unity of the three persons within one Godhead.

Jesus stressed the unity between Himself and the Father, when He said “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him” (Jn.14:7). Speaking to Philip, Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father? Believest thou

not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me..." (Jn.14:9,10)? Jesus carefully stated that He was *in* the Father and the Father was *in* Him. Notice that He never said that He *was* the Father, or that the person of the Father was actually Jesus. For He went on to say, "...the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (Jn.14:10).

The writer to the Hebrews described the relationship between the Father and the Son by these words: "God...hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person..."(He.1:1-3). Jesus is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person — not the same person, but the same in substance. Jesus also said, "I and my Father are one" (Jn.10:30). Here it is important to see that Jesus did not say that He and the Father were the same person, because He then could have merely said, "I am the Father." Rather, Jesus is stressing the unity between Himself and the Father as two distinct persons united in the same substance within one Godhead.

The Apostle Paul also stressed the unity of the Godhead. "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one" (1Co.8:4). "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by him" (1Co.8:6). In this last verse, Paul said that there is "one God" consisting of "the Father" and the "Lord Jesus Christ." That thought is expanded to include the Holy Spirit by the Apostle John when he said, "For there are three that bare record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1Jn 5:7).<sup>118</sup>

The unity of the Godhead is very important to our salvation inasmuch as it is at the very heart of the Gospel itself. Paul refers to Jesus Christ as a mediator between God and men. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ"

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<sup>118</sup>Some manuscripts do not include this phrase referring to the witness of God in heaven in 1Jn.5:7. Some believe it was a marginal note added by some scribe that later became copied into the text itself.

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(1Ti.2:5). Who could possibly act as a mediator between God and man? Job surely would have liked to have such a mediator in his day! If the mediator was a mere man, God could no more hear him than the one he represented. If the mediator was God, how would He relate to and correspond with sinful man? Being God, how could He truly represent mankind? The mediator needed to be both God and man in one person. “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one” (Ga.3:20). Our mediator is God Himself through the person of Jesus Christ who through his humanity makes our salvation in Him completely secure. Make no mistake about it; Jesus is one with the Father in the unity of the Godhead.

### *In Summation*

We may foolishly choose not to believe the doctrine of the Triune God if we wish, but we certainly cannot say that Scripture does not teach it! We must admit that the means to fully grasp it to our understanding seems always beyond our reach. It would appear that even Paul the Apostle was often overcome by the complexity of understanding the Godhead for he wrote to Timothy and said, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1Ti.3:16).

Yes, great is the mystery of the Godhead! We may not understand how God could have become flesh. We may not understand how a virgin could conceive and give birth. We may not understand how Christ was resurrected from the dead. Moreover, we may not fully understand the triune nature of the Godhead. However, to deny any of those doctrines is to deny the Word of God. To deny the Word of God is to deny the Gospel. To deny the Gospel is to remain dead in our trespasses and sins! May God give us all his grace to receive his Word (His Word is Truth), and give us faith to believe that Truth which our mortal minds cannot fully grasp.

# **Section 7, Sanctification and Regeneration**

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**Christian Maturity**

**Faith in Action**

**Spiritual Guidance of Man**

**The Tabernacle and the Temple**

**Spiritual Warfare**

## **Chapter 7.1 Christian Maturity**

In Chapter 5.4, we discussed the necessity of the new or spiritual birth of man as an instantaneous act of the Holy Spirit. In that context we only briefly discussed the infancy and the necessary maturing of the new born in Christ under the tutorage of the Holy Spirit. In this section we shall examine that process in much more detail. We know that when a child is first born he or she is quite helpless and must be under the constant care of his or her parents for many years. In like manner, Christians are not born fully-grown, but they must mature spiritually over a length of time under the careful guidance of the Holy Spirit. The length of that time varies with the individual Christian, but it is something that we all must go through. Christian maturity and the service to God that it provides is the primary goal of the believer in this life.

In this first chapter, we shall discuss sanctification and the process of mental regeneration that attends sanctification. In the next chapter we shall consider the role that exercising an active God-given faith contributes to that process. In subsequent chapters, we shall also discuss the intricate spiritual composition of man and the internal spiritual warfare that we all must inevitably encounter as a consequence of our new life in Christ.

### ***Spiritual Immaturity***

Just as some adults never seem to grow up in their thinking, some Christians never quite mature to the point that they are able to put off initial childish thoughts regarding their faith and replace it with mature knowledge. Just as childish adults are often difficult to get along with, spiritually immature Christians can also cause difficulties within the body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul said of the Corinthians, "... I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (1Co.3:1). The Corinthians, having believed the Gospel, had not progressed past the initial elation of first coming to accept Christ, but continued to behave like young children in thought and action. They appeared to have attained no spiritual growth and

therefore attempted to demonstrate their faith in childish and carnal ways. By various means, they attempted to perpetuate the excitement that accompanied their initial conversion. That made them vulnerable to errors and the imagination of their hearts, and they squabbled over trivial things like small children over toys. As a result, they were not making spiritual progress. Paul told them, “I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able” (1Co.3:2). While it is normal for new Christians to live on “milk,” just as a baby must begin with milk, that continued lack of maturity results in instability in those who should have become solid in their faith after many years pass.

It is therefore imperative that we learn not only the basics, but explore the depths of our faith, “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ep.4:14). It is amazing how many Christians will swallow error whole without first examining it carefully to see if it is good to eat. Like babes, they quickly put everything that is colorful in their mouth and swallow it. The best defense against false doctrine is an in-depth personal knowledge of the entire Bible. As Paul said to Timothy, “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1Ti.4:15).

While it is true that a baby is as much alive as an adult, the adult is able to contribute in a constructive way to society. In like manner, a newborn in Christ has the gift of eternal life no less than the one who has followed Christ for many years. Yet, only the mature Christian can constructively contribute to building up the body of Christ. The perpetually immature Christian merely places a strain upon other believers and drains resources that would be better spent in reaching the lost.

### **Spiritual Child Neglect and Abuse**

Of course, there is nothing wrong with spiritual immaturity in a *newborn* Christian; it is a necessary beginning for us all. It is also an exciting time to see another come to Christ and to see him or her saved through simple faith without any depth of knowledge. Though babies

are enjoyable and exciting in their stumbling ways and playful antics, parents cannot be happy with children that never grow up. From the crib, we begin teaching them the things they will need to know to grow up into responsible productive adults, and we push them to ever-higher levels of knowledge and responsibility as they grow in their ability. Like parents, we should enjoy feeding the newborn in Christ with the basics of the Christian faith to strengthen them to the point where they can feed themselves and walk on their own. To withhold that feeding and training constitutes spiritual child neglect and even abuse. A twenty-year-old that acts and thinks like a baby is a danger to himself and to others.

We would not put a baby in charge of a large corporation at birth. Yet, many churches seek to elect immature believers to church offices as soon as they come to believe in Christ. Congregations are often misled by their worldly maturity and ability that they mistakenly assume means spiritual maturity as well. As a result, such churches find themselves playing spiritual “patty-cake” when they should be conducting serious work and in-depth study to the edification of all. A spiritually immature or retarded believer who holds a position of responsibility in the Church will lead others into serious error. He will harm himself as well by becoming a perpetual child believing that childish thoughts and actions are a sign of true spirituality. Rather than putting away childish thoughts, they advocate them in others.

### *Spiritual Growth*

It is important that new believers immediately receive the “milk” of the Word of God. We are told that we should “as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Pe.2:2). However, it is important that we mature by that “milk” to the point where we can eat the “meat” of sound doctrine through in-depth teaching of strong Bible truths.

**“For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of**

**Christ, let us go on unto perfection [maturity]; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrines of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” (He.5:13–6:2).**

Therefore, the key to spiritual growth is not to be found in merely reiterating the elementary doctrines and traditions of our faith. Rather it is to be found in an in-depth education from the Word of God under the tutorage of the Holy Spirit. While the basic things that we learned at our mother’s knee and from our first-grade teachers were important and basic to what we have become as adults, we cannot dwell on how exciting it is to be able to tie our shoes, count to ten, or recite the alphabet. We cannot merely depend upon those early accomplishments to get us through life; we must learn about many things in depth from various books, teachers, and through long hard experience. The fact is that even as adults, we never stop learning. If that is true of learning about carnal things, how much more so is it of spiritual things? Spiritual things are much more complex and often hard to understand but are infinitely more important in the light of eternity.

Perhaps we received the Gospel from a parent, a friend, a preacher, or an evangelist, and we believed it with little or no prior knowledge of the Bible. That was a simple step of faith requiring no human effort, because faith is the opposite of works. Either we believed, or we did not. Work requires human effort, while saving faith is a complete child-like reliance on the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. The wonder of grace is that simple faith alone is enough to receive God’s gift of eternal life. Nevertheless, many having come to Christ and having received salvation, have never matured to the point where they can be of any service to Him.

While the Holy Spirit is an able teacher, He still requires us to be willing and eager students. Though we have an excellent textbook in the Holy Bible, it is still necessary for us to open its pages, to read it, and to study it. It is not enough to merely keep it well dusted with the vain hope that merely honoring the Book will enrich our faith. So it is that far too many freely receive the gift of life from “the stranger of

Galilee” and even revel in it, yet never learn much about the giver of life Himself! Jesus remains a benevolent stranger to them. Rather than merely receive the gift of eternal life and then live in ignorance, we should “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2Pe.3:18). The primary source of our knowledge of Christ is the Bible whether we read it for ourselves or hear of its truths from others who teach and preach it, but blessed is the man who diligently studies it for himself with the Holy Spirit guiding him within.

### The Subordinate Role of Experience

Today, there is far too much emphasis being placed on Christian experience, rather than upon sound doctrine, to the point that sound doctrine is being tossed to the wind with devastating results. Conversely, some fundamentalists would toss out experience entirely as being extra-biblical. The truth is that sound doctrine is the foundation of the Christian faith, while Christian experience that is *based upon sound doctrine* strengthens the faith of the individual. In addition to head knowledge, we also need heart knowledge that we by “speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ep.4:15).

True Christian faith is *not* the result of wild speculation, nor is it based upon experimentation with what ever seems to work, but it is based on tangible evidence to be found in the knowledge of God’s Word. The Apostle Paul put experience, good works, and biblical knowledge together when he prayed, “...that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col.1:10). Therefore, it is not only important to talk correctly, but to walk correctly as well. “And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience, godliness” (2Pe.1:5,6). We must add to our initial God given faith: moral sense, Scriptural knowledge, self-control, forbearance, and true pious living.

Here we see the progression to maturity through experience in which knowledge immediately follows faith and virtue, yet precedes

self-control, patience, and godliness. Far too many believers today are stalled at some point along the way. Many evangelicals never get to the point of true knowledge of the Word, while many fundamentalists with all their insistence upon sound doctrine never achieve self-control, patience with other believers, and true spirituality.

### *Christian Imperfection*

Having discussed the necessity for Spiritual growth in believers and the need for maturity, we come now to the subject of supposed perfection in Christians. Some say that a true Christian is, or must become, perfect in this life. By saying that, those people believe that Christians must be without flaw or fault, always doing only that which is good, and never commit sin. Consequently, one's failure to achieve that high plane of sinlessness must result in the loss of salvation, or it proves that a believer who falls into sin was not ever a believer at all. Not only is the notion of a completely sinless Christian life not true, we should see how such an assumption discourages the genuine believer and acts as an obstacle to those that have not yet believed.

First, we must examine the word "perfect" as it is used in the English translations of Bible texts. This word is translated from several Greek words meaning, "complete." In some verses, the word "mature" probably should have been used. The word "perfect" is not actually an erroneous translation, but is often a misunderstood word in the biblical context by today's reader. Anything that is perfect is obviously complete in every detail. That is, it has achieved or is in its final state of maturity. That is the sense in which the word is commonly used in the New Testament.

That misunderstanding accounts for an apparent contradiction that can be seen in Philippians 3:12 and 3:15. In 3:12, Paul says that he is not already perfect. In 3:15, he seems to suggest that many are perfect (himself included) by saying: "as many as be perfect." In the latter case, the word means "mature" in the faith; in the former case, the word means "complete" denoting the achieving of a perfection that we will receive only upon resurrection from the dead into a sinless

state of being. (Ph.3:11).<sup>119</sup> However, 1John 1:8 makes it very clear that no man is without sin while still in mortal flesh, not even Christians: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” John is definitely speaking of Christians here, for he even includes himself with the use of the pronouns “we” and “us.”

No man, in himself, is ever righteous before God (Ro.3:10); rather, the Christian has received the righteousness of Christ as a *covering* for his sin through the gift of the Holy Spirit (1Co.1:30). God imputes Christ’s righteousness to us as if it were our own. If we do that which is good, we can only do so from the Spirit of Christ that is within us; if we commit evil, it is from our fallen nature that is still also very much present within our flesh (Ro.7:21). Sin is a “law” or “precept” that lives in the very elements of our mortality (Ro.7:23). That brought Paul to say, “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Ro.7:25). In as much as we mortals do not have perfect wisdom and knowledge, it is not even possible for us to continually know what is good, let alone do it. Moreover, our old carnal nature does not incline us toward doing good, but toward self-centered pride, which is the source of evil acts. Paul says that even when we would do good, evil results: “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” (Ro.7:19).

At the most, then, we may only say that we are “good intentioned.” That brings to mind the saying that “the road to Hell is paved with good intentions.” This is a true saying to the extent that it states that we of ourselves cannot do what is good. Nevertheless, we are not without hope; the old mortal man is temporal while the new man is eternal. The Holy Spirit is constantly striving with our spirit in the renewing of our minds, and one day when we are raised from the dead, we will receive a new incorruptible body. No longer will the law

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<sup>119</sup>The *King James Version* uses the word “perfect” in both places. Newer translations, such as the *New International Version*, correctly translates this word in Philippians Chapter 3 verse 12 as “perfect” and Chapter 3 verse 15 as “mature.”

of sin live in our members. In that day, we will know true perfection, but not now. Therefore, we can only look forward to that wondrous day when we will truly be complete in all respects in a new sinless body.

It is probably not wise to approve of Christian bumper stickers because they tend to exaggerate or make trivial certain spiritual truths. However, one such sticker that was popular a few decades ago said, “Christians are not perfect, just forgiven.” While we should not use this to excuse ourselves to the world regarding our many failings, that is something that we must realize in and of ourselves. Otherwise, we may think more highly of ourselves than we should. Have we then, which were so weak and helpless that God had to send his own Son to die for our sins in our stead, suddenly become all-knowing and perfect? Didn’t we receive all that we have by the grace of God and not by any efforts of our own? How, then, can we act as if we did not receive it, but earned it?

If we think that we are perfect, that is in ourselves righteous, merely because we have become Christians, we commit sin in doing so. Rather, it is only that the Holy Spirit within us is perfect and strives with our spirit to regenerate us. The regeneration of our minds will take all of our lives, for as John said, “it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1Jn.3:2). Moreover, Paul said, “that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die (1Co.15:36). We then see that if we think we are perfect, we will look to our own false sense of self-righteousness and ignore the gift of God. If we think we are perfect, then we look to our own human knowledge and human abilities and ignore the message of the cross.

### **Necessity of True Humility in Christian Witnesses**

Those who are truly mature Christians know full well that our pride has been broken. We dashed it to pieces against the Law of Moses! We lay sprawled and helpless through the condemnation of the Law of God because we were, and still are, sinners by nature. If Christ gave Himself for us because of our deadly imperfection, can we now say that we are perfect in our present state? In no way is that possible!

Moreover, since we are not perfect, we wrong others even when we do not intend to do so. In his epistle, James says, “For in many things we offend all” (Ja.3:2), not only in our speech, but in our deeds as well. If, then, the unbeliever who has not yet come to Christ sees those who claim to be Christians behaving in a manner betraying their professed perfection, will they not be taken aback? Will they not say in their minds that all Christians are pious fools and hypocrites? How dare we witness to them? Therefore, we should work out the time of our salvation here on earth with trembling lest we become corrupt by thinking more highly of ourselves than is our due (Ph.2:12). Rather, by clearly seeing our serious shortcomings, we are repeatedly drawn to Jesus as our hope, our light, our joy, and our life.

Non-Christians often have better insight into human nature than some Christians do. Who knows sin more intimately than does a proud sinner? Yet, who is more right for a fall into sin than a proud Christian (Pr.16:18)? Is your testimony of value when you say you are perfect and do not error or sin? No, rather you lie to the seeker of Truth and prove yourself false each time you stumble. We must therefore follow Christ by listening to the admonition of his Spirit within us. If we stumble, we must call upon his mercy. We should not ever intentionally commit sin (Ro.6:1,2), but we should not despair if our flesh wins out for a time. We are human men and women, mortal, and destined to die in the flesh. In fact, as those in Christ, we have *already* counted ourselves dead in the flesh and crucified with Him (Ro.6:6). Then, we can no longer live for the flesh of this life that must perish, but look to the Holy Spirit for the life beyond this world where we may be made truly perfect in Christ.

### *Sanctification of the Soul*

Rather than “perfection,” the word we need to understand is “sanctification.” That word does not mean that we have been made perfect and without sin; rather, it means that we have been “separated” and “set aside” for God’s holy purpose and use. We were born in sin, and we cannot make over our past life to conform it to a state of sinless perfection. Our past sin alone continues to condemn us. For that reason, only our soul is sanctified. Our flesh cannot be conformed

to the law of God, nor can any acts emanating from it. Therefore, any attempt to set ourselves aside from our sin nature to serve God is doomed to failure; we cannot ever hope to sanctify ourselves. Certainly, any mere ritual act that we may carry out in an attempt to make our carnal flesh acceptable to God, whether by baptism, manner of dress, by self-inflicted punishment, or by any other means, cannot ever conform it to God's holy requirements.

### **Positional Nature of Sanctification**

We receive spiritual life from the Holy Spirit in the "new birth" (see chapter 5.4) that removes (separates) us from our old Adamic nature, and sets us forth into a new relationship through Christ with God. Although sin is still present with us in the flesh, it no longer rules over our soul; we are inwardly ruled by the Spirit of God. As mortals, sin is still present with us to be sure, and its law continues to rule in our fleshly nature, but we, who now live in the spirit, are no longer under its dominion to continually obey it (Ro.6:14).

Sanctification then is not something that we can do for ourselves, but something that we freely receive without condition as the righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account. Sanctification comes to us through the Holy Spirit (2Th 2:13), because of the blood of Christ (He.9:13,14; 13:12). Sanctification means that we have been set apart from Adam's prevailing sin as we were placed in the dominion of the sinless Christ (1Co.1:2) thus fully conforming us to the Law of God. We are thus *legally declared* to be fully justified in God's sight. Therefore, we are not being sanctified through the performance of any sanctifying acts, but rather we are sanctified solely through the redemption that we have received in Christ. For that reason, the immediate translation of our soul into that holy state of being is properly referred to as "positional sanctification" inasmuch as it is the result of a new positional relationship that exists between God and ourselves at the very moment that we are placed in Christ.

In Jesus' great priestly prayer for his disciples, Jesus asked that they be kept from the evil of the world, not removed from the world (Jn.17:15). The separation (sanctification) of which we speak is spiritual. That is, we are still *in* the world, but not *of* the world

(Jn.17:16). The significant difference that sanctification produces is that Christians see their sins in the light of God's Truth, recognize them for what they are, and loath the law of sin in their flesh that brings sin forth. Sanctification brings knowledge of the Truth regarding our sins, and the Word of God drives that Truth home (Jn.17:17).

We are sanctified because we now believe in Christ; we are separated from the rest of humanity because we have recognized and confessed our sins (1Jn.1:9), not because we deny that we still commit sin. The sanctification or holiness of Christians, then, does not come about because of their own actions, but they are declared holy because they are spiritually separated, set aside, and sanctified to God's holy use. It is by God's choosing; it is by his own will that we are sanctified (1Th.4:3,4).

### *Renewal of the Mind*

Nevertheless, we need to ask if sanctification has any practical effect on our earthly way of life. The answer clearly is that it does — indeed, it must. The practical consequence of sanctification is to be found in the renewing of our minds that is undertaken over time by the Holy Spirit. “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Ro.12:12). Being reminded by the Holy Spirit of the high position to which God has called us, we are constantly exhorted thereby to lead a moral life that is pleasing to Christ.

Therefore, we should at all times seek to humiliate and discipline the flesh to our regenerated spirit and our renewed mind so that sin is *no longer a way of life* with us. We have been categorically removed from the condemnation of the Law and placed under grace that we may live uprightly before God. The Law said, “this do and you shall live,” while grace declares, “receive life unconditionally that you may do.” No longer is the goal of eternal life unreachable; we already have reached the reality of that hope through the irrevocable promise of God!

Therefore, the liberty that we have received in Christ through grace constrains us to do what is good and pleasing to Him rather than to continue in doing evil to satisfy our fleshly nature, which we now count as dead and crucified in his body. It also frees us to serve God with full abandon rather than first striving for a sinless state of being under the Law in order to make ourselves worthy of his use. While we cannot ever say that we have reached a state of sinless perfection in this life, we find that we have certainly changed our direction toward desiring that end.

Because of the evident love of God that we have experienced in our redemption, we now look toward God as our benefactor rather than turn our back on Him in fear of his judgment. While God's Law yet condemned us, there was an irresistible inclination toward rebellion against Him who must ultimately judge all violations of that Law harshly. After being saved by his matchless grace, there is instead a strong desire to serve God as our deliverer who has unconditionally relieved us from any fear of that judgment.

As Christians, we can never condone sin in our lives just because we are still living in mortal flesh. We cannot excuse sin, nor can we rationalize it away in our minds. Sin is an offence against God whether committed by the unsaved or the saved. That practical aspect of sanctification is an outgrowth of positional sanctification. Since God has set us aside to serve Him in spite of our sin nature, God also must provide us with the means for that service. Therefore, even the practical aspects of sanctification are not of human works but stems instead from the works of the Holy Spirit living within us. Just as Christ died to provide a covering for our sins with his own righteousness, Jesus also provides the cleansing for our sins on a daily basis as He intercedes for us. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1Jn.1:9).

## Chapter 7.2 Faith in Action

As we discussed in the previous chapter, sanctification means that God has set us aside: separated us from our old self that lived for the flesh and served the law of the flesh and has changed us into a new man who lives in the spirit. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Ro.8:1). The question that we must face daily is: why should we continue to serve the law of sin in the members of our flesh if our life is in the spirit? “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Ro.8:5,6).

### *Faith the Means*

The only means by which we can stop minding the things of the flesh and be spiritually minded is through our faith in the finished work of Christ. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jn.5:4). However, for faith to have any power, it must be placed in Christ alone who has the authority to deliver the hope that our faith calls to mind. Mindless and spiritually blind faith directed to the wind is no more than wishful thinking — a dream to vanish in the light of day. While faith is the means to salvation, it is the grace of God that has delivered the substance of our hope; it is Christ who died for our sins. Faith is not merely a precious pearl that we can tuck away for a future time when we will need to produce it as a “ticket” to eternal blessedness. Faith must be acted upon and used day-by-day to keep our minds on Christ as our present hope as well as our future salvation.

Because in this life we cannot always see the completion of our salvation (which is our physical resurrection) because of the demands of our carnal flesh, properly directed faith must be our constant companion. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (He.11:1). Of course, being yet mortal, we cannot see the end with our physical senses. Because of the power of the world, our minds cannot fathom the depths of God’s love and

see the wonderful things that God has planned for us in eternity. For that reason, we must walk in faith that actively directs our thoughts to our hope in Christ. As we walk in faith, we are encouraged by the Holy Spirit to act upon our faith to the end that not only are we comforted, but others also are drawn to Christ through the example provided by the outward working of our faith.

### *Active Faith*

There is an extreme danger of seeing faith as a “mantra” that only needs to be expressed vocally in order to release its power. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There is no power in “faith” as a mere word or outward profession. As we saw earlier, faith is the means, not the source or the end. The substance of that means is in the object of our faith, Jesus Christ, to whom our faith directs us. Faith with no object or an object that is of no value is meaningless. It is hollow and empty with no ability to comfort us or to satisfy our needs.

James, in writing to the Church (then consisting of Jews; Ja.1:1), used an allegory to describe that “faith” without substance. “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit” (Ja.2:15,16)? Here James is asking us to imagine the physical salvation of a brother or sister consisting of mere words and no substance. Of course, while their hopes may be raised for a time, they are not really benefited in any way.

What James is primarily talking about here in 2:15,16 is substantive faith, not benevolence to the needy as evidenced by its context between verses 14 and 17.<sup>120</sup> Just as wishful thinking about food and clothing does not feed or clothe anyone, faith without actively exercising it in reality is equally absurd. James goes on to say, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (Ja.2:17).

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<sup>120</sup> Though the primary point of this passage is not the need for benevolence, James uses it to launch into that subject in the verses that follow. (Also see 1Jn.3:17,18).

There must be substance to our faith, which actively works its way out in our lives.

There is no disagreement between James and Paul in the matter of works and faith when James says, “faith, if it hath not works, is dead.” James is not speaking of works in an attempt to gain justification before God under the Law or the Ten Commandments, but of the exercise of faith brought about by the love of Christ within us. Just as make-believe clothing cannot warm a man or hunger be satisfied by make-believe food, we cannot be covered by a make-believe righteousness or saved by a make-believe salvation. There must be solid reality to our faith, or it is not saving faith.

James asks, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him” (Ja.2:14)? Merely saying that we have “faith” cannot save us, and even true faith not acted upon can save no one. We live in a day where the emphasis is upon “faith” as a cure for everything with little regard to the object of that faith. We live in an age where faith in ones own abilities is being overemphasized, so that our ego does not suffer. Often, no object is mentioned at all, we are merely told to “have faith” or to “keep the faith.” It does not really matter what or whom you have faith in as long as you believe strongly enough. We live in an age of “easy believeism” drenched in meaningless cliché. It is all empty words.

It is not “believeism” that converts us, but heartfelt trust in the effective work of Christ on the cross and who died in our stead. It is only when we actively engage that faith in the grace of God that it becomes the effective means of salvation to us. Is an inactive faith truly faith or is it but a presumptuous facade? Consider the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Do we not find joy in his bidding us to respond with outward actions to please Christ?

### ***Faith Demonstrated Only by Our Actions***

James goes on to ask: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar” (Ja.2:21)? That action by Abraham was a direct result of his faith. Abraham’s faith was not shallow recognition, but active belief and total trust bringing about complete obedience. Of course, Abraham did not act

upon his faith in order to demonstrate that faithfulness outwardly to others. Likewise, Rahab did not act upon her faith so that we would know that she was spiritual, but to save herself and her family. Abel acted upon his faith in order to offer a sacrifice pleasing to God (He.11:4). Noah believed God and acted upon that faith to build an ark to save his family (He.11:7). The actions of all were spontaneous and intuitive. Nonetheless, when we look back on their actions we do see that the substance of their faith was openly *demonstrated* by their actions.

Therefore, James says, “shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (Ja.2:18). How could we demonstrate an inactive faith to others? There is nothing to show! Our faith, then, must be in thought and in deed. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Ja.2:26). James is not in a head-to-head battle with Paul over justification by grace, because James himself is talking about genuine and active faith as opposed to an empty shell of faith, not about works of the Law. The works of which he speaks are not hopeless ritual works performed to obtain self-justification by the Ten Commandments, but they are good works brought about by the same faith that has given us the power to believe to our justification in Christ.

James also said, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (Ja.2:19). Satan surely believes in the existence of God, since he is God’s archenemy, and he certainly knows who Jesus is, but does that mean Satan can be saved by that knowledge? Of course, that can never be since Satan intends to continue his evil battle against righteousness. However, we who have partaken of the grace of God do not believe as the demons believe to their inevitable destruction, but we believe as the redeemed in Christ to our certain salvation! Our works should reflect that difference. Do we believe out of fear, or rather in hope? We must continually pray to God that the joy of that great hope shall flow outward to others through our actions, that we may be complete in our faith. We are now set free to do good works and not evil that we may be committed to that promise that is ours through Christ.

### *Benefits of Active Faith*

Even when we properly rely upon faith as the means of salvation, there is a danger of accepting faith in principle, but still seeking to justify ourselves by works. Conversely, there is the danger of neglecting the good works that should attend faith as James goes on to say in his epistle. Have we received our freedom to sit on our hands and do nothing, merely abstaining from evil works? No, we are now *free* to serve God without the fear of our inadequate works condemning us. John Calvin said, “Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone.” Faith must be accompanied by good works.

While sin did not benefit us in any way, good deeds brought about by our faith do. God certainly has no law against doing what is good. Likewise, there is no law against loving our brothers in Christ. The good that we do does not turn sour in our stomach, as does the fruit of sin, but encourages our soul in every way. Now that we are the servants of Christ, we are indeed free men (1Co.7:22). In doing those things that are pleasing to God, we are also doing those things that are truly beneficial to our souls. For, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2Co.3:17) — *not license* to do evil which destroys us, but the liberty to do what is good which benefits others and us.

### **Freed from All Condemnation**

While we were sinners, the Law condemned us. We have already discussed the error of attempting to mix works and grace as a means of justifying ourselves before God; it is not possible. Are we to conclude, then, that all works are evil? Not if God is working in us to accomplish *his* will *through* us. We must see that those good deeds that we would do with holy desire are definitely not the same as impossible works to satisfy the Law of God in the Ten Commandments. Under the Law, we struggled hard to satisfy the requirements of the Law without any hope of actually doing so. We were trapped into failure by our fallen nature. Laws are written for law-breakers in order to bring them to justice, not to free them. The Ten Commandments could only condemn us as violators of God’s

Law, while the new Law that Christ wrote in his own body on the tree frees us from all condemnation (Ro.8:1).

What we would seek to do now is in direct response to God's love for us, not from a dreaded fear of our deserved punishment if we fail Him (Ga.5:13,14). The Law of Christ, working in us by the Holy Spirit, frees us from performing hopeless attempts of works to satisfy the requirements of the Decalogue in order to deserve his righteousness, but instead carries us upward to a much higher calling (Ro.8:2,4). We are now called to walk with Christ on a high spiritual plane. Now, walking with Christ, we are called upon to accomplish freely, through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, that which we were not able to do in the flesh under the Law.

Therefore, as Paul said, we should seek out those things of good report, those things that are pleasing to God (Ph.4:8). We should not only dwell in our minds on those things, but they should manifest themselves in our actions. For, we so overflow with the good of the Spirit of God that it *must* spill over into our actions. Just think of it, we are free of any condemnation for our past, present, and future actions. We are now free to seek out those things that are pleasing to God, and to do them with great joy. Through the weakness of our flesh, we still can not do those things perfectly, but God knows our weakness and can turn our insufficient efforts into something that truly works for good because we do those things to please Him.

### **Beloved servants of Christ**

We also observe that since we are no longer under law, but under grace, we have now become loving and willing servants of Christ. The Apostle Paul says that we are now free men and no longer under bondage: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Ga.5:1). Here, Paul refers to the bondage of legalism as opposed to the freedom of action that we have as servants to the King of Glory. "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Ro.6:22,23).

All whom God has chosen and shall yet choose have been purchased out of the worldly realm by the death of Christ on the cross. Though Satan is still around in the world, we are no longer bound to him. The chains of sin by which we were held are now broken. We are now the redeemed servants of Christ, not held by hard chains but by the soft bonds of love. We should not think that Satan does not still attempt to influence believers. Nevertheless, we are no longer his slaves and do not need to jump to his bidding; we are no longer his, but Christ's.

“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness “(Ro.6:18). The master can deal with his own in any way that he sees fit and even free those whom he will. Christ loves his servants and even calls them his brothers (Ro.8:15). More than that, Christ elevates us to be adopted sons of the Most High, so that we may also be called the Sons of God (Ro.8:14)! It is true that we shall not receive the final estate of that adoption while blood still flows in our bodies, for “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom” (1Co.15:50). In this life, then, we are but servants, but we are beloved servants with a promise of future glory. We have the down-payment of eternal life within us by the Spirit of Adoption that dwells in us.

## **Chapter 7.3 Spiritual Guidance of Man**

In the previous two chapters, we discussed sanctification, and then we discussed active faith as the means by which the flesh is overcome in order for God to produce good works through believers. Certainly, the way to spiritual growth cannot be found through following external stimuli of this world, nor are they to be found in the religious organizations and institutions of men. Moreover, the path to practical sanctification is not to be found in attempting to adhere to moral codes or rules that we may ourselves devise no matter how noble they may seem to be. No, we must realize that the Holy Spirit who indwells us guides us internally.

Before we can understand how the Christian is led internally by the Holy Spirit, we must first come to a basic understanding of the intrinsic composition of man, how that structure was altered as a consequence of the fall, and how it is restored to a much more substantial form in the new birth.

### ***The Composition of Man***

Inasmuch as we do not fully understand the exact substance of God, it should not be too surprising that we also do not know the exact composition of man who is one of God's most complex creations. Nevertheless, it would be well if we search out answers to the subject of human spirituality with a certain amount of diligence; for, in not doing so, we may be distracted by the many subtleties of our own being and be ambushed by the many wiles of Satan. For that reason, it is necessary for us to come to some understanding of the spiritual nature of man even if we cannot go beyond the periphery. Most certainly, we must utilize analogies and allegories in dealing with that subject since we could never hope to come to a full and exact understanding of spiritual things without enlisting the aid of more familiar physical things. Jesus acknowledged that spiritual dullness in us when he spoke in parables to aid human understanding (cf. Jn.3:12).

**The Initial Tripartite structure of Man**

We read in Genesis that "... the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Ge.2:7). Flesh itself does not have life any more than dust, sand, or rocks have life. However, God breathed the "breath of life" into the lifeless flesh. The word *nshamah* translated "breath" means "wind", "divine inspiration", or "divine intellect." Adam had created within him a spirit from out of God's own substance, and because of that spirit he was alive — became a "living soul." Therefore, we find that Adam was created a tripartite being consisting of body, soul and spirit.

That tripartite construction should not be so surprising to us inasmuch as God created man in his own image (Ge.1:26). God is a singular triune being consisting of three persons who are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as we discussed at length in Chapter 6.3. Though we could erroneously carry this analogy too far, we can see a general relationship between the Son and Adam's flesh, a general relationship between Adam's spirit and the Holy Spirit, and even a general relationship between the Father and Adam's soul. Of course, this analogy is not exact, but it only serves to demonstrate how a triune being would carry his image over into his own creation. God initially created Adam as a singular being that consisted of three distinguishable characteristics that were nonetheless inseparable within Adam's being.

We should also be careful to acknowledge that Adam's spirit, though created out of God's own spiritual substance, was not in any way God Himself but a created entity. Surely, we can see that if Adam's spirit had been in all ways identical with the Spirit of God, dwelling in flesh, he could not have been deceived by Satan and he would never have sinned. (In fact, as we suggested in Chapter 2.4, it is probable that Adam's indwelling spirit was actually the same spiritual being whom we also refer to as Satan or the Son of the Morning). That is of course precisely the reason that Jesus, the second Adam, could not be tempted or deceived by Satan (Lu.4:1–13). The Spirit that presided over Jesus' soul was the Holy Spirit, not a created being.

Adam was not an automaton as a consequence of the source of his spirit. That is, he was not merely a physical extension of God and his will, but had a personality and individuality that was separate of his Creator. The *soul* that was created when God breathed spirit into mortal *flesh* was uniquely Adam. In the soul is the self-awareness that we know as “self” or “ourselves” that gives man his individual identity and personality. It was within his soul that the rebellion of Adam was formulated before it was carried out by the flesh.

### **The Pseudo-dichotomy of Fallen Man**

Satan’s plan of attack to induce Adam and Eve to sin was through their flesh in order to gain full access to their soul. After that successful invasion (Ge.3:6), Adam and Eve reasoned in their minds, heeded their emotions and their will, which was overcome by the desires of the flesh, allowing them to carry out their sin. Satan had also deceived the first man and woman into believing that from the prideful elevation of their souls (i.e. becoming like gods), they could also generate and preserve life (Ge.3:5). We observe this plainly stated in the words of Satan’s lie: “ye shalt not surely die” (Ge.3:4).

However, as we observed in the creation of Adam, life is found *only* in man’s *spirit*, which in the beginning was closely allied with God Himself. When Adam sinned, he denied God who led him through the spirit that ruled his soul, and in doing so, he lost the source of life itself. *Fallen* man therefore is actually a pseudo-dichotomy of flesh and soul inasmuch as the spirit in any real sense is nonexistent without the Spirit of God to infuse life through it. What remains of man’s *spirit* in this earthly existence is but a dull and empty shell that can neither communicate nor provide life.

As a result, man’s soul has been elevated to the false position of guardian and “life-giver.” However, life cannot be obtained from a man’s soul, Satan’s words to the contrary. Though Adam could not sustain his *life* in any real sense, he continued to exist on earth (but, not in the garden — not in God’s presence) until, having run its course through the ravages of time, his flesh returned to the dust of the ground from which it was taken (Ge.3:19,23,24).

Even after Adam's flesh died some 930 years after his creation, mankind continued to exist through the many generations that were begotten from the loins of Adam. Today, the descendants of Adam cover the face of the Earth. Though the flesh of man is under the sentence of death, God did not seek to destroy the souls of Adam, Eve, or their offspring. Though their flesh must surely die, He *preserved* their souls by his unconditional promise of the Messiah (Ge.3:15). Because of God's continuing promise, man's soul remains immortal and must spend eternity either in the presence of God or in the outer darkness of Hell forever alienated from Him.

### **Necessary Differentiation of Soul and Spirit**

Though some men reason that man is a dichotomy of flesh and spirit, they do not really mean "spirit," but "soul." Spirit and soul are reasoned to be the same in the fallen man only because the spirit is corrupt and dark without giving forth any light to the mind. Fallen man listens only to his soul that receives its inputs only through the flesh. However, "...the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner [able to judge] of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (He.4:12). Therefore, God's Truth is able to discern the difference between the fallen spirit and the soul in a manner similar to which a sword can separate joints and marrow of the flesh.

The soul is obviously not the same as the spirit since the soul is the result of the coalescing of lifeless flesh with living spirit. To put this complex subject in a very simple physical allegory that we can more easily understand: the flesh houses our soul, and the soul houses our spirit. The spirit is at the very core or heart of man. The empty "shell" or "room" of the spirit is what is often meant in Scriptures by the word "heart," not the physical organ which pumps blood. The Hebrew word *leb* or *lebab* (Gr. *kardia*) means the center or innermost "organ" of man. One must admit, it is also widely used to define "intellect" and "feelings" as well since intellect and emotion are both prominent properties of the soul that houses the spirit. Therefore, we can see that the distinction between the soul and the spirit is often

blurred until fallen man considers them identical. The unfortunate result of that confusion is that fallen man actually looks to his soul for the life-giving manna that only a regenerated spirit could provide.

### **Falsity of Temporal Life**

Mortal men today are not truly alive in the sense that God meant life for man; but only in a corrupted temporal sense invented by Satan who rules upon the earth through its worldly systems. All of Adam's descendents are actually condemned to death at birth because their soul and flesh have no real spiritual life in them. Every man's flesh is subject to decay and *must* die as did Adam's flesh: "...it is appointed unto men once to die..." (He.9:27). God's judgment of man's sin is only being deferred until after physical death has overtaken him in order that the human race can continue upon the earth.

The soul therefore rules fallen man, and the flesh provides inputs through the senses so that *carnal* knowledge is increased. Man shall continue to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and "in sorrow shalt [he] eat of it all the days of [his] life" (Ge.3:17). In that horrible poisonous knowledge, fallen man can find no peace, but only torment and eventually, ultimately, in death realize total and complete devastation of his soul.

### ***Properties of the Soul***

The soul of man is where his intellect, emotion, and sense of subconscious motivation (i.e. his volition or will) reside.

### **Intellect**

Often men reason that the spirit is a mere appendage to the soul that is manifested only in the intellect. After the fall, the soul (the "ego" or "mind") became a powerful part of mortal man. Moreover, through worldly knowledge gained from the five physical senses it grows stronger and stronger in carnal knowledge. That often leads fallen man to look for God in his intellect as he rationalizes with the things of the world. No wonder so many errors and false religions prevail on the earth. Man conjures up many *inventions* of "truth," that

satisfies his intellectual goals but he has no real understanding of spiritual wisdom. Truth is to be found only in a fully regenerated spirit, not in the human intellect.

### **Emotion**

Emotion is the second property of the soul. If many confuse intellect with spirit, far more confuse emotion with spirit. Many have trod that road; letting their emotions rule them in spiritual matters through experiences and feelings. Those people become Satan's toys. When Satan pulls the strings, they perform for him. Regarding this matter, Watchman Nee<sup>121</sup> said,

**“Emotion is what believers mistake most for spirituality. Carnal Christians whose tendency is emotional in character habitually crave sensation in their lives. They desire to sense the presence of God in their hearts or their sensory organs; they yearn to feel a love-fire burning... with such sensations they can serve the Lord; without them, they can scarcely move a step. Since many believers crave joyful feelings and the sensations of having the Holy Spirit, of the loveliness of the Lord Jesus, and of the presence of God, evil spirits will supply their senses with many strange experiences. This is that their natural abilities might be stimulated and that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, traceable only by man's delicate intuitive facility in the spirit, might be suppressed”** (*The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee).

If man's spirit is dark, all information will come through the flesh; either the intellect or the emotion or both will receive it as unambiguously valid, react to it according to the desire of the flesh, and act accordingly.

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<sup>121</sup> Perhaps the most comprehensive study describing the spiritual nature of man is *The Spiritual Man* written by Watchman Nee in 1927–1928 in Shanghai, China.

**Volition**

The third property of the soul is the human volition (or will) that since Adam's fall is corrupted and must therefore be constrained. The human will sets a man's course through life and is the most important of the three. Unfortunately, since the will is no longer free to communicate with the Spirit of Life, fallen man's will has actually become subordinate to the soul's intellect and emotion. His intellect and emotions are not controlled by his will; rather, the roles have become reversed. Therefore, fallen man cannot look to his will for guidance in making sound choices. It is in servitude as it carries out the desires of the flesh; it is held in bondage to Satan.

Since the fallen man is ruled through the soul by the world through his five physical senses, Satan plays with those senses until man cannot rely upon them except for the very basic things of this world. Nee went so far as to say, "All Satanic works are performed from the outside inward; all divine works, from the inside outward" (*The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee). Surely there is a great deal of truth to that statement. The indwelling Spirit of God works from within, not through our carnal senses that open into the world. Satan attempts to distract us through the physical senses since they open into his domain. We cannot see spiritual things through the senses of the flesh, though many today are tricked into believing that they can.

***Living in the Spirit***

Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (Jn.10:10). What is that abundant life? Certainly, Jesus was not referring to worldly wealth or gain, as some would have us believe. Nor was He just referring to leading a more godly or pious life here on earth. No, He referred to the restoration of spiritual life to man that Adam had lost in the fall. That restoration was necessary in order that man may again associate with his Creator and enjoy his presence forever in eternity. It means that through the final and complete atonement offered up by Christ in his own body, man may be once again restored to and even exceed the created status of the first Adam through the second Adam, Jesus Christ. That is exactly

why Jesus came: that by redeeming us to God, we might again receive the rich abundance of spiritual life through *his* Spirit.

### **The Regeneration of Man's Spirit**

The Spirit of Christ supersedes the fallen spirit of Adam that so dismally failed us. True life cannot be found in our flesh or in our soul, but in our *spirit* and only then when it is *regenerated* by the Holy Spirit (Jb.14:14). For, the empty shell of stone will be taken from us, and we will be given in its place a heart of flesh that can contain life (Eze.11:19–20). That is why it is imperative that the Holy Spirit regenerates our spirit. We receive that gift of eternal life through the *Holy Spirit* when we are born again. In our fleshly mind, we may achieve intellectual knowledge of God. We may even learn of the salvation offered through Christ. We may enjoy religious experiences brought about through our emotions. We may have quite pleasant feelings. We may attain a form of religion, but without any spiritual substance. We must genuinely worship God “in *spirit* and in truth” (Jn.4:24).

As the psalmist said, “The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly [hollow or innermost place]” (Pr.20:27). Alternatively, as the New American Standard Bible more clearly translates it, “The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the innermost parts of his being.” How could we ever hope to find our spirit if that “lamp” is out and it is hidden behind the thick veil of death? The natural man will only continue to look to his unenlightened soul and outward to the things of this world for his salvation; yet, he shall not find salvation in them. He may find some temporary comfort for this temporal life, but he has nothing stored against the day when his soul is required to answer for him before God (Lu.12:20). The material things of this life cannot deliver the soul.

When we receive the Holy Spirit into our heart – the empty abode of the spirit, the “lamp” of our spirit is “relit” and the soul is born again to life. The spirit's light shines forth; yet, it is not so bright that we are immediately aware of its presence. The light of our spirit is perceived, at first, as quite feeble — indeed as if seen through a

darkened veil. However, the Holy Spirit continues to work with the vestigial remains of our spirit to awaken it and transform it into his own likeness. The Spirit of God no longer consumes us, as He would have Adam should He have remained in him after the fall. After having first dwelled in Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection, He has been sent forth as our helper and Comforter, not as a destroying angel. He now corresponds and works in unison with our spirit. How gentle is the Spirit of Christ as He regenerates our poor spirit. As our spirit is regenerated, man again becomes a tripartite being (1Th.5:23), a trichotomy of flesh, soul, and spirit. Then, our soul must learn to correspond with the newly regenerated spirit rather than with the corrupt senses of the flesh.

### **The Intuitive Quality of Faith**

We surely see that faith does not subject itself to mere intellectual reason alone, for it cannot be substantiated by inputs received from our five senses; the way of the world always denies the existence of spiritual Truth. Nor is faith supported by emotion, for the firm confidence that faith provides cannot manifest itself in fickle emotions. Rather, faith is intuitive. It has come to us by means of *intuition*, which at first seeps through the torn veil between our soul and the place where our regenerated spirit resides.

That instinctive conviction affords a direct perception of Truth from the chamber of our innermost being. The quality and consistency of certainty from that source is perceived as being entirely different from impulsive thoughts that merely come to our minds from external stimuli. In addition, it is different from those thoughts that are rationalized by human reasoning. It is by the means of our intuition that we receive three important things that are directed toward us by the Holy Spirit. Those are: awareness, enlightenment, and conscience.

### **Awareness**

The awareness received by means of the Holy Spirit is not subject to the reasoning of our minds, but is directly implanted into our thoughts without any of the five senses of our flesh being utilized. That is both the source and strength of faith, making it unshakable by

worldly events or circumstances. Since no alteration of that intrinsic awareness is possible, it is also the bulwark of assurance that faith provides. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Ro.8:16). When in time sufficient awareness is built up in our minds from our spirit, our minds in turn begin to obtain spiritual understanding as well (Ep.1:17,18). It is through that conscious understanding that our souls finally begin to respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit (Col.1:9,10).

### **Enlightenment**

Following awareness, we may discover sudden leaps of our minds to an understanding of things that are not brought about by ordinary mental reasoning. This understanding is far more steadfast as the Holy Spirit conveys things to our minds directly without any intervening process. Some may choose to call this process “inspiration”, because inspiration means “breathed into.” Others may choose to call it “illumination” since it only allows us to see *existing* Truth. Many who do not have great intellectual ability can still intuitively come to a full understanding of Truth from the Holy Scriptures in that way. Yet, those with greater intellectual ability need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit even more. Their minds will not be able to come to a proper understanding of even the very basic elements of spiritual Truth without intervention; they are too full of worldly carnal knowledge that is stored up within their soul to do so.

If we should choose to ignore the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, we would also find ourselves ignoring the teaching ability of the Holy Spirit (Jn.14:26). The Holy Spirit teaches us by means of direct revelation even as He taught the Apostle Paul: “But I certify ye brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Ga.1:11,12). In fact, Paul received all by means of the instruction of the Holy Spirit through divine revelation (Ep.3:3).

It must be quickly pointed out here however that any suggestion of direct *unique or new* revelation from the Holy Spirit is *rightly* denied and feared today by mainline Christianity because many

cults have claimed a unique revelation that differs or exceeds that which is found in Holy Scripture. It is indeed true that *unique* foundational revelation ended with the apostles. However, unique revelation apart from established Scripture is *not* what we are talking about here lest we fall into the trap of the Gnosticism of an earlier age.

What we are talking about is the Holy Spirit taking the things of Christ and making them clearly understood and real to our minds. Those truths are fully substantiated by Scripture, but they are not always apparent to us — especially to a new believer. The sudden insight into a passage of Scripture that we may have read many times before without understanding it is what is meant by direct revelation by the indwelling Holy Spirit as He enables us to see that which we could not before by removing the veil that was over our spiritual eyes and revealing Scriptural Truth to us.

### **Conscience**

The conscience of man is rightly a function of the will or volition, not the spirit. Consequently, it never expired to an incommunicative state with the fall of man's spirit (Ge.3:7). Its nagging accusations have remained a constant source of torment to men (Ps.38). Satan, from the time of the fall, has consistently used the conscience not only to torment sinful men, but also to induce them to commit more sin by continually accusing them of their failures to keep the Law of God (Re.12:10). The Holy Spirit however first utilizes our conscience to initially convict us of sin and then draw us to Christ. As the Holy Spirit gains control over the conscience once again, we also find that heeding its admonitions are beneficial in rooting out sin in our lives in order that we may live more peaceful and godly lives.(Ac.19:20).

After our spiritual rebirth, the Holy Spirit also uses the conscience to keep our emotions under control, and by convicting us of any continuing sins, draws us ever closer to Christ as we confess them. It is not just the mind that must be under spirit control, since our emotions must be under his control as well. By that, it is meant that a sense of tranquil assurance will develop, not that our emotions will be stimulated. We become calmed inwardly by the peace that Jesus gives

us so that our actions will exhibit the calm and certain self-control that emanates from our converted spirit (Jn.14:27).

### **Response of the Will**

Once our intellect and emotions are under the control of our regenerated spirit, the third property of our soul, our volition or will, responds as it is unbound and set free from Satan's grasp. The renewed strength of our spirit then spills out into outward actions through the flesh. In as much as our spirit is fully conferring with the indwelling Holy Spirit in all matters, we find ourselves doing God's will.

Yet, not even the Apostle Paul could boast that he did *only* those things that were God's will (Ro.7:7–25). That is because we must also consider the initial corruptness of man's soul, the condition of his flesh, the attraction of the world, and the power of Satan. For that reason, man can never be truly perfect as long as he resides in the flesh. Rather, we are at war within ourselves (Ro.7:23). Our mind wars with our emotion; our will is impulsive as our mind and emotions still attempt to command it; our senses bring in noise and turmoil to our soul from the world. Satan bombards our soul from the world with lies and deception. Often, it seems that our spirit is only able to get through to us in sporadic bursts.<sup>122</sup>

Moreover, our soul is not easily persuaded to give up control to the regenerated spirit. For it screams at us that it knows what is best: "Listen to logic and reason; yield to the emotional pleasures of this life; avoid losing self-esteem!" Nevertheless, we can never be ruled spiritually if our soul is not put in its proper place: under the rule of our regenerated spirit. Therefore, as Jesus said, we must deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Him wherever it leads us (Mt.16:24). We must deny "self", crucify our old nature on the altar of the cross, and follow only the leading of the Spirit of Christ (Mt.16:25).

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<sup>122</sup> We shall more fully discuss this spiritual warfare in Chapter 7.5.

## **Chapter 7.4 The Tabernacle and the Temple**

The discussion of the composition of man that was presented in the preceding chapter may appear to be a mere psychological analysis that has little or no Scriptural basis. Therefore, the Scriptural parallel for that earlier discourse must be disclosed now. The Tabernacle and the Temple both provided the same general representations, and they are often considered interchangeable for that reason. Here, we shall not only discuss the similarities, but the distinction to be made between the two. We shall first discuss the Tabernacle as a portrayal of fallen man, and then we shall discuss the Temple as a portrayal of the perfected man.

### ***The Tabernacle as a Portrayal of Fallen Man***

In Scripture, we find that God has portrayed fallen man as a tabernacle — a tent-like structure with three compartments. Those three compartments can be compared to the flesh, the soul, and the spirit. All allegories and analogies must fall short of fact at some point or points of course. It is apparent that man differs from a tent or a building physically, and that inanimate objects like tents do not have minds or souls as does man. Yet, the representation of fallen man by the Tabernacle is clear enough in Scripture, and the allegory is useful for our instruction and edification.

### **Old Testament Illustrations**

The analogy of man as a tabernacle of God is not just confined to a few verses in the New Testament. This comparison of man to a tabernacle or dwelling place of God actually originated in the Old Testament. The religious system of the Jews was meant to instruct mankind and to pave the way for the coming of the Messiah. The details of Old Testament worship are all recorded as examples for us. Everything in the old dispensation, the Decalogue, the Tabernacle, the ceremonial law, and the Levitical priesthood, was a picture, a model, an example revealing the true nature of man and the manner in which man should, yet fails, to serve God's purpose for his existence.

The moral law clearly pictures man's fallen nature and his corrupted relationship with God because of sin. The ceremonial law shows us through example the way in which we must be reconciled to God through a substitutional blood sacrifice. The high priest of the Levitical priesthood was a type of Christ Himself who would one day accomplish the atonement that the Levitical high priest only portrayed.

The religious system of the Jews was also intended to instruct believers, both the Jews of that day as well as today's Christians, regarding a means of salvation by grace. Yes, *grace!* We must not fail to see one prevailing covenant of grace from God that was extended to man from the time of the fall of Adam and continuing through all of Scripture. The difficulty with the Israelites as a whole was that they did not look upon the moral law as an instructor demonstrating their fallen nature and need for grace. They did not look upon the Tabernacle in such a way that it revealed their own supernatural makeup, responsibility, and shortcoming. Nor did they look upon the Levitical ceremonial laws as an illustration leading them to an understanding that was necessary in order that they might receive their Messiah when He came. They did not comprehend the wondrous Truth veiled behind the system of animal sacrifices that pointed to one future perfect sacrifice that would be offered *once for all*. Instead, all but a few fell into legalism and meaningless ritual and ceremony (Ro.9:31,32).

### **God's Requirements Demonstrated**

When God gave the Decalogue to Moses, He spelled out his necessary requirements for man in stone. As we have discussed earlier, they actually demonstrated man's desperate need for salvation because it clearly revealed his sin nature (Ro.7:12,13). Through many miracles, God demonstrated to his people that He was the one and only God so that they would look to Him and to Him alone, for salvation (De.6:4; Is.42:8; Ex.6:6,7; Ps.3:8; Is.33:22 etc.). God demonstrated his might that the Hebrews should know his omnipotence, his ability to deliver them from any peril (Ex.15:1–19; Is.25:4–9). Through his wrath, He demonstrated the penalty for disobedience to his will — a penalty that *must* be paid (De.9:7,8; Is.13:9; Ps.76: 6-8). He demonstrated spiritual

death by means of physical death (Ge.19:13; Jos.5:6; 1Chr.10:13). God demonstrated the vile nature of sin by Leprosy (i.e. corrupted flesh) and other maladies that showed how the vileness of sin (the spiritual disease of man) quarantines us from God (Nu.12:9,10). That was evidenced by the physical separation of the “unclean” person from the Hebrew community of worship (Le.13:44–46). The Levitical priesthood also demonstrated how man as the steward of his house should serve God. The Tabernacle, itself, was a model of this house, this tent, in which man exists. The Apostle Paul even refers directly to the flesh of this life as a “tent” which is the meaning of the word “tabernacle” (2Co.5:1–4).

### *The Parallel between Man and the Tabernacle*

Moses directed the construction of the Tabernacle, but it was fully designed and specified by God Himself (Ex.25:9). Moses was fully instructed in every detail regarding how the Tabernacle was to be assembled inside and out so that it would be an exact replica of a blueprint in Heaven. Furthermore, all of the ceremonial laws were carefully dictated with regard to how the Tabernacle was to be utilized. All of the rituals associated with the Tabernacle were fully prescribed by God (He.8:5). That care in construction and utilization is significant, inasmuch as the Tabernacle was to represent a precise illustration of fallen man.

God was actually to dwell in this tent (Ex.25:8). We may wonder how that could be. God is infinite in the heavens; how, then, can God dwell in a tent or a building constructed here on earth? At the dedication of Solomon’s Temple, Solomon posed that very question: “Will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded” (1Ki.8:27)? Only the shining glory of God would indwell the Tabernacle not the eternal one Himself. Moreover, his glory would rest in the Holy of Holies just above the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant that was hidden to all mankind behind a heavy veil.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> We shall have more to say about the veil, the Ark and the mercy seat later.

Let us now examine the Tabernacle in detail (Refer to Figure 1 below) and relate each component to the supernatural makeup of man (Exodus Chapters 25–27, 30). As we do so, we shall clearly see the parallel between the Tabernacle and the analysis that was presented in the previous chapter.

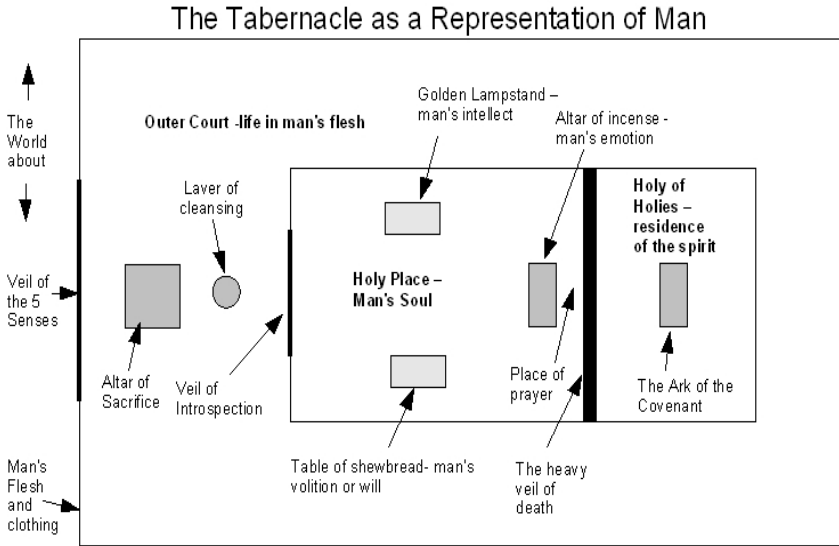


Figure 1

***Life in the Flesh — the Outer Court***

The outer court of the Tabernacle can be seen to represent fallen man’s life and necessary death in the flesh (Ex.27:9–19). We observe that the Tabernacle proper was covered with skins and hair as well as fine linen trappings (Ex.26:1,7,14). This is highly suggestive of man’s flesh and clothing. However, we note that all the beautiful trappings faced inward, not outward. When Adam and eve were first created, they were supplied with a glory that shone outward as a covering for them. For that reason, they did not even realize that they were naked until the aura disappeared immediately after their fall (Ge.3:7,10,11)

Outside the outer court of man’s physical body, all things that are corrupt and vile exist in the physical world surrounding him. The

gateway outward into the Hebrew camp through a thin curtain illustrates how man's carnal life is open to the world around him through the veil of his five physical senses (Ex.27:16).

### **Sacrificial Death Required**

In the carnal existence (the courtyard) physical death is seen represented by the death of animals on the altar with the flesh consumed by the fire of Almighty God because of man's sin (Le.4:1–5,13–15). The end of carnal life was represented by the spilling of animal blood on the ground (Ge.4:10,11; Ex.29:12; Le.4:7; 5:9; etc.). “Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin]. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (He.9:21–23).

Physical death was always represented by the death of animals, not men, for God never desired a human sacrifice in connection with that ritual. It is clear that there was to be one and only one human sacrifice for the sins of man; that perfect sacrifice was Jesus Christ. To offer an *imperfect man* as a sacrifice would have been an abomination to God. Therefore, God temporarily accepted the sacrifice of innocent animals in order to accommodate man's immediate need for temporal atonement for sin.

### ***Man's Soul — the Holy Place***

If the outer court represented man's physical body and his life and death in the flesh, it follows that the Holy place in the Tabernacle proper represented man's soul (Ex.26:33). Separating the flesh from the soul is the veil of introspection that must be parted as we begin our internal self-examination. By penetrating that veil, we cross from the purely physical to the metaphysical. Therefore, getting through that veil is not nearly as easy as it is for the world to enter in through the veil of the physical senses. As man turns away from the world, the proper approach to understanding his soul must be by way of the laver in the outer court (Ex.30:17–21). This symbolizes his need to be

cleansed first of the vile corruptions of the worldly life he leads (Ex.30:19–21; Jn.13:4–10).

Once inside the Holy place (representing man’s soul), we find three things of significance: the golden lampstand (Ex.25:31–40), the altar of incense (Ex 30:1–10), and the table of shewbread (Ex.25:23–30).

### **The Lampstand — Intellect**

There is little difficulty in relating the lampstand to man’s mind or intellect that serves to illuminate the interior of his soul. We note however that the lampstand had seven branches representing perfect (complete) knowledge and wisdom. Unfortunately, fallen man falls far short of the intellect that God had intended for him because of his fall. There is no perfection in his thinking nor is there purity in his enlightenment.

### **The Altar of Incense — Emotion**

The altar of incense can be seen to represent man’s emotional component. The emotion of fallen man is highly unstable. Emotion is often expressed in supplication represented by incense that hovered between the altar and the heavy veil leading into the inner chamber. While fallen man could not go behind the heavy veil, the sweet aroma of incense would eventually penetrate through it to symbolically make his presence and petitions known to God.

### **The Shewbread — Will**

Shewbread means “the loaves that are set forth before.” The twelve loaves of shewbread can be seen to represent man’s sense of existence or volition — the mainstay of man — his will. The loaves in the Tabernacle became stale after a week and needed renewal (Le.24:8). In like manner, man’s will needs constant regeneration lest he become complacent; his resolve needs refreshing on a periodic basis. Regeneration of the will can come about only through the working of the Spirit of God as He supplies the true manna from heaven; those loaves are unattainable through the worldly means fallen man has available to him.

### *Chamber of Man's Spirit — The Holy of Holies*

If the Holy place represents man's soul, the holiest place of all (the Holy of Holies) must represent his very core or heart; this is the devastated chamber of fallen man's spirit. Before we move on to speak of the Holy of Holies, it is important to note that the soul is located between the flesh and the inner chamber of man's spirit. That is because the soul was in the beginning brought about by the joining of the flesh and spirit (Ge.2:7).

We observe that there are two doorways into the soul of man: the doorway from life in the outer world through the way of the flesh and the doorway from the holiest place. The door opening into life in the flesh is covered with the veil of introspection but is not heavily obstructed (Ex.26:36,37); the things of the world enter readily enough through the senses of the flesh and penetrate inward to the soul. However, the door to fallen man's innermost being is heavily barricaded.

#### **The Veil of Death**

In the symbolic Tabernacle, entrance into the Holy of Holies was obstructed by a heavy veil (In the later Temple, it was as much as 4–12 inches thick) and was further obstructed by the altar of incense (Ex.30:6;40:5,26) demonstrating man's emotional instability and the necessity of prayer as the only way to penetrate beyond it. Fallen man *cannot* enter into the Holy of Holies because he is separated from eternal life by that veil of death.

No mortal man could enter through such an obstruction. He would be immediately consumed by the Holy fire of God's Word should he suddenly step into God's presence. As the prophet Malachi asked, "Who shall stand when he appeareth ...he is like a refiner's fire" (Mal.3:2). As God told Moses, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Ex.33:20). That veil of separation therefore represents an impassible barrier. The only way through it is death, but that would only bring God's judgment immediately upon him.

Nevertheless, Aaron, the high priest, *was* permitted to enter into the presence of God only once a year on the great Day of Atonement. He was not to make any errors in his ritual service while he was in God's presence or he would immediately die.<sup>124</sup> Once Aaron completed his work in the Holiest of Holies, he immediately left God's presence. It is significant that only the high priest could enter through the veil, for that foretold of one man who alone could enter into God's presence by virtue of a perfect life — the coming Christ.

### *The Temple as a Portrayal of the Perfect Man*

The Old Testament Tabernacle and the worship and service surrounding it were mere foreshadows of the true Temple which was to be realized under the new dispensation of grace brought about by the new covenant with man through the blood of Christ (He.8:5; 10:1).

The compartments of the Temple were fashioned similarly to those of the Tabernacle and were used in worship in the same way as was the Tabernacle. However, the Tabernacle was a tent that was used by the Israelites while on their wilderness march. In many ways, the tent more accurately represents the corruptness of fallen man as he wanders about lost in the wilderness of mortal life. It was only after the Israelites were safely in the land of Canaan that it was possible to have a permanent structure that was then called the Temple. The beautifully ornate Temple that Solomon built in fact pointed toward the coming of a perfect man.<sup>125</sup>

### **Christ, the Perfect Temple**

Jesus, the son of man, referred to Himself as the Temple when He said that though it would be destroyed He would raise it again in

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<sup>124</sup>A tradition says that a long rope was tied around the high priest's ankle, since if he died in the process of his duties it would be impossible for anyone to enter inside to remove his body. However, this tradition cannot be verified in fact.

<sup>125</sup>It was King David's desire to build a more permanent place of worship that paved the way for the eventual building of the Temple by Solomon. David did not like to think of God living in a leaky tent while he remained dry in his paneled palace (2Sa 7:1,2).

three days (Jn.2:19–21). As we shall see, Jesus was perfectly represented by the Temple.

Just as Israel had found physical redemption in the Promised Land, the believer now finds full redemption in Christianity with Christ as its *permanent* centerpiece. From the distinction between the somber coverings of the Tabernacle and the beauty of the Temple, we observe that the Temple more specifically represented the coming Messiah. The beauty was not just inward, but outward as well. Only in the God-man, Jesus Christ, can the true beauty of the Temple be seen. If the Tabernacle represented a type of fallen man, God, Himself, took on the form of the perfected Temple when He became man.

Jesus was a man in whom the Spirit of God *fully* dwelled in all his glory. We see the perfection of God in Jesus: his intellect was the seven-fold wisdom of God; his volition was fully the will of God; his emotions never veiled his heart. In reading of Jesus, we observe no examples of the evil emotions that plague men. Jesus was the perfect man: exhibiting humility, not pride; love, not hatred; concerned with others, not self — even to his death on the cross.

Jesus, in perfect obedience, presented his flesh an unblemished living sacrifice to God on our behalf and entered once through the veil of death into the holiest of holies (He.7:27). There, sprinkling his own blood on the mercy seat of God He purchased our salvation (He.9:13,14). It is Christ whom the High Priest (Aaron) of the Levitical priesthood represented. Therefore, the Temple though still representative of man in general, more specifically represented Jesus, who was the *perfect* man, and the work of redemption that He performed on fallen man's behalf (He.8:1,2).

### ***Regenerated Man Represented by the Temple***

The New Testament writers clearly state that *man* is the Temple, the perfected Tabernacle, in which God now dwells: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (1Co.3:16)? In many other places in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul referred to the saints as “an holy temple in the Lord” (Ep.2:21). That is quite true, because in those who believe,

the Holy Spirit fully dwells as we have already seen (1Co.3:16,17; 2Co.6:16).

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well that a time was coming when men would no longer worship God in the Temple at Jerusalem (Jn.4:21). Rather, men would worship God “in Spirit and in truth” (Jn.4:24). From that we may conclude that men would soon worship God in their own renewed nature in which the spirit of God truly dwells, not merely in an external physical representation.

### **Regenerated Man’s Entrance through the Veil**

Unlike the Old Testament High Priest, Christ, our High Priest did not leave God’s presence after his work of atonement, but He sat down at God’s right hand! Furthermore, He did not just part the veil enough to enter, He ripped it from top to bottom (Mt.27:51) and removed the obstruction of the veil of death forever so that all of us who follow after Him can have direct access to the very throne room of God with Jesus as our mediator. “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (He.9:24).

**“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water”** (He.10:19–22).

Since the door into the Holiest of Holies is now open and made visible to us by the light of the Holy Spirit, we may boldly enter into the very presence of God as the followers of Christ.

In the Old Testament Tabernacle, the altar of incense was in the “soul” and was moved into the Holy of Holies only on the Great Day of Atonement, whereas after the veil was rent, the altar of incense (“golden censer”) remained inside the Holiest of Holies where Jesus had left it (He.9:3,4). That signifies that we now have for our aid in prayer not only our regenerated spirit, but also the power of the Holy

Spirit who has taken up residence in our hearts. Our prayers are no longer offered up through a thick veil but in the very presence of God as we approach his throne. We, ourselves, have become a priesthood of believers (1Pe.2:5,9) able to go directly in to our Father with the confessions of our sins, because Jesus, our high priest, has opened the way and ever intercedes for us (He.9:15; 7:25–28; Ro.8:34).

### **The Ark of Salvation**

Before the Holy Spirit came, there was nothing but darkness within our hearts. No light could come forth to our soul through the veil of death. Now however, Christ has entered and illuminated the Holy of Holies to our soul by his Spirit and has totally rent the veil of darkness that had hid its contents. Within the holiest of holies was placed a gold-covered wooden chest known as the Ark of the Covenant (Ex.25:10–22; 26:33). It contained the Ten Commandments of God engraved on stone tablets (Ex.25:16,21; He.9:4), the budding rod of Aaron (Nu.17:10; He.9:4), and a pot of manna that had fed the people of Israel in the wilderness (Ex.16:33,34; He.9:4). It was enclosed behind the veil to the eyes of all flesh, but to the redeemed who have entered into the Holy of Holies by the way of Christ its contents have now been revealed.

### **The Mercy Seat**

The chest cover was known as the “mercy seat” (Ex.25:21; 26:34), was made of pure gold (Ex.25:17) that was sprinkled with blood by the high-priest yearly on the Day of Atonement (Le.15:14,15). The contents of the ark can be viewed only through the mercy of God, that blood-sprinkled gold (Ex.25:17). In so doing, God has allowed the infirmity of man’s flesh to be sprinkled on his purity; He has allowed man’s plight to touch his righteousness (Le.16:14,15). The mercy seat rightly speaks of our redemption by the blood of Christ through which we have obtained mercy. Today, we do not look through gold-covered wood that is sprinkled with the blood of bulls as in the Old Testament example, but through the blood-stained wood of the cross that was stained with the blood of Jesus, and that is the purest of all!

**The Two Cherubim**

Above the mercy seat and facing into the ark were two cherubim: touching wing to wing (1Ki.8:6,7; He.9:5). The one cherub can be seen to represent the Holy Spirit, while the second cherub is likened to man's renewed spirit (1Ki.6:23–28). When we are redeemed, our spirit is immediately regenerated into a likeness of the Spirit of Christ. Together they look through the mercy seat into the things of God (Ex.25:20). The Holy Spirit works “wing to wing” with man's spirit like two doves in peaceful harmony (Mt.3:16; Lu.3:22; Jn.1:32) as they together look into the ark of salvation that man was forbidden to look into before (Ge.3:24). The shining glory of God is visible just above the mercy seat of Christ and under the spreading wings of the cherubim. Man meets with God in this place (Ex.30:6).

**The True Manna**

Jesus said that He is the true manna from Heaven and the bread of life (Jn.6:31–35). The manna within the Ark represents the spiritual sustenance that is fully ours in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Our souls can now feast on the true manna that sustains us and keeps us eternally alive in Christ. He is the one who renews the bread of our will.

**The Rod of the High Priest**

We recognize the authority of Jesus our eternal high priest, and the divine resurrection of Christ in the budding rod of Aaron (Nu.17:6,8,10; He.9:4; cf. Mt.28:18). A rod, or a scepter, is a symbol of authority (Ex.4:2,17,20; 9:23; 14:16). However, Aaron was only a type of Christ in the Tabernacle representation under the old covenant. Jesus is the True High Priest (He.8:1; 9:11; 10:21): He who was a branch that was cut off (Da.9:26; Jn.19:30), yet budded again to life in his resurrection (Mt.28:5,6).

**The Tablets of the Law**

We observe that the commandments of God were originally written within the depths of man's hearts. After man's fall however, he no longer had access to the Holy of Holies and could no longer read

them there. Consequently, God gave them to man once again, but externally — engraved in hard stone. Now that redemption has come through Christ, man is once again guided by the Law of God that is written in the depths of our hearts. Jesus is the Living Word that springs to life in us and we find that his commandments are not grievous but joyous (1Jn.5:3).

Therefore, it is in the Old Testament that we first find God's unconditional love for us, not just in the New Testament. Even under the old covenant, salvation is seen as possible by means of the promise of the Messiah and through God's grace. God did not give all those things to Israel in order that the precepts they taught would be thrown away by future generations as something old, outdated, and no longer of value. Furthermore, God has not preserved the record of those things in Scripture without purpose, but to instruct us that we may better understand ourselves and know of Him and his will for us.

Our regenerated spirit now corresponds with our soul. Our intellect is illuminated with God's Truth, not the mere wisdom of this world. Our worthless pride-filled emotions are replaced with faith, hope, and love (Ro.5:1-5; 1Co.13:13) as God develops the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Ga.5:22,23). Our will is renewed constantly: not by the moldy bread of this life, but by the perfect bread of God (Mt.26:26; 1Co.11:23,24). Truly, a new being has been born who is not born of the blood of this life, nor of the will of man, but by the Holy Spirit and the perfect will of God (Jn.1:13). We are each a Temple that has an open passage into the very presence of God who now dwells within us.

## Chapter 7.5 Spiritual Warfare

From what we have discussed in the previous chapters, it may seem at first that when the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, and he begins to respond to God, his troubles are over. Unfortunately, that is not true as Christian experience clearly proves. Man still has the influence of the world entering into his flesh through his five senses, and from there entering in through the veil of introspection into his very soul. That worldly barrage continues even as the Holy Spirit works to regenerate us from within the Holy of Holies that now opens directly into our soul through the torn veil. Satan masterfully orchestrates the world's systems such that a continuous battle exists within our souls as the Holy Spirit is opposed by the World, the flesh and the devil.

### *Christianity as a Way of Life*

Being a Christian is not constituted in part-time participation in religious activities or in church ceremonies and rituals through our physical presence at various meetings. Nor is it an intellectual exercise or some kind of psychological crutch to relieve us from worry and strife. Instead, Christian living requires complete submission to and full-time involvement with God's will and purpose in every detail of our being. As entirely new creatures in Christ, we must painfully adjust to a new way of life that opposes our old nature. Christianity requires complete and unconditional acceptance of the dominance of our new spiritual nature over the old carnal one as well as an unconditional commitment to Jesus Christ as our Lord. As in marriage, it means accepting the sorrows of that new relationship as well as the joy.

That new way of life is in complete opposition to that lived by fallen men in the world at large — a way in which we ourselves at one time walked before we were converted. We in fact have now become salt in the wounds of the walking dead that remain in Satan's worldly kingdom. It should be no surprise therefore that they choose to oppose us at every turn even denying us many of the temporal benefits and comforts that the world can provide for our physical welfare. While

there is most certainly a worldly price to pay when we accept Christ as our savior, there is far more to be gained. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Ro.8:18). After all, eternal life is infinitely more valuable than any worldly treasure that all men must ultimately leave behind, and it is much more to be desired than any worldly comforts that we may be called upon to forfeit during our brief stay here on earth.

### **The Internal Struggle**

For a short while, a new believer is often protected from Satan’s attacks as he concentrates so fully upon the joy of his newfound salvation that the present world does not even seem to exist for him. However, when he begins to exercise his God-given faith in a hostile world, he becomes highly vulnerable. After the initial euphoria and excitement of his conversion becomes the effort of daily commitment, the new believer quite often finds himself bewildered and in the middle of a war for which he does not remember enlisting. Satan will attempt to fill his mind with doubts about the reality of his salvation even as the world calls him back. Only expecting and seeking peace, he is completely unprepared for the internal struggle.

While the mature Christian should seek to understand and aid the new believer in Christ in every way he can through prayer and through the common fellowship we have in Christ, the fact is that we cannot directly intervene for them in that attack because the battle is a spiritual one. It is waged within their own soul, not outwardly, where we could give any direct aid. Nevertheless, if they are truly newborn children of God, the outcome is not in doubt inasmuch as the Holy Spirit that is within them is greater than are any of his opponents.

We must always be fully engaged in the war that rages in our soul. Any attempt to avoid the consequences of the many battles is to give in to Satan’s evil design. It is apparent that a child of God cannot establish any form of peaceful coexistence with Satan in which he could maintain faith in Christ while avoiding Satan’s wrath. It is no more possible than for light to have coexistence with darkness. If we seek to avoid the personal shame and consequences of the cross of

Christ, we shall also lose its benefits. Rather than aiding God in his great purpose, we would find ourselves standing against Him.

### *Tenacity of the Old Nature*

Satan has many means at his disposal both to prevent a man or woman from coming to Christ and then to attack the soul of one who has accepted salvation in order to detract them from the new life that is theirs. We shall discuss some of his methods in the various topics that follow. However, the primary means that Satan uses to derail the believer is the attraction of the world at large that appeals to man's old nature. In that respect, we find that it is our "old man," that we once were, that is now the enemy — and a tenacious one at that.

### **Spiritual Ignorance**

If a believer can be kept away from the knowledge of Truth, Satan can use his spiritual ignorance to keep him away from the glories of Christian living in this world. Consequently, many have strayed from God's Truth as found in Holy Scripture by commingling it with human philosophy. In doing so, Truth can be bent until it is more palatable to the fallen human nature. Once that road has been undertaken, it is not long until human philosophy overwhelms Truth leaving only a shell of Christianity behind that is filled with elements of the old nature.

The natural man lacking Truth is most often inclined toward superstition such that he sees signs in almost every event that occurs around him. Likewise, if the believer can be kept from studying the Scriptures in depth, he may also fall into superstition that leans toward craving spiritual experiences rather than finding solace in the bedrock of Truth itself. It is not uncommon for a believer to make various presumptions based upon that superstition and the experiences related to it such that it replaces the express word of God regarding their salvation. That has led, among other things, to the presumption that our mortal bodies should not ever suffer illness if we are in Christ and other such strange doctrines that are unsupported by Scripture.

Satan usually seeks to stimulate rather than inhibit human emotions. Often he will disguise those emotional outbursts in religious

rituals that purport to be valid worship of God. As someone has said, “if Satan can not get us to under-do, he will try to get us to over-do.” We could easily fall into base superstition, sign seeking, and carnal activity thinking that we are being spiritual minded. Not only do we become a “frustrated Christian” in our own personal battle to know the mind of Christ, we also become an ineffective witness to others. No unbeliever who observes us desires to accept a “religion” that could affect him or her similarly. If we allow ourselves to become so entrapped, we do great disservice to the Gospel of Christ.

### **Religious Pride**

Pride that contributed so heavily to man’s first sin remains in the old nature as a major fault that Satan can use against the believer. Many exercise that pride by seeing themselves as worthy because of an intelligent decision they have made in accepting Christ rather than submitting themselves to the fact that they are miserable sinners that were only saved out of God’s mercy.

Rather than seeking out and embracing the evidential truth about their old nature, many only act the part of a Christian by engaging in various church rituals and make-believe acts of charity. While our churches are full of unbelievers who merely act the part, the believer must also avoid all such hypocrisy in all that he does. As long as the old nature persists, the believer is susceptible to pride.

Much akin to hypocrisy is envy, inasmuch as hypocrisy is often fostered by our envy of other believers. We desire to be more like them and covet their position in Christ or even to exceed them in their holiness. Rather than turning to God in humility and seeking out his purpose for our lives, we attempt to emulate what we see in other believers. In doing so we often bypass our real purpose in life and become bitter when we cannot live up to a high standard that we have set for ourselves.

### **Legalism**

We have already seen that any effort to become righteous from our own strength in the flesh is worthless since such works only deal with sin in outward appearance, not inwardly, where it festers.

Nevertheless, the old nature persists in that notion. Unable to convince even ourselves of our ability to live up to the whole Law of God, an effort to earn or somehow deserve salvation is attempted by establishing petty laws that we have devised in order to create a false aura of pseudo-righteousness. In doing so, we may find somewhat of which to glory among ourselves, but not before God (cf. Ro.4:2).

Often legalism takes on the form of specific acts of worship or penance that are performed ritually over and over in order to prove ourselves worthy of the salvation that we have received without effort. Such formality is as worthless in earning salvation as is man's petty laws. Legalism springs from our mistrust of the grace that has been bestowed upon us by God in Christ. In doing so, true salvation is being rejected out of hand.

### *Engaging with the New Nature*

Therefore, we dare not engage in the battle with our old nature lest we find ourselves utilizing the same worldly tactics as the enemy. If we should engage the foe with our old nature, we would find that we are, indeed, ourselves, the "enemy within." We would only invent means and rules to the end of making ourselves appear to be self-righteous in a blind attempt to avoid Satan's accusing attack as we stumble along.

Only when our old nature is finally reckoned as being truly and finally dead in Christ's death can we fully engage our minds with the battle. As the Holy Spirit continues his efforts within us, we find our thoughts turning increasingly to God and his will for our lives. The answer to this dilemma therefore is found in the regeneration of the mind of those that believe (Ro.12:2). It is not our effort at all, but fully God's grace working in us.

As the light of Christ within us makes Truth visible to us, the mind begins to respond to Truth by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit. Certainly, we know that we must persevere in our faith if we are to stand against Satan (Ep.6:13,14), but this "spiritual walk" is actually a learning process even as our old nature consistently attempts to trip us up. We do a lot of stumbling, yet through it all we gain valuable Christian experience that leads us to become hardened soldiers. God

has called us to the battle and we must never forget that our own soul is the fought-over territory.

### *The Spiritual Nature of the War*

The consequences of accepting Christ are certain and real as it sets off spiritual warfare on a massive scale. This warfare is different from any other war fought upon the earth. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after [according to] the flesh” (2Co.10:3). This war is spiritual with regard to the enemy, the battlefield, and the weapons used. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ep.6:12).

There is a thin veneer separating the material world and the spiritual world. If we find the material world full of many difficulties and pitfalls, the spiritual world has many more of a much higher magnitude. Whereas in the material world, we must wrestle with other men, things, and nature, in the spiritual world we must wrestle with Satan, demons, and the supernatural. Moreover, before the Holy Spirit comes to make his home in us, man’s inner being is as dark as pitch. Evil spirits (demons) can easily hide there and lie in wait for the unwary to cross over into their region.

Because of the light shed forth by the Holy Spirit in the newborn in Christ, the battlefield is no longer in total darkness. Nonetheless, we must still beware of evil spirits who misrepresent themselves as messengers of Truth and light in order to seduce the naïve who remain spiritually ignorant. We must also be aware that Satan himself appears as an “angel of light” and, a messenger of Truth (2Co.11:14) to the unwary. We know from what we have studied earlier about his creation that he is quite beautiful and, no doubt, carefully dresses the part (cf. Chapter 2.4 The Son of the Morning, page 117). Satan is a master of every deception and lie, and he will attempt to deceive many into believing that their personal familiarity with demonic spirit guides (fallen angels) is beneficial and can save them.

A familiarity with the spiritual world or spiritual beings cannot save anyone. Man’s salvation is solely based upon the objective fact

that Christ came out of deity in the flesh as a man, that He died for our sins on the cross, and that He was raised again for our justification (1Co.15:3–4). Christ Himself is now ruling within us from his throne on high through the indwelling Holy Spirit. That alone is man's source of salvation. Only the Holy Spirit can illuminate the inner man thus dispelling the impenetrable darkness. For that reason, when the Holy Spirit indwells a believer, it is impossible for him to be taken over by an evil spirit. Though Satan may attack from without, demon possession cannot occur at the same time that the Holy Spirit is in possession of our innermost core, for "greater is he that is in you, than he who is in the world" (1Jn.4:4).

### *Satan's Fiery Darts*

While man's old nature itself can derail a believer as the world rushes in, Satan's more direct means of disabling a believer is by placing obstacles in his path: pressures of the world, humiliation by the godless, loneliness, and doubt. Unfortunately, many may believe when those obstacles are encountered that they are out of the will of God — not realizing that they are placed there by the evil one precisely because we are acting in the will of God that Satan consistently opposes.

One of the most devastating attacks that the Christian believer encounters is mental depression as Satan seeks to keep the redeemed out of commission by keeping them under worldly pressures. We may find ourselves in personal circumstances where the pressures of everyday life seem too much for us to bear. Furthermore, the more a believer sees of this world's moral decadence and violence, the more he suffers from depression. A combination of the two is quite overpowering and can be spiritually disabling. The media today, particularly television, graphically brings worldwide news events into our homes so that they often take on a very personal character for each of us. Moral decay and violence is rampant in the world.

No one enjoys being humiliated. However, when we accept Christ, we find that we must bear the shame of the cross wherever we go, and Satan will use the worldly element to humiliate us before the world at large. Due to anti-Christian bias, it would seem that evil not

only prevails in the world, but it is often also depicted as desirable. Christians are seen as intolerant bigots and wild-eyed terrorists if they take a moral stand in opposition to worldly notions and systems. There can be little doubt that Satan is working behind the scenes here not only to ensnare the unsaved, but to discourage the redeemed as well.

A believer is usually prepared to accept a little criticism from unsaved acquaintances, and is aware that some changes must take place in his lifestyle. For some, however, those changes can be more drastic than for others. The newborn may not immediately be aware that he could suffer consequences on the job because of certain ethical stands that he must now take. Certain worldly activities that his business associates enjoy may no longer be proper for a Christian, thus making him an outsider to his colleagues. Certain social requirements of the job may now be in total conflict with his faith. So much so, that it may greatly affect his ability to function satisfactorily in his current position. Conflicts with his superiors and job loss are quite possible.

The sudden breaking off of personal fellowships with rank unbelievers brings a feeling of loneliness, which strongly tempts the new believer to turn back to his old way of life. Many of his longtime friends now avoid him. Some old relationships he must now sever himself. He is seen as an outcast in the eyes of the world and is no longer welcomed into certain clubs and organizations. Where he was welcomed before, he is now despised.

More often than not, a direct attack on the believer's faith is not launched from mortal enemies but from the believer's friends, relatives, and even close members of his own family. The prophet Micah said, "For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house" (Mi.7:6). We most certainly can see a fulfillment of the words of the prophet Micah in Christianity today (cf. Mt.10:35,36). In some countries, Christians are hated to the extent that they are betrayed, sometimes even to physical death, by members of their own families and close friends (Mt.10:21). We are reminded of what Jesus said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Mt.10:34).

The friend or family member's attack is most often launched out of a genuine concern for the believer's well being. They may mean well toward him, but lacking spiritual insight, they attempt to pull him from the narrow path that he must follow. We can see that clearly in Peter's rebuke of Jesus (Mt.16:22,23). When Jesus spoke of the death He was to suffer, Peter, with good intentions after the manner of men, rebuked Jesus by saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Mt.16:22). Peter was concerned for Jesus' physical welfare, but he ignored that which was God's will in his concern.

Jesus surely felt compassion toward Peter at that moment, but for Him to have given in to Peter's concern would have been disastrous. How often, in our own compassion for a loved one, have we given in to a friend or relative accepting their concern for our well-being rather than accepting God's will for our lives? Their natural benevolent concern for us can be Satan's trap. Recognizing the attack through Peter as coming from Satan, Jesus said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Mt.16:23).

That is what Jesus was referring to when He said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt.10:37). Jesus' words are recorded even more harshly in the Gospel of Luke: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Lu.14:26). We find that the word "hate" here, does not mean, "despise," but "love far less" (Mt.10:37). Therefore, though we love our families as much or more than we do ourselves, we must not love our family members more than we love Jesus.

We cannot allow the concern of family members for us or even our responsibilities toward them interfere with our calling and our daily walk with God in the Spirit of Christ. Even our own life must not be loved more than our desire to do God's will; if it is, we will lose our life (Mt.16:25; Mk.8:35; Lu.9:24; Jn.12:25). That is, our physical life would become worthless for God's purposes here on earth and our spiritual life would become dead or stillborn. Jesus referred to that commitment to Him at all costs as "bearing our cross" when following

Him (Lu.14:27; Mt.10:38; 16:24) — even dying with Him, to live with Him. Most certainly, a Christian's life is not always a bed of roses if he or she is truly living within God's will.

The most devastating attack of all can be launched through one's unsaved spouse. The one with whom we have shared all things suddenly becomes an outsider to us, and we to them. They become Satan's most effective advocate as the unsaved spouse may even begin to honestly doubt the believer's sanity. The new believer, already deeply engaged in the internal war within his own soul, has great difficulty in coping with a spouse who cannot know what he or she is going through. The result of that conflict can often lead to separation and divorce. Satan will use that situation to his advantage in turning the newborn back into the world if he can. Blessed is the new believer whose spouse seeks to understand him, comes along with him, or is already in Christ to aid him.

Satan is the instigator of many conflicts within the churches resulting in many divisions and clashes as he attempts to pit one believer against another as well as insert his own agents into the church in order to divide us and derail us from the faith. For that reason, the believer most often finds that the local church is a battleground of Truth against error rather than it being a place of peace and comfort for him. We should be aware of Satan's devices in that regard and fully expect this as we choose a church to attend lest we become gullible to every whim of doctrine and practice. Nevertheless, we must be willing to receive those believers who in the past have held false doctrine due to Satan's deception but have turned away from them — forgiving them for Christ's sake. "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2Co.2:11).

Finally, Satan has the specter of death with which to oppress us and overwhelm us inasmuch as death, the final enemy of man, will not be defeated until the final judgment has taken place (Re.20:14; 21:4). Satan realizes that the necessity of the death of the flesh is not something that we can easily comprehend, and it is such an important subject that death and the trials that lead up to it are the entire topic of the next section of this book.

If we do not realize that the source of human life is in the spirit, we may concentrate on the death of our flesh as our ultimate end. That can only lead to despair and a disregard for the wondrous salvation that we have received in Christ in order that our souls shall live on immortal until our bodies are redeemed in the final resurrection. The result of despair is a sense of hopelessness that prevents the child of God from reaching his full potential in the work that God has set out for him.

It is at this time that our intellect must overcome our emotions recognizing the attack and its source. It is at this time, that we must turn to prayer; at the very moment when we do not *feel* like prayer, we *must* turn to it! By so doing, we clear the debris and fog that confusion and depression has brought upon us. For, when we turn to prayer, we seek out our spirit, and pray to our Father through the Holy Spirit within us. “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ep.6:18).

Through all of this turmoil, the believer soon discovers what it is like to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. In the words of Jesus, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (Jn.15:18,19).

We must therefore “put on the whole armor of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ep.6:11). Here we must understand that we are not to conquer Satan in battle; we would be no match for him. In fact, Satan is already a defeated foe in the aftermath of Jesus’ atoning death for us and his resurrection from the dead. The Christian’s sole purpose in the battle is to take and maintain a stand against Satan’s devious methods launched against us. We are an occupying force to hold the ground of Christ’s victory over the world until the Victor returns.

### ***The Believer’s Array of Defensive Weapons***

Though Satan has a vast array of weapons and the battlefield is very dark, the believer is far from being defenseless. The Apostle Paul

in saying that we are to “take unto [us] the whole armour of God,” lists the spiritual weaponry that is available for each Christian’s use in the spiritual warfare that we each must face. After all, no one constructs a high-rise building without first counting the cost or goes to war without first counting his resources with which to engage in the conflict (Lu.14:28–31). Likewise, who can freely submit to Christ, considering the consequences of Holy Spirit rule, without examining the resources made available to him to withstand the inevitable attack of the enemy (Lu.14:33)? That brief but highly effective list of spiritual armament is to be found in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 6.

### **The Belt of Truth**

The Holy Spirit conditions our minds to search the things of God, and to perceive Truth, which holds our array of spiritual weapons together (Ep.6:14a). Truth is the “belt” that binds the weaponry to the believer. If we hold to a mere form of Christianity in erroneous imaginings, we have nothing with which to carry the spiritual weapons into battle. There is no other way to achieve true knowledge of Truth than through studying the Bible that is the Word of God. That is why those that are being regenerated spend considerable time searching the Scriptures for themselves with the aid of the Holy Spirit; Truth is essential.

Just as we must hold fast to Truth as the Holy Spirit reveals it to us in God’s Word, we must also seek to be ruled by the Spirit of God who takes the things of Christ found in the Word and makes them real to us. In doing so, we cannot be long led astray by the delusion that would deceive the very elect if it were possible (Mt.24:24). We must come to God on his own terms via the cross of Jesus Christ. We must enter through the veil only at God’s invitation, after having first received the cleansing of God’s Word, and carrying with us the blood of Christ that cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Only then, can we live and walk in the spirit. There are no shortcuts to Truth and spiritual maturity; there are only pits and snares.

As we are born from above in the spirit, we are to seek to be “filled with the Spirit” (Ep.5:18) and are told to “quench not the Spirit”

(1Th. 5:19). However, we are also told to *test* the spirits to see if they are of God. (1Jn.4:1). From the words of the Apostle John, we conclude that evil spirits will attempt to deceive the elect just as they deceive the lost of this world. However, we also are given a means of discernment. The decisive test is God's Truth that is to be found only in the Bible. We must study it, know what it says, and understand what it means. Jesus said that God desires to be worshiped not only in spirit but also in *Truth*. The deception of this age is the converse of Truth — it is the *lie*. The evil spirit that perpetuates that lie is the father of lies. We must worship God only in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the Truth of God's Word.

### **The Breastplate of Christ's Righteousness**

Bound up together by the belt of Truth is a whole array of spiritual weapons. First, we must wear the *breastplate of righteousness*, which is the righteousness of Christ (Ep.6:14b). We must wear his righteousness because we have none of our own. His righteousness will deflect the fiery darts of the evil one. Any breastplate that we may attempt to fabricate for ourselves out of a sense of self-righteousness may be easily penetrated by Satan inasmuch as it only advertises our ignorance, presumption, and vulnerability. The more zealous our presumption, the greater our vulnerability.

### **The Shoes of the Gospel**

We must also walk in the *shoes* of the “gospel of peace” wherever we may go in the world (Ep.6:15). The Gospel protects our daily walk from being contaminated with the things of the world. Everywhere we tread, we are to leave the “footprints” made by the Gospel behind. However, the Gospel shoes that we wear are not of our own fabrication. God has given them to us to wear that we may leave the imprint of Truth everywhere that we go. If we seek to give out a “gospel” that does not have its foundation in Truth, we only perpetuate a lie and nullify our stand.

We must therefore be completely honest with would-be converts — even if we must at times step on their bare toes. Failure to

tell the whole Truth most often only results in half-hearted conversions if indeed they are real conversions at all. It is all too easy to voice an intellectual statement of faith without having the presence of the Holy Spirit within to effect a true conversion. Lacking the power of the Gospel, we leave the new “convert” to walk into the enemy camp barefooted. Perhaps that is why we have so many “nominal Christians” today — those who we often hear about who “wear the name but do not share the shame.” For them, there is no war, because they remain firmly entrenched in Satan’s camp.

It is argued by some that to inform the unsaved of the adverse consequences of accepting Christ would only prevent many of them from ever accepting Christ at all. However, that concern is without foundation inasmuch as God does the calling, not we. We can only provide the facts of the Gospel and allow the Holy Spirit to do his work in those whom He sees fit to do so. In any event, God’s divine election cannot ever be overruled by the desires or efforts of man.

### **The Shield of Faith**

Our faith acts as a forward *shield* against all of the evil doubts that Satan may hurl against us (Ep.6:16). The soldier of Paul’s day carried a huge shield that covered his entire body. During an immense barrage of arrows by the enemy, he could completely hide behind it. Faith is our hiding place. True faith cannot be penetrated by Satan’s arrows and as we have discussed before is unshakable because of its intuitive nature. Unlike the breastplate of Christ’s righteousness, the shield of faith is held at arms length and can be moved side to side as required to defend all parts of the soul during the battle.

### **The Helmet of Salvation**

Our mind must be kept encased in the *helmet of salvation*, which is the true unshakable assurance of our personal redemption in Christ (Ep.6:17a). Without the assurance of salvation, we may come to doubt whether we are enlisted on the right side of the war. Assurance is another of the great doctrines along with salvation by grace alone

that was restored during the Protestant Reformation.<sup>126</sup> Elsewhere, Paul refers to this helmet as the “hope of salvation” (1Th. 5:8). Most certainly if we have no assurance that we are enlisted in Christ’s army as one of his own, we have no hope in the battle of salvation whatsoever.

### The Sword of the Word

Nor need we go into battle without any offensive weapon; the Word of God is also a spiritual sword to be used against the enemy when it becomes necessary (Ep.6:17b). Jesus used the Word of God against the wiles of Satan in just that way when He was tested by Satan in the wilderness (Lu.4:4,8,12). “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (He.4:12). As we can see, the sword of the Word is very sharp indeed. For that reason, the Word of God is not something to be played with and whirled around in a frenzy of activity, but must be used with all care and in all seriousness of mind. Even as we use that sword against the enemy the second sharp edge facing us reminds us to use it faithfully lest we ourselves become cut by the Truth of God’s Word.

### Necessity of Prayer

One of the most essential needs in human warfare is a means of communication to keep the soldier in contact with the command center. While not a weapon in the usual sense, it is very essential to the conduct of the war. The Christian also has a means of spiritual communications that is *prayer* (Ep.6:18). It does us no good to be out in the front lines in full battle array, if we have no specific sense of purpose or direction. Prayer keeps us directed as God commands.

Since God has ordained each of us to perform a different task in the conflict, it is not enough to merely follow the examples of other believers; their task and ours may be quite different. Though all

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<sup>126</sup> According to Cardinal Robert Bellarmine who was Pope Clemet VIII’s personal theologian in the 1600’s, assurance was the “greatest of all protestant heresies.”

believers' overall objective is the same, individual Christians are assigned different undertakings in meeting that objective. It is prayer that keeps us in touch with the throne of God in order that our task in the battle may be clear.

### *In Conclusion*

Though we are at war with the power of darkness because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are not without comfort (Jn.14:18). Jesus did not refer to the Holy Spirit as the Comforter without cause; He is our friend and constant companion. As the war breaks out within us, we find that we at first become confused. Nevertheless, as our mind responds to the Spirit of Christ we begin to know an inner peace: the peace that only comes from communion with our Creator (Jn.14:27) and the assurance of sins forgiven. We are, then, at war with the evil of the world, but at complete peace with God. Though we witness moral decay and violence all about us, we should never despair that the war is lost. We need not fear the power of the world, for Jesus, whom we serve, has already overcome the world (Jn.16:33). God becomes known as our benefactor and comforter not our judge, for his purpose is to reclaim the lost, not to destroy them (Mt.18:11; Lu.19:10).

That is why we did not know open warfare with God before we were saved. That does not mean that the unsaved man will not seek to deny God's existence or unilaterally seek to dethrone Him in the eyes of other men. Man constantly wages war against God (Ps.2:1-3). It is rather that God will not respond to the "dares" of the unsaved to intervene with violence to their puny efforts against Him. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps.2:4). When God has that man alone in his presence, with the great eternity spreading out before him, God will judge righteously. God is omnipotent; we could not stand against Him for one moment. God will not stay his hand forever on the earth; at the end of the age, God's wrath will fall on all who will not be justified to his holiness (2Pe.2:9).

God has not declared open warfare on mankind for a time, which He created for that purpose, so that man might be called to receive redemption by the Spirit of Christ (2Co.6:2). For that reason

when we did not have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, there was no open warfare in our soul. We went about our lives determining for ourselves (so we thought) what we would and would not do in control of our own destiny; we were so absorbed in self-satisfaction and the accolades of the world that we could not give a single thought to God's purpose for us. We were fully captivated by Satan because of our fallen spirit and the confusion of the world about us.

The open warfare that we now perceive as believers sets us against Satan against whom we are still, of ourselves, no match. Satan, having no benevolence for us, attacks us in his fury. However, we are allied with the God of Hosts through the Holy Spirit. We do not fight alone! On our behalf the mighty power of God is unleashed — not against us, but for us (Ro.8:31)! The ultimate victory has never been in doubt; it belongs to God (1Co.15:57). Praise God that He has called us to his side through his Son. We were lost, but now redeemed!

Man's will is the prize that Satan desires. He wishes us to serve him in body and soul as we once did. Even though our bonds have been cut away by the Holy Spirit, we still must contend with Satan who still seeks to keep us falsely imprisoned by our lack of understanding and prevent us from reaching others with the Gospel. The world that we live in is Satan's domain, but we shall not forever be under the world's influence. Only when our will is completely free from worldly influence and fully in accordance with God's will shall the battle be won. It should therefore be obvious that the spiritual battle will continue for all of our natural lives.

# **Section 8, Suffering, Illness, Death, and Resurrection**

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**Source of Human Suffering**

**Understanding Illness and Suffering**

**Doctrine of Death and Resurrection**

## **Chapter 8.1 Source of Human Suffering**

Nearly two-thousand years have passed since Jesus won out over Satan on the cross. That time was necessary so that as many as have been born in the flesh that God has also chosen in Christ may be born anew from above through the gift of the Holy Spirit for eternal life. The age of grace has allowed generation after generation of sinners to be born with the certain hope that many would come to accept Christ as their Savior. God is not willing that any of them so ordained should perish (2Pe.3:9). Nevertheless, the relatively brief extension of man's mortal life in the flesh has always been plagued with many tribulations from beginning to end. No man reaches the end of his life on earth without having experienced infirmity, pain, sorrow, sadness, and tribulation of every sort. While it is understandable that the unregenerated would continue to suffer so, we find that the redeemed in Christ often suffer as much or more. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the condition in which man finds himself, determine its underlying causes, and attempt to see it from God's viewpoint.

### ***Satan's Accusations***

Satan has no way to deny his consummate defeat by Jesus, for Jesus lives at the right hand of God the Father, and Satan is a condemned outcast whose destiny is sealed. Though his place in Heaven is forever denied, he still haunts the earth seeking whom he may consume in order to satisfy his own appetite for evil. Yet, he must still stand before God giving a full account of his evil actions whenever God commands it. As he does so, he takes occasion by that opportunity to hurl accusations against men and women on earth. Satan can still rightly point out that fallen men and women are no better than he before God's judgment seat since they are all equally guilty of sin, disobedience, and rebellion the same as he. He argues that if God would allow men to escape judgment, he must be acquitted as well.

However, that is an argument that Satan cannot possibly win. Jesus' resurrection from the dead in immortal flesh has proven God's

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ability to completely redeem men apart from also accepting the evil intent and works of Satan (which could not ever be). Those who now live as the resurrected body of Jesus are unique beings, being once born in the flesh as fallen men, yet now born again to a new life through the Holy Spirit from above. The redeemed are no longer linked with the root sin of Adam since they are no longer in him, but in Christ. They have covered over Adam's sin nature with Jesus' cloak of righteousness. Having been broken away from the tree of Adam as our forefather in the flesh, we have also made a clean break with the fallen Spirit of Adam, and we are no longer required to stand in the dock of judgment alongside Satan. We are no longer associated with his evil fall, but with Christ's death for the destruction of sin in the flesh and his resurrection from the dead that we may have eternal life through justification in Him.

Nevertheless, Satan continually accuses men of sin against God, and in particular, he accuses those who follow Jesus (Re.12:10). Satan has no need to accuse the man who rails against God and revels in his sin, because it is apparent that he is a condemned sinner. His works and prideful boasting clearly bears that out. God must ultimately judge him, just as He must judge Satan. However, the Christian rightly claims that his sins have been forgiven. Furthermore, the believer claims to be an entirely new creation in Christ. Unfortunately, the new life that we have in Christ is still contained in the same fleshly vessels of the old life as long as we are mortal. The old sinful nature, though correctly reckoned as dead, remains in our flesh as a dead weight that we carry about with us. For that reason, we cannot be perfect as long as we remain in the flesh, and we are, therefore, still subject to failure by yielding to the flesh at times and committing sin.

When a Christian commits sin, the Holy Spirit living within him is sorely grieved thus providing Satan with a clear basis for making an accusation against him. Paul in his epistle to the Romans asked, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect" (Ro.8:33)? This is a rhetorical question requiring an answer of, "no one." Though the charges cannot stick, because Christ died for all our sins past, present, and future, Satan nonetheless constantly attempts to

use the occasion of our sin to justify himself by leveling charges before God against the redeemed.

### *Tribulation of the Believer*

The soul of the born-again believer is untouchable by Satan, having been purchased by the blood of Christ for his own possession, but the mortal flesh that remains in this world is not protected. In fact, man's body that he occupies in this life is still condemned to die, as did Adam's body, by God's irrevocable decree (Ge.2:17). It is our soul (our personal identity) alone that will be saved at death to be joined to a new sinless physical body at the time of our future resurrection from the grave. The resurrected body to be occupied by Christians at that time will not be made of corruptible flesh as was the old one, but of an incorruptible flesh that is no longer subject to sin or the curse of death. The resurrection body will indeed be a physical body somewhat similar to the bodies that Adam and Eve occupied in their innocent estate before their disastrous fall, but it will be even more like that of the resurrected Christ that far exceeds that earlier estate in its glory.

When Satan rebelled against God, he was cast out of Heaven, and he must now roam the earth "as a roaring lion... seeking whom he may devour (1Pe.5:8). Satan's present earthly domain, which encompasses all of the things of this world, clearly extends to the flesh of all men and women both of the saved and the unsaved equally. It is for that reason that fallen man continually suffers much tribulation in this life. The consequences of sin will plague the unbeliever in his state of depravity. Satan often uses them as pawns in his ineffective efforts to obstruct God, but he does not need to bring any specific accusations against them or trials upon them. They willingly do that to themselves.

However, the natural consequences of past sins committed in the flesh as well as occasional stumbles into sin as a consequence of our mortal estate often continue to bring affliction upon the believer as well. Indeed, those that follow Jesus can actually suffer far more than the unbeliever because of the adversarial relationship that exists between Satan and the Christian. As we shall soon discover as we discuss the trials of Job, much of the believer's suffering is not a consequence of his sin at all, but is directed at him by the evil one

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because of the imputed righteousness of Christ that he has received as a covering for sin and which Satan hates.

Even so, Satan's testing of Jesus' own is not, as some might think, capable of two outcomes. Satan cannot ever win against the Holy Spirit, "because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1Jn.4:4). Those who are in Jesus cannot ultimately fail to hold to God's grace during trials, temptations, and tribulation, for they were born anew with his Spirit permanently living inside them. Those trials therefore are not allowed by God that we may fail and draw away from Him. Nor are they allowed by God in order to determine salvation or destruction for the believer who shall know no condemnation (Ro.8:1).

They are allowed by God to prove the power of God's grace to his own. It is a proving of God-given faith, not a testing of human will. The end result of those trials confirm in believers the surety of God's promise in order to give us the victory over Satan in our individual lives. Each victory over temptation and the weathering of trouble and illness in our lives through faith demonstrates the integrity of the Holy Spirit and his redemptive power in Adam's race. In doing so, it also turns Satan's accusing finger back upon himself! Who will dare to accuse those whom God in his holy righteousness and mercy has redeemed through his own sufferings on the cross?

Those who say that Jesus' followers will always live a prosperous and comfortable life and, if their faith is sufficient, will not ever suffer any illness just because Jesus healed so many physical infirmities during his earthly ministry are just not tuned to the main-stream of Scripture. One has but to look at the lives of men and women throughout the history of the early Church and, in particular, at the life of the Apostle Paul to realize that discomfort, troubles, and suffering are very much a part of the faith that we hold so dear. Jesus, Himself, said that in this life those who follow Him would experience tribulation (Jn.16:33). We therefore must not lose the hope of our salvation just because we experience illness and other troubles. Instead, we are to have confidence in the midst of our tribulations that Jesus has fully "overcome the world" for us (Jn.16:33).

For the present, then, we remain in Satan's domain, yet we live apart from it as those who are alien from it (Jn.17:15). Though we still walk and live in our flesh upon the earth, we now have our citizenship in Heaven and have therefore become strangers down here. The natural dwellers on earth cannot understand, what seems to them, our radical thoughts and actions. Our earthly bodies and our daily trials are still in Satan's domain along with them; only our spirits and our souls are set apart from it (Jn.17:16).

### *The Testing of Job*

We can find no better example of how Satan works in creating tribulation and illness for God's own than in the ancient book of Job. Job was said to be a "perfect" man (Jb.1:1). However, from this statement we cannot conclude that Job actually possessed his own perfect righteousness before God. It is evident that no man has ever stood truly perfect before God except one man: the Lord Jesus who had the express character and nature of God. Therefore, what we must understand from this verse is that Job was a good man by any human standard (i.e. blameless), he was upright in his actions toward others, he feared and believed God, and he attempted to avoid evil at every turn (Jb.1:1).

Job was not only a good man, he was also very rich and in good health. It appeared that God had highly favored Job because of his uprightness. In fact, when Satan presented himself to God, God pointed to Job as an example of an upright man. Satan however argued that Job's uprightness came about from a selfish motivation. That is, he suggested that Job believed and worshiped God only because God had protected him and made him wealthy (Jb.1:10). Essentially Satan was saying that God had bought Job's loyalty. Here in the oldest book of the Bible we observe Satan making an accusation against one of God's own, and in doing so also accusing God of wrong doing through favoritism (cf. Ac.10:34).

Notice that Satan was not accusing Job because he had committed any overt sin. Job was so upright in character that Satan had no grounds for such an accusation based on any specific personal sin in Job's life. Therefore, Satan's attack was not launched upon Job

because of some evil that Job had done. Rather, it was launched upon Job precisely because Job was upstanding, and God had blessed him in return. We must understand that blessings are bestowed upon mankind because of God's inherent goodness, not because of man's moral excellence. God did not owe Job anything merely because Job obeyed and honored Him; man should do no less than revere God in every way as his sole duty in life (cf. Ec.12:13). Job's great wealth was all a result of God's grace, not a reward for Job's works. Nevertheless, Job's response to those blessings was what Satan brought into question with his scathing accusation against Job's integrity.

### **Trial through Loss of Possessions**

Satan said, "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face" (Jb.1:11). God had "built a hedge" around Job; that is, he had protected Job from Satan because Job was a man of upright character who trusted Him. However, now we find that God removed the hedge from around Job that Satan might test him. We may ask ourselves why God would do this. Why would God concede to Satan's unfounded accusation since He is Sovereign in everything that He does? Certainly, God did not do that to satisfy some morbid curiosity in Him concerning Job, nor did He do so to give in to Satan that he might have his evil way. That would make God complicit with evil. Rather, God allowed it to prove the integrity and worth of Job; the ultimate beneficiary of the testing would be Job himself. Job's integrity could be proved only by allowing Satan to test him.

The testing of Job was similar to the testing of the Lord Jesus. Why was Satan allowed to tempt Jesus in the wilderness? Had Jesus done anything wrong? Of course not! Did God, the Father, have any doubt as to the integrity of Jesus? Of course not! Could Jesus have failed the test and fallen into sin? Of course not! The testing of Jesus served to demonstrate beyond question the power of the Holy Spirit within the life of Jesus and to establish Him as the perfect man, since only a perfect man could die for the sins of the whole world. Job however was not a perfect man before God, as we shall soon see, but the testing of Job ultimately proved the upright character, decency, and

honor of Job. In the process, Job was to learn much about God, about himself, and about his friends as well.

Job did not merely lose a few conveniences, he lost all of his wealth, the means for making wealth, his devoted servants and even his own flesh and blood as we read in Job 1:13–19. Job’s response to the loss of his possessions was to worship God and acknowledge that all the material substance that he had owned had come from God to begin with. For he said,

**“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly”** (Jb.1:21,22).

Job passed this test with amazing integrity. He acknowledged that nothing he possessed was ever his own to keep. First and foremost, they all belonged to God to do with as He willed. Rather than mourn over their loss, he praised God for allowing him to enjoy them in the time that they were in his care.

### **Trial through Personal Infirmary**

Not satisfied with merely taking Job’s possessions that completely failed to prove his accusation against him, Satan again accused Job saying,

**“Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face”** (Jb.2:4,5).

The thrust of this last accusation is that Job may have willingly surrendered his earthly possessions and that he suffered the loss of loved ones with aplomb, but that was only because he valued his own life and flesh much more. If the hedge was removed from around Job’s body and he was directly inflicted with illness and pain upon his person he would, in his despair, curse God. Again, we see that God removed his protection for a time and having done so, Satan inflicted Job with the most painful illness possible (Jb.2:7,8).

We should be quick to notice that although God at first gave Satan the power to destroy Job’s material wealth, He limited Satan to that alone and did not allow him to touch Job’s person (Jb.1:12). Later,

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after Satan's second accusation, God allowed Satan to inflict disease upon Job, but still restrained Satan against taking Job's life (Jb.2:6). The point to be made from this is that all of man's sufferings are by God's permission, but they are not of God's making since it is Satan who accuses us, not God. Man's fallen nature gives Satan the grounds that he needs for the accusation, and Satan's accusations bring tribulations upon us only because God wishes to prove our worth to Himself. Even so, Satan does not have a free hand to do whatsoever he wishes with the flesh of men.

### **Trial through Close Family Relationships**

So severe was Job's distress that his wife seeing his unending suffering said, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die" (Jb.2:9). Perhaps, we should not see her words as just being antagonistic toward God, but we should also see her despair of Job's suffering. She loved Job but could not bear to see his continuous and never-ending pain. Furthermore, we must realize that she had shared in Job's earlier material losses including the loss of her children. Now, she was watching Job waste away with a painful disease.

There can be no doubt that Satan was at work through Job's wife in an effort to induce Job to curse God. Satan often works through our loved ones and those who are closest to us in order to break us down and cause us to commit sin. What Job needed most from his wife was comfort and understanding. Job answered his wife with these words, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Jb.2:10).

As Christians living in today's world, we take no delight in the many adversities that come our way, and we most certainly do not enjoy disease. Sometimes, even as Job, our faith is tested through loss of our prized possessions, loss of loved ones, personal illness, pain, and suffering, and we even have our faith tested through our closest loved ones. While the proving of our faith is very desirable and to be looked forward to, we do not enjoy the means by which our faith is validated. Nevertheless, faith cannot be tested in any other way except through adversity.

Moreover, we have much more light today than did Job, since we live two thousand years *after* the cross. We have the reality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ while Job only had the unrealized promise of a future mediator who would stand between God and man. Yet, how many of us could hope to do as well as did Job in his circumstances?

### **Trial through Close Friendships**

When Job's three friends came to aid and comfort him, we witness the turmoil that was within Job in his response to their speaking. The three friends believed that Job had committed some terrible sin and that God was punishing him for it. Even today, many still think that illness is always the consequence of the commission of some terrible personal sin. If no sin is outwardly apparent, it must be some secret sin of which only the inflicted is aware. If we are right with God, it is reasoned, He will always bless us with wealth and health. However, we have seen in the first two chapters of Job that the exact opposite was certainly true concerning Job. His afflictions actually stemmed from his uprightness and integrity. Furthermore, it was Satan who inflicted him, not God. Job's integrity was at stake from Satan's accusations. God was actually defending Job by allowing him to be tested — though Job would never have believed it at the time.

It is quite true that God sometimes *does* send sickness to punish the ungodly. There are several examples of that to be found in the Old Testament (Le.26:15,16; De.28:61; Ps.107:17,18; Mi.6:13). However, that is certainly not universally true. It is a serious error to believe that sickness is always a judgment from God for some great sin. If we are Christians, our sins have been fully forgiven and no longer laid to our charge. Sometimes adversity is used as the means for our correction. Sometimes it is sent that we may seek to draw closer to God or turn us in the way in which He wants us to go. Sometimes it is sent to us in order that it might speak a silent message through forbearance in our trials to others near us. Sometimes it is sent for the glory of God as He sustains us through it all (Jn.9:1–3; 11:4).

In almost every case, it is far beyond our human understanding; we may not ever know why a disease strikes a loved

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one or us. We may never understand why a loved one has been taken away through death. It must be enough for us to know that the one who sends those sorrows our way also sent his own Son to die for our sins on the cross! Let's not be like Job's friends. Let us not accuse others of some hidden sin or lack of faith because they have encountered misfortune or suffer illness. Instead, we should make every effort to comfort them. Except for the grace of God, their troubles could very well be ours.

### *Job's Single Fault*

Job prayed and worshiped God when his possessions were taken, and when he was afflicted physically he did not "sin with his lips." However, we are not told what thoughts may have ravaged Job's mind. We must recognize that Job was sinless in all outward appearances, but he did have one serious fault that he shared with Adam's entire race: Job was a proud man — as in the human sense he had every reason to be. He had thought of himself as being perfect before God through faithfully worshipping Him and fearing Him.

Job continually defended his state of innocence before God in the presence of his friends even as his pride crumbled before their criticism. He cried out to be vindicated of the wrong accusation that had brought suffering upon him "not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure" (Jb.16:17). Apparently, Job had come to believe that he was suffering this illness at the hand of God because God *erroneously thought* that he was guilty of some sin in his life of which he was completely innocent! That only demonstrates how pain and suffering can affect our thinking. Surely, Job knew that God was omniscient knowing all things without any possibility of error.

### **Job's Standing before God**

Moreover, in his suffering, Job saw how little standing he, a mere mortal, had in relationship to Almighty God. Further, Job saw that what he needed was a representative before God (a "daysman" Jb.9:33) since he could never stand before God to defend himself. After all, God would hardly allow him to take his next breath (Jb.9:18). If he should speak of the strength of his argument, God is

certainly stronger. If he speaks of seeking justice, how can he even obtain an appointment before God in his court to plead his case (Jb.9:19)? Moreover, should that be possible, how could he ever plead his own case before God with a frail human tongue?

**“If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse [guilty]. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life”** (Jb.9:20,21).

### **Job’s Great Need for a Mediator**

Job needed someone who could present himself before God at his throne in Heaven and simultaneously put his hand out to Job as he sat there on the ash heap. Such a One would need to be unimpeachable when standing before God on Job’s behalf. Yet, the same would need to be a mortal man in order to present himself before Job on his own level with an understanding of his situation. No angelic messenger from God could provide Job the comfort and council he needed. Likewise, no mere man would dare stand before God’s throne on Job’s behalf. What Job needed was a mediator who could bridge the gap between God and man. Such a one did not exist upon the earth in Job’s day, but Job apparently was not ignorant of the fact that someday in the future that mediator would come upon the earth to represent mortal man before the Eternal God.

Job therefore looked forward to the day when the Anointed One would come. He saw the significance and great need of Him in the midst of his own sufferings for he said:

**“Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:”** (Jb.19:23–25).

Job declared that he knew that he had a mediator (next of kin; i.e. a man who stood between him and God); that this mediator lived in Job’s day (as the pre-incarnate Christ); and that his redeemer would appear and make his stand upon the earth in the “fullness of time” (Ga.4:4). If only Job could record his defense in hard stone until that

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far-off day came. Then, the mediator would read it, and Job would be vindicated! Here we see an early example of how the Old Testament saints looked forward to their redemption in Christ much as we look back to that date when Christ died for our sins on the cross.

Job not only looked for complete exoneration through the efforts of the coming mediator and deliverer, he also saw the future resurrection of his own flesh — even if his present illness should finally destroy his body in the grave.

**“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me” (Jb.19:26,27).**

Job was further convinced that he would see God in his own flesh, and with his own eyes. He would not see him as “another” that is, as a re-created being apart from the personality of the old Job, but as “himself” even though his heart and internal organs (his reins) were destroyed in the grave. He rightly understood that his person or soul would be retained. Job is of course referring to his physical resurrection from the dead. That was Job’s hope, and as he pointed out to his friends, their only hope as well. For, they were just as guilty before God as Job in their fallen nature and could not therefore point to Job as an example of God’s judgment of sin lest they also accuse themselves (Jb.19:28,29). He and they were in the same state of physical condemnation before God. Nevertheless, Job’s friends had succeeded in breaking down Job’s personal pride and his status with them.

### *Man’s Worthless Estate Compared to God’s Holiness*

At last, God spoke to Job and further humbled him with questions asking where Job was when all things were created, and what part had Job in any of those things? Did God ever ask for the council of Job (Jb.38:1–39)? Job then saw his own vileness before God: the same Job which in Job 1:1 was referred to as a good man who feared God and avoided evil. Here we plainly see the insignificance of man’s own works before God. Who among mortal men was more diligent in his works than Job? Yet, how far short of

God's perfection he was. Even the best man is nothing beside the glory of God (Ro.3:23).

Then, Job repented of his audacity and pride saying, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" (Jb.40:4). That is all that any of us have to say before a Holy God in our own defense — nothing. Job confessed his worthlessness before God, his pride fully broken, and in so doing he saw the grace and majesty of the Sovereign God extended toward him (Jb.42:5,6). Observe that God Himself finally came to Job's rescue, and because of Job's humility and repentance, He returned to Job his health and his wealth. Satan's testing of Job had ended in complete failure for Satan, but in a great victory for Job.

It was a humble Job that prayed for his would-be comforters — even while he was still suffering (Jb.42:10). Then his friends turned and comforted him in all the suffering that had befallen him. That is decent and right, and it is all that we can do for each other as Christians. We should pray for and comfort the ill, not accuse them of sin or a breach of faith lest we condemn ourselves in the process. Satan had lost in his accusation of Job; for salvation is always and ever shall be God's work on our behalf.

## Chapter 8.2 Understanding Illness and Suffering

Notwithstanding what we have learned from studying Job's trials, one of the principal difficulties that Christians have is reaching a personal understanding of the purpose of illness and death as they relate to themselves. We can see a purpose for illness and death that is directed toward the wicked, because we judge them as deserving of punishment. Notwithstanding, why should believing and devout Christians need to suffer illness and death? We even find that many believers suffer more than does the unbeliever who so often prospers even while he is committing evil (Ps.37:35). If the believing elect are truly the chosen "bride of Christ," how is it that Christ would allow them to go through such painful tribulations in their lives?

### *Accepting God's Way*

Certainly, there is no reason why we should ever hope to *completely* understand God's ways. God's ways are as far above our ways as is a star above a street light. We saw in the book of Job how little man's own thoughts and opinions matter before a sovereign God and that with good reason. Where were we when God created the heavens and the earth? Did He even ask us where to place a single star? Did we counsel God regarding how He was to make us, or how He was to form and deal with his creation including ourselves? If not, why should we think that we can council Him about anything now or reconcile his ways to our own?

### **Excessive Emphasis Placed on God's Love**

Because God's love was so evident in Christ's atoning death for us, Christians tend to focus entirely on God's love for mankind and in doing so forget about all his many other attributes (See Love, page 98). If a man perceives any purpose or activity of God that interferes with his narrow concept of an exclusively loving God, it must be immediately tossed out as erroneous. We cannot bear to think that God would ever judge and punish men for their sins — at least not while they remain on this earth. While it is true that God is love, to focus

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exclusively on that one attribute is to immediately deny God's holiness, power, and sovereignty.

### **Erroneous Views of Illness**

It is precisely because of that singular view of God that many churches and individuals have gone over both sides of the doctrinal ship regarding illness and death. Both sides represent extreme positions that deviate from Truth as found in Scripture. Over one side goes those who believe that illness is a matter of "chance happening" that God is powerless to control. After all, a loving God would not allow tribulation if He were able to prevent it, and He would not be loving if He was unwilling. This quite common supposition defies God's sovereign omniscience and omnipotence of which Scripture speaks so abundantly.

Over the other side go those who look at the healing miracles of Jesus when He was upon the earth and the healing miracles of his apostles, and they assume that Christians should not *ever* suffer illness. Jesus loves them too much for that. If they do suffer, it must only be because they are living in sin or are not properly exercising their faith in God's love. We see that this "loss of faith" which is referred to is not the loss of faith in Christ as their savior, but the loss of their faith to be healed. We must recognize that that kind of "faith" is held quite apart from any consideration of God's will and is therefore a "faith" without any substance. It merely becomes faith in "faith," which is nothing but presumption. It is supposed that one can just believe themselves to health, which is actually a form of metaphysical mind power, and the basis behind this concept is actually of occult origin.

### **God's Way Revealed in Scripture**

We must be careful not to leap into extreme positions just because we do not fully understand a particular matter of God's wisdom. When faced with eternal Truth, the workings of our temporal minds are just too shallow to envelop it. Accordingly, we tend to rationalize Truth to fit our own individual concepts of what is reasonable and fair or what we assume to be beneficial to us. If Truth doesn't fit our own sense of reason or justice, we have a tendency to

distort it or toss it out altogether. However, Truth must be accepted at face value regardless of our inability to grasp it.

Even so, God has not completely left us ignorant of his ways. He has chosen to instruct us through the written Word of Scripture that reveals his Truth in precise terms. He has also given it to us in a form that we can read and understand by rendering it to us through the minds of mortal men who were inspired by his Spirit. God has not chosen to disclose everything to us, just all that He wants us to know, which is all that we need to know. If we want to know anything, we must first be willing to accept God's revealed Truth at face value. Those details that are not disclosed by Him must be accepted through faith as being beyond our comprehension.

Therefore, we must turn to God's Word, the Bible, as our sole authority on this matter of illness and suffering just as we have every other doctrine. Scripture will not support either of the extreme views mentioned earlier though God is no more pleased with the anguish that men suffer than He is with their sin. We read that "Jesus wept" over the sorrow surrounding Lazarus' death, though He knew that the joyous outcome was to be the restoration of Lazarus to life (Jn.11:35). Therefore, God's attribute of Love is not in any way diminished.

We must understand that sin has a far worse impact upon our eternal destiny than does earthly tribulation no matter how severe. Tribulation only lasts for a season, but the consequences of sin are eternal. Unlike the faulty ways of man, God's ends always fully justify his means. God's means and his ends are not exclusive of each other, but work together for the good of all men who place their trust in Him (Ro.8:28). Saving faith is not invested in us to avoid the means, which are temporal, but to enable us to cling to the hope of eternal salvation and receive redemption from the eternal consequences of otherwise unforgivable sin.

### **Is Illness and Death Malevolent?**

Therefore, illness and physical death is as much in God's will for the Christian as it is for the wicked, though God means his own no harm in allowing it. It is a necessary end to all sinful flesh as a result of Adam's sin (Ge.2:17). Only those outside of Christ can find cruelty in

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that which God has necessarily willed for all mortal flesh. That is because their punishment is fully justified in their own eyes and they have no hope for life after physical death. Yet, Christians know that the bodies that we live in are only temporal and must soon be discarded.

Christians can never consider physical death as an act of evil since by passing through death's door we who believe in God's Son receive the inheritance of eternal life, which is the fulfillment of the promise of God toward us. It is indeed a comforting fact that we cannot truly receive the inheritance that we have in Christ Jesus as long as we live in these corruptible bodies lest we spend eternity in pain and depravation (1Co.15:50). As we continue to live in them for the present, we have the *promise* of the life to come, but can not yet know the *reality*.

When our bodies die, they will be buried in the grave as corruptible flesh to rejoin the elements of the earth from which they came (Ge.3:19). Nevertheless, in that decaying flesh is the pattern, the seed, of the body yet to come. In that spring of the resurrection, when the body of the redeemed individual is regenerated and raised out of the earth, it will be comprised entirely of new, sinless, and incorruptible flesh (1Co.15:42). The painful experience of physical death will then be submerged in the joy of eternal life. For the child of God, the sting of death is swallowed up in the victory of the resurrection (1Co.15:54)!

While thoughts of resurrection are joyful, it is not pleasant to think about the death that must precede it. We are accustomed to living here on earth in these mortal bodies, flawed though they may be by sin and suffering. For that reason, death will never be something that even we Christians will ever truly look forward to, but it is something that we can learn to accept with an overwhelming and certain hope of one day living in that wonderful resurrection body that will know no pain and can never ever die.

### *The Source of Life Is Spirit, Not Flesh*

Where men most often make the greatest error is in assuming that the source of life is within their flesh. To do so is to place too

great an emphasis upon our physical bodies. While we live and move about in them, we do not receive life or have permanence of our being in them. The human body is but a physical mechanism that our soul occupies on this earth and which the spirit makes alive. The source of life is in the spirit and our soul must continually look to the spirit for life, not the body. The natural body of man is temporal and designed to last for a span of time, but the spirit and soul are designed for eternity.

### **The Mortal Body**

If Christians should place no confidence in the ability of our flesh to please God, why should we be overly concerned with indulging it as if we still believed that our eternal destiny depended upon it? That is not to completely disregard the mortal body as being evil however since it is truly a wonderful creation of God. We are truly "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps 139:14) as the psalmist David said.

When Adam was created, his physical body was sinless and perfect. However, when he sinned it was his flesh that carried out the act of disobedience. Becoming spiritually naked, his flesh became dominated by death wherein it became subject to decay. While we should reasonably care for our flesh on this earth in order to carry out the necessary acts of the will for its survival that we may serve God in them, we should not let it rule over us. We should realize that flesh and blood could never have an inheritance in the Heavenly Kingdom because of its corruptible state (1Co.15:50).

While we are yet in this world, we place a great emphasis on our flesh over our spirit in spite of the fact that we should rightly consider that our flesh was crucified and died with Christ nearly two thousand years ago when sin was judged in his flesh. Therefore, when we consider the well-being of our souls as being directly related to the well-being of our flesh, we actually deny the atoning work of Christ. For, "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Jn.17:3). To know Christ is to know life.

If we seek only to please the temporal life of this world that resides in the flesh, we shall ultimately lose our lives because our life

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will end when our body dies. Conversely, if we seek eternal life, we shall save our lives because our souls shall continue to live on through our regenerated spirit (Jn.12:25). Rather than consider only the well-being of our flesh, we should place a much greater emphasis upon the well-being of our soul, and that is determined totally by our spiritual relationship with Christ.

### **Pain the Herald of Death**

Why then are we still so often concerned with our flesh if there is no life in it? One answer is to be found in the pain that we must undergo in this life. Physical tribulation is not an experience to which we can look forward with any pleasure. Not only do we suffer the pain itself, but that pain also proclaims the mortality of our flesh, which is the result of our sin nature. It is often only then that we begin to realize that our flesh cannot be depended upon to perpetuate our life. It is then that we turn to God and seek something more than just relief from the pain of the moment. We begin to seek eternal answers to eternal questions. We are then receptive to that “small still voice” of the Holy Spirit who is calling us (1Ki.19:12).

Through prolonged suffering, God often reclaims those who are his own as an act of mercy that ends in physical death. How could we dare to blame God that the flesh of that person has suffered so, knowing that tribulation and death must be the way of all sinful flesh without exception? The important question, rather, is whether that person who occupied the flesh has eternal life with God. Isn't that the question we should be asking ourselves every waking minute of every day: not is it well with our flesh, but is it well with our soul?

### **Error of Self-Affliction**

Nevertheless, we should not look upon tribulation as something to be pursued. Since we are in Christ Jesus as one to whom all sins have been forgiven, we cannot hope to perform an act of penance for our sins by self-inflicted illness or tribulation. In doing so, we would find ourselves siding with Satan, our accuser, in condemning ourselves. Rather than denying the flesh, we would be wallowing in its dross. As we have clearly seen before, there is no

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amount of human suffering that can justify us before God; Jesus has already suffered it all for us! God never places illness or death on his own people as an atonement for their sins because they are already fully atoned for in Christ. We should never undertake punishment at our own hands in an attempt to “make up” for the commission of any sin, but rather seek and receive forgiveness of all our sins in Christ.

Moreover, if God puts before us a physical remedy or medical procedure for our illness and we say, “no, God wants me to be sick because He has not healed me supernaturally,” and then we refuse God’s providence so as to prolong our suffering, we find that we are opposing God’s will for us. Surely, Satan laughs at us for our self-condemnation. We may at times need to suffer at God’s hands because of the necessary proving of our faith, but never for our sins, since we are in Christ (Ro.8:1). Charles Wesley wrote in one of his many hymns,

**“No condemnation now I dread, I am my Lord’s and He is mine; alive in Him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine”** (*And Can It Be?*, Charles Wesley).

Illness and tribulation may often be a natural consequence of sin as we have seen, but they certainly are not a remedy for it! To deliberately bring illness or injury upon ourselves as penance for our sins is similar to continuing “in sin, that grace may abound” (Ro.6:1) or doing evil that good may come of it (Ro.3:8). In attempting to suffer for our own sins, we commit an even worse sin by denying the sufficiency of the suffering of Christ on our behalf. We are then fallen from grace as surely as if we seek our own righteousness under the Law.

### ***Our Physical Condition a Matter of God’s Will***

Whether our body is well or ill is not determined solely by the condition of the flesh, but is determined by the will of God. God is able to sustain our flesh until He wills us to leave it behind to merge again with the elements of this earth. If we are well, it is God’s will; if we are sick, it is God’s will; if we live, it is God’s will; if we die, it is God’s will (Ro.14:8). If we are true believers in Jesus and know of his own sufferings in this life, it is impossible to argue with the will of

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God regarding the tribulations that come our way knowing that God so loves us, that Jesus suffered and died for us (1Pe.2:21–23; Jn.3:16). Nor should we think that we, who believe, have had something very strange and terrible happen to us because we suffer tribulation in the flesh (1Pe.4:12,13). It is not strange at all since it is quite common to the corruptible flesh of all mortal men. The mortal flesh of the redeemed is no different than is the flesh of the ungodly since both are sentenced to death.

### God, the Refiner of Men

Our God is as a refiner's fire spoke the prophet Malachi, "and who shall stand when he appeareth" (Mal.3:2)? No man could look upon the face of God and live, let alone stand upright before Him. For that reason, God placed Jesus as an intermediary between Himself and us — not that the fire could not touch our flesh, but that we may stand before Him in the midst of that fire cloaked in the righteousness of Christ (Da.3:23–27). We are like gold ore that is refined in the fire. The impurities are removed only as the gold is heated. Therefore, the same fire, which brings destruction upon the dross, also purifies the metal.

So it is with man: the fire of God brings destruction to the wicked who even on their death beds revile and curse Him, but it brings purity and understanding to those who praise Him even in the hour of their greatest tribulation. Though illness and death are physically the same for the Christian and the unbeliever, the effects are quite the opposite. When the dross is burned from the godless, nothing remains but ashes. When the dross is burned away from the believer in Christ, there remains a faith and hope that is as hard as steel and as pure as gold. Even as Job in his suffering, let us have sufficient faith to say about God, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Jb.13:15)!

Therefore, just because a believer becomes ill and dies of a terrible disease, we cannot say that he has been forsaken of God or that he has lost his salvation. Since the flesh of all men must die, and disease is a means to that end, we cannot believe that disease will not also prevail in a man of faith. God does prolong the lives of many, but only as He chooses. An example is seen when Jesus chose to have

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John outlived Peter (Jn.21:16–23). Jesus asked Peter; “If I will that he [John] tarry til I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me” (Jn.21:22). Peter had just been told how he would die in order to glorify God. It was none of his concern how Jesus would make use of John’s life. Peter suffered martyrdom; John suffered exile, illness, and old age. God has an individual plan for each of our lives, and it is up to Him to determine each life’s length that His purpose for us will be fulfilled.

God is not without sympathy for the necessary pain and sorrow that we must undergo. He is an expert refiner. He will not press us beyond that which we can bear so that our faith and hope would evaporate in the heat. His grace will always be sufficient to sustain us in our time of need (2Co.12:9). The impurities of this mortal life shall one day be separated from the believer, and his eternal soul shall shine forth like refined gold (1Pe.1:7). In the words of the old Hymn:

**“When thru fiery trials thy pathway shall lie, My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply. The flame shall not hurt thee — I only design Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine”** (*How Firm a Foundation*).

In that glorious day, when Jesus returns for His Church, the bride of Christ shall stand before the throne of God, cleansed by the blood of Jesus, purified by the refining fire of God, dressed in garments of white, and wearing a crown of purest gold (Re.4:4). Can there be any spot or stain in Her that God Himself has made pure?

### *In Conclusion*

In this and the previous chapter, we have seen that illness and suffering in the human race is a direct consequence of man’s sin against God. That is, when Adam sinned, man’s body became subject to injury and deterioration. Having said that, we should understand that illness is rarely a direct punishment imposed upon man by God for *individual* instances of sin, though various physical injuries and ailments can result as a *natural\_consequence* of some of our sinful actions.

However, God often does use illness to chasten the believer and to turn his mind toward Him. In addition, Satan can use illness in

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an attempt to get man to blame and curse God for their condition as we saw with Job. Satan can also manipulate illness in our physical bodies to deceive man into worshiping him through apparent supernatural “healing” of illnesses which Satan himself has brought about and then removes. However, there is one final and absolute purpose for human illness, and that is to bring forth the separation of the soul from the mortal body. That is what we refer to as death and is in the exclusive providence of God alone.

## **Chapter 8.3 Doctrine of Death and Resurrection**

All men have one great fear without exception. For, though man may elevate himself in this life through riches and fame, he cannot forestall the inevitable moment of his death (Ec.3:2,19). Death is described in Scripture as the final enemy of man (1Co.15:26). Just what is it that man sees so frightening about death? We shall fully discuss that fear in this chapter as well as how it can be overcome in complete victory.

### ***Death is Universal***

There is certainly no escape from death, because it is universal to *all* men. We shall in no way escape it (Ec.8:8). For “it is appointed unto men once to die...” (He.9:27). Death is the final enemy of man because death cannot be destroyed until the corrupted flesh of mankind ceases to exist so that it can no longer offend God. Death must reign until God’s holiness is fully satisfied for Adam’s offence.

Death is not always brought about by disease as we discussed at length in the previous chapter. It can also be brought about by the violence of others including acts of war. Natural disasters such as hurricanes or earthquakes also claim lives. We can die because of a failure in human judgment, others or ours, such as when we are driving an automobile or flying in an airplane. Death can come about as a result of the mechanical failure of one of man’s many gadgets ranging from elevators to space ships.

The possibilities for “accidental” death are far too numerous for us even to begin to mention them all. Of course, we must understand that there are no accidents as far as God is concerned. There are only incidents that He has brought about or has allowed to happen. Though it may not always appear like it from man’s point of view, God is always in control of every situation. Whether by illness or by specific incident, God alone has the power to determine the time for the soul’s separation from the mortal body.

### Death of the Unbeliever

The natural man fears the non-continuance of his being; the destruction of his very essence, the very core of his being lost for eternity (Ec.3:20,21). He fears an endless span of time in which he has no conscious awareness. Death is like a door into a dark room that opens and allows, yes, demands entry but provides us no exit. All that we have known and now are shall cease to exist forever many think when we pass through that door.

To some unbelievers, the thought of that non-existence may seem a comfort as long as it is somewhere in the distant future. It allows them to do as they wish in this life without the fear of any eternal consequences. Those are fatalists, which say that since death is both natural and inevitable, we should accept it as readily as we do birth and life itself. As a Shakespearean character put it, "It seems to me most strange that men should fear; Seeing that death, a necessary end, Will come when it will come" (*Julius Caesar, Act ii. Sc. 2*).

Since those persons do not believe in God, they have no fear of eternal judgment and are unconcerned about any prospects after the death of their mortal bodies. In that, they are like blind sheep being led to the slaughter. If warned of eternal judgment, they willfully deny it and ignorantly continue in the ways of sin until they expire their last breath and find that it is too late. Hoping for a blissful non-existence they shall, instead, find that they are facing judgment followed by an eternity of hopeless awareness in intense suffering.

Conversely, to other unbelievers, death is a dread most terrible. It is a subject to be avoided or even joked about, so that one does not need to face it. Satan continually tells us that this life is all that there is, and that there is nothing beyond. The world tells us that we should enjoy her pleasures to the utmost, for we only go around once! Better that we encourage frivolity and live it up, "because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry..." (Ec.8:15).

Many live only to go from one wild party to another, "But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell" (Pr.9:18). In that, there is no hope for anything beyond

the grave. Those sounds ring in our ears from everywhere today as we are continually bombarded by the lies of Satan. As long as men believe his lies, they are his slaves and remain blinded to Truth.

But, “Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice” (Pr.8:1)? Doesn’t wisdom shout in their ears at every turn of the way that they are being deceived (Pr.8:2,3)? Why then do they not hear? Are they already so deep in the pit that the sounds of wisdom cannot reach them? Instead, they continue to listen to that imposter of true wisdom that says, “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant” (Pr.9:17). Can we really steal from God that which He has so lovingly provided, gorge ourselves on them, abuse their purpose, hear only the siren call of this world to satisfy the flesh, and think that He does not see?

He that accepts the world’s invitation comes only to grief and the expanded knowledge of this world only increases his sorrow (Ec.1:18). The more we know, the more we realize that which we do not know. They believe in only that which they can observe and enjoy with the physical senses of their bodies, but what when their bodies are no more? With what senses will they then perceive? In what can they then find any joy?

### **Death of the Believer**

Even to the believer in Christ, death can be a frightening prospect. In death, we must leave all of our worldly possessions behind. Our work, whether mundane or religious, must end. All our loved ones who remain behind can no longer provide us comfort and fellowship, nor we them. The entire physical world that we have known will be cut off with the death of our physical bodies. Though we have the certainty of life with Christ, we are mostly ignorant of what that existence will be like. We also face the prospect of standing before Christ and giving an account of our life. Not that we need fear judgment for sin if we have placed our trust in Him, but that we may be ashamed of our conduct in areas where we have fallen short of our responsibilities to Him as members of the body of Christ.

When illness leading to death comes upon us, we may not know God’s purpose, whether in our lives or the lives of others. Nor is

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the physical pain felt any less in the believer than in the unbeliever. Who can comfort us in the pain that racks our bodies? Who can get through to a mind that barely perceives life at all? In that hour, we can but cling to faith alone — not some great faith that we have achieved through great effort, but a God-given faith — the faithfulness of God toward us.

When referring to the time when we must leave this mortal body (2Co.5:1–4), Paul said, “whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord” (2Co.5:6). That is true because of the corruption of our mortal flesh. Yet, due to the encouragement of our faith, we are “willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2Co.5:8). Therefore, we can be fully present with God only when we are finally absent from our old body. Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Ph.1:21). That is, the fruit of his physical labor was to serve Christ through the preaching of his Gospel, but to die was to find himself in the very presence of Christ (Ph.1:23).

### *Death is Release of the Spirit from the Mortal Body*

Death (Gr. *thanatos*) as it is most commonly employed in New Testament Scripture can best be defined as “the separation of the soul (the spiritual part of man) from the body (the material part), the latter ceasing to function and turning to dust.”<sup>127</sup> For the soul to remain in those mortal and corrupt bodies as they lay decaying in the grave for eternity would not only offend God, but also keep us forever separated from our Creator and the purpose for which He originally created us.

When our spirit is evicted upon the demise of our flesh, our soul exists in an abnormal state greatly desiring to be housed once again (Re.6:9–11). Are we really so attached to our mortal flesh? Yes, for it is difficult for us to envision a reality of existence without a body of flesh. We actually fear to be “unclothed,” that is, to exist without the covering of our bodies that have served our every need for so long (2Co.5:1–4). Yet, as long as our soul exists, we exist as a unique salient being.

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<sup>127</sup> *Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, W.E. Vine

On the earth, the natural man is housed in a body of mortal flesh attended by a corrupted spirit. Immediately after the death of the body, the soul continues to exist without flesh and the life-giving spirit is likewise unaffected. In the believer, that spirit has become one with the Holy Spirit through our being fully identified with Christ. In the unbeliever, however, the spirit remains corrupted. Either way, man continues to exist when his soul is separated from mortal flesh after its death, and that thought is not at all comforting to the unbeliever. Even to the believer it is difficult to contemplate.

Listen, then, to wisdom — not the wisdom of this world that is a lie, but the wisdom of God! Life is not flesh and blood, but in the spirit! Flesh has never been the source of life, but only a physical dwelling for the immortal soul here on earth. Jesus said, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (Jn.6:63). The spirit of man is housed in that vessel of human flesh, but it is not made of the same substance. Therefore, though our flesh must die, our spirit continues to exist and our soul lives on.

The spirit, which is the life-giving essence of the soul, leaves the body at the time of physical death. Even when Jesus died on the cross, it is recorded that “he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (that is, released his spirit) (Jn.19:30). It is important to take note that we do not have the authority to tell our spirit to leave our body. As we have seen, that moment is in the providence of God alone. Nevertheless, Jesus was in full control when He dismissed his spirit because He had been given that express authority by his Father (Jn.10:17,18). He gave his life only when He knew that his atonement for all sin was completed through his suffering (Jn.19:30). He did what only God can do.

### **The Mortal Body Sleeps in Death**

As believers, we should not imagine that our physical bodies will be immediately restored to us at the time of our death new and incorruptible, for even Christ was without his body for a time as it hung lifeless on the cross and as it lay in the tomb. In the same way,

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we will also know a time<sup>128</sup> when we shall be without our flesh as it goes into a dormant state somewhat similar to natural sleep. Unlike natural sleep however, the mortal body will go through a transformation of decay in order that its basic elements may be later reconstructed into an immortal body when it awakes in the resurrection.

In the meantime, we shall not wander about in darkness dreading the final judgment, for we will be with the Spirit of Christ who will not desert us even at the end of and beyond our earthly lives (He.13:5; Jn.14:16–18). We shall immediately find ourselves in the very presence of Christ Himself. There we shall patiently wait with certain hope for the resurrection wherein we will be made perfect and complete in Him through that new sinless physical form.

The often-mentioned exception to this process is those believers who are alive when Christ returns for his Church. While, even those will have their spirit separated from their natural bodies (i.e. death), they will *immediately* receive the new body in resurrection. That is not so much an exception to death, but an exception regarding the length of earthly time that the natural body sleeps before the new body comes forth. That translation will occur, as the Apostle Paul put it, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1Co.15:52).

Though it appears to those that remain on earth that we have been destroyed with our body in the grave, the body only sleeps, and our soul will be at rest — though fully awake and aware — in the very presence of God awaiting his last call to the elect upon the earth. We should not ever think that physical death ends the conscious state of the believer (or even the unbeliever for that matter). Rather, only the body sleeps, when the spirit leaves it. In as much as life is in the spirit, the soul does not sleep, but is still aware of its being.

We have seen the sleep of death demonstrated in several of Jesus' miracles where the dead were raised. In the Gospel of Luke

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<sup>128</sup> Though time will pass on earth, in the eternity of Heaven it will seem like a mere instant much as it shall be with the living elect who will be transformed at Jesus' coming to earth for his Bride (cf. 1Co.15:52).

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Chapter 7, Jesus demonstrated his power over death itself by raising the widow's son. This man was being carried on a bier for burial. As soon as Jesus spoke the words "young man, I say unto thee, Arise" the spirit of the man returned to his body, and he sat up and spoke (Lu.7:14,15). To those observing, it would have seemed as if the young man had merely awakened from sleep and arose to begin a new day.

Again, we see physical death related to sleep when He raised the daughter of Jairus. This account is in Matthew Chapter 9, Mark Chapter 5, and Luke Chapter 8. Jesus told the mourners, "weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth" (Lu.8:52). Now, we cannot assume by this that the young girl was merely sleeping in a natural way that we usually mean by sleep. Rather, Jesus was saying that her body was asleep, because her spirit was absent. Flesh without spirit is dead. All present "laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead" (Lu.8:53). Yet, when Jesus took her by the hand, and "called, saying, Maid, arise" (Lu.8:54) we are told that her spirit returned in her and she arose (Lu.8:55).

The most astounding example of Jesus' power over death is, of course, to be found in his own resurrection, for what mere man can raise his own dead flesh from the grave. His own resurrection was previewed in the restoration of the spirit of Lazarus to his physical body as related in John Chapter 11. We must understand however that when Jesus raised Lazarus and others in his earthly ministry, He only enabled the mortal body to resume physical life for a time by recalling the departed spirit. In that sense, they were not yet resurrected from the dead in incorruptible flesh and needed to face physical death again in the future.

Lazarus' two sisters sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was ill (Jn.11:3). Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus; yet, He delayed going to Bethany for two days (Jn.11:6). Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (Jn.11:11). Since the disciples misunderstood his words, He said plainly: "Lazarus is dead" (Jn.11:14).

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### Man's Spirit Must Return to God

We may well ask, where does the spirit go when it leaves the body? We find some beginning evidence in the book of Ecclesiastes. We are told that all men “are of the dust, and all turn to dust again” (Ec.3:20). That, of course, refers only to man's mortal body. In the next verse the question is posed, “who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward” (Ec.3:21)? The body and spirit are separated in death, and we know that the body goes down into the grave. How do we know where a man's spirit goes, and whether it goes upward toward heaven? The question is answered directly in Chapter 12: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ec.12:7). Jesus Himself said just before He dismissed his Spirit, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Lu.23:46). When the spirit leaves the body it must return to God, and it must know his presence because it was created of a similar (spiritual) substance by Him.

### *The Physical Resurrection of Man*

Therefore, we must not think that physical death is the annihilation of our being such that we shall become lost because God did not save our flesh from entering the grave. We are neither dead nor lost from God when we pass through that portal. Our spirit lives on, our soul is eternal, and we wait only for the resurrection of our bodies. If we are in Christ, we shall be raised bodily to enjoy eternal life in God's glory and presence.

Many erroneously think of the resurrection of man as taking place only in a spiritual sense, but we have already seen that the spirit has never died with the body. It therefore has no need to be resurrected. Furthermore, since resurrection literally means “to stand up again,” we know with certainty that we are talking about the physical resurrection of the human body. Otherwise, the word has no meaning at all. We must ask how a purely spiritual being can “stand up” or for that matter take on any other physical position? Jesus promised that He was going to prepare a place for us (Jn.14:2) before He left the earth bodily. Since Jesus is resurrected and ascended in the

flesh, we must know that He enjoys a *physical* existence and habitation. It follows then that the place that He prepares for his own is also a physical one.

### Two Resurrections

Many theologians see only one general resurrection occurring at the end of time in which the elect (sheep) are placed on Jesus' right hand to inherit the kingdom and the reprobate (goats) are placed on his left to be cast into everlasting punishment (Mt.25:33). However, both lost and saved individuals are commonly referred to metaphorically as sheep elsewhere in Scripture, never goats. In the context of this and surrounding verses, Jesus is clearly referring to the judgment of nations or ethnic groups (Gr. *ethnos*) that have either nurtured or deprived multitudes under their leadership with regard to the Gospel of Christ. The judgment of nations will take place at the beginning of Jesus' thousand-year reign on earth (Mt.25:31-32).

Other verses of Scripture definitely refer to two separate resurrections (cf. Re.20:4-6). The first resurrection began with the resurrection of Christ Himself and it includes all who have died in Him as well as those who shall be caught up in the transport of his living Church from the earth as the present age comes to an end. The second resurrection is to take place only after the thousand-year reign of Christ ends just prior to the beginning of the eternal ages.<sup>129</sup>

#### *Resurrection of the Elect (First Resurrection)*

If we have received the Spirit of Christ within our souls, we are no longer as natural men. All things have become new. Our own spirit is still powerless, our flesh is still destined to die, but we are *no longer alone*. For with our spirit is the same Spirit who has won out over death, the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, when we die will we who believe wander about forever unclothed and without hope? In no way, for infused and identified with our spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. Since the

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<sup>129</sup> This discussion was necessarily kept brief here and is mentioned only to obtain a better view of the physical resurrection of man. A more thorough discussion of the doctrines of the last days shall be found in Book III of this work.

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grave could not hold the mortal flesh of Jesus, and since his Spirit is fully identified with our spirit, how can the grave forever hold our flesh? Therein is our wondrous and certain hope: that the Holy Spirit, whom we have received, will in the same manner raise our bodies from the grave in the last days fully transformed into incorruptible flesh.

For, our old bodies shall flower like a seed that has been planted. Out of the corruption in the earth shall come forth our new body. We shall be raised incorruptible by the power of God. Even as Job, we can say with assurance: “though after my skin worms destroy this body [in the grave], yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Jb.19:26). For, we shall stand before God in incorruptible flesh, and with the Spirit of Christ indwelling us. How, then, could God ever condemn us that he sees as his own sons? No more can Satan accuse us in that day. We shall be fully justified to God by the wondrous works of Jesus in whose righteousness we stand.

The first resurrection consists of all the Old Testament saints that had looked forward to salvation in Christ who were raised when Christ was raised (Mt.27:52,53), the Tribulation saints who shall suffer martyrdom under the antichrist,<sup>130</sup> as well as those believers in the present Church age at their appointed time.

### **All Believers to be Transformed**

We should not have sorrow for those who have died, because their spirit has left and their body decayed into ashes before Jesus has returned to call up the Church into his presence. Nor should we think that only those living in the flesh at the time of his return will know the glory of a flesh made incorruptible. For, we are told, “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1Th.4:14). Just because there will be living saints at the time of Jesus’ return is no cause to believe that those who have died will be forgotten or left out (1Th.4:15).

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<sup>130</sup> The antichrist and his reign during the great tribulation shall be discussed fully in Book III of this work.

Rather, upon hearing Jesus' call to his own, "the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1Th.4:16). The souls and spirits of those who died trusting Christ shall return with Him to be joined to their resurrected bodies. Therefore, whether we, being a soul made alive by the Holy Spirit, are in the mortal body or absent from it at Jesus' return, we will all be "caught up" with Him together into God's eternal presence (1Th.4:17; Ac.1:9). "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1Th.4:18).

"The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible." In that day when Jesus returns and calls forth his own, we shall all be raised in a new body, or our living bodies shall immediately be changed (transformed) into incorruptible flesh, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1Co.15:52). Then, we shall praise God in our flesh: not the corruptible flesh which we had as mortals in this life, but housed in incorruptible flesh which has been raised from the kernel of our old flesh.

### **Nature of the New Body**

What form will we take on in Heaven? To believe that we will become spirit beings in Heaven and no longer inhabit material bodies is simply not Scriptural. Angels are spirit beings (although we see they can take on the appearance of human form for a time) whereas man is of a different order of creation that God has designed to function in a material universe.

However, we shall not be carnal beings either. We found that God is a spirit and has no material substance (see page 86). Man, however, will have a *spiritual body*. A body by definition is a physical structure of material substance. As we mentioned before, the Greek word for resurrection as used in Scripture means "to stand up" so that the resurrected being must have a physical body. There is no question that Jesus Christ had a physical body after his resurrection. Jesus told his troubled apostles, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Lu.24:39). We shall be like Christ in our resurrection. Therefore, we will have a physical body, but one that is spiritual in disposition rather than carnal.

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Paul answered the question of the nature of the resurrected body in his first epistle to the Corinthians (1Co.15:35–58). He makes it clear that our bodies are sown as corruptible flesh, but raised an incorruptible body (1Co.15:42). “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (1Co.15:44). While in this mortal body we maintain the image of the earthly (i.e. Adam), our resurrected body shall bear the image of the heavenly (i.e. Jesus Christ; cf. 1Co.15:49). As we once bore the image of Adam in sin to death, we then shall bear the image of Christ in righteousness to eternal life. Our mortal body came from Adam who “was made a living soul”; our spiritual body will come from Christ who was made a “life-giving spirit” (1Co.15:45). Our bodies will be transformed into incorruptible flesh that cannot feel pain ever again. Nor can we ever know death again, for we will be eternal beings even as Jesus is eternal.

Our bodies shall be made up of flesh and bone, but we shall not have the blood of this old life in our bodies; the life of mortal flesh is in the blood (Le.17:11,14). Jesus’ mortal blood was shed for us on the cross and offered up to God on the mercy seat. When Jesus invited Thomas to thrust his finger into his wounded hands, and thrust his hand into the spear wound in his side, we find that Thomas did not need to do that. When Thomas simply saw the wounds of Jesus he believed and said, “My Lord and my God” (Jn.20:28). The blood of mortal man cannot extend into Heaven, but must remain with the earth. For “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1Co.15:50). We shall be completely new creatures in Christ. “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Ep.5:30).

### **The Judgment Seat of Christ**

All believers must then stand before Christ in the first resurrection to give an account of their deeds done on earth (Ro.14:10–12; 2Co.5:10), but there will be no question of condemnation since their sins have been fully forgiven (See Ro.8:1; Re.20:4-6). Instead, many shall be rewarded for their service (Re.22:12).

### **Declaration of Victory over Death**

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall it be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1Co.15:54)! We can clearly see this: that mortal death, rather than bringing destruction, brings forth eternal life. Therefore, we in that day may shout: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory” (1Co.15:55)? For, death cannot have any strength against us except in sin, and the strength of sin is in God’s law, the Ten Commandments, the Law of Moses, which condemns all men (1Co.15:56). Nevertheless, we as believers are no longer under the Law, but live in grace and in that grace desire to do His will! This same God, who first gave the Law, has given us salvation and freed us from the condemnation of his Law. It is apparent that if our flesh were not physically raised, that death and the grave would have their victory. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1Co.15:57)! We have been *given the victory* over death by God Himself through Jesus Christ our Savior .

Therefore, death should never hold the same dread for the elect that it does for sinful man in general. Rather, we can hold fast to that marvelous hope of the resurrection, and we know that our hope is not in vain. We do not fear that which can destroy our bodies alone (only being concerned for the temporal flesh), but God only, who alone could destroy our soul and body in hell (Mt.10:28). However, we now peacefully rest on God’s promise of salvation from that judgment — the promise that we have received in Christ, Jesus. Therefore, we understand that when the time that God has given us on earth expires, eternal life in Heaven with Him begins.

### **The Doctrine of Heaven**

Jesus said that He was going to prepare a place for us (Jn.14:2). Since Jesus was resurrected in the flesh, and ascended into Heaven in the flesh, we must know that He enjoys a *physical* existence and habitation. It follows then that the place that He prepares for his own is also a physical one since He said, “where I am, there ye may be

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also” (Jn.14:3). Since, Jesus has gone to the Father, that physical place that He went to prepare for us is also in the presence of God, the Father.

We perceive how that that place must somewhat resemble the Garden of Eden in which man was first placed and where man and God conversed freely and enjoyed full fellowship. However, man will not be placed in that new Eden in a state of innocence as was Adam, but in a regenerated state of full knowledge and total redemption. Furthermore, Satan or any other thing that is evil will never be allowed into Heaven to spoil the joy and peace that man will know with God through Christ for all eternity.

The eternal residence of the redeemed is referred to in Scripture as Heaven that has a capital city that is referred to as the New Jerusalem. The old Jerusalem that was earthly soon passed away, after the Jews rejected their King. The New Jerusalem will be Heavenly with the King in residence and shall never pass away.

**“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Re.21:2).**

That New Jerusalem shall be beautiful indeed, with walls made up of stone that glitter like diamonds (Re.21:11), city streets that look like transparent gold (Re.21:21), city gates of pearl, and the city foundations will be garnished with precious stones (Re.21:19) of every sort. The water of life and the tree of life will be there for all to partake of freely (Re.22:1,2) and there will be no more curse there (Re.22:3).

**“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Re.21:3).**

God will always be present in the new city, in which his glory will so illuminate it that there will be no night there (Re.21:25). Man will ever after be able to approach God as the Father of his redeemed creation and even enter into his very presence and shall see Him face to face (Re.22:4). “And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Re.22:5).

**“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new”** (Re.21:4–5).

All sorrow, crying, pain, and trials of every sort that we suffered on the earth will pass away to be remembered no more. Everything will be new and bright.<sup>131</sup>

### *Resurrection of the Lost (Second Resurrection)*

Alas, the unsaved man’s spirit is corrupt and cannot raise his flesh again to life, let alone exist in the presence of God. When God Himself raises the lost, they shall have their old body restored to them in order that they all can receive justice due for their evil works. This is known as the second resurrection or the resurrection of the lost.

### **The Judgment of the Lost**

While the redeemed will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive rewards for their efforts on his behalf while in the flesh, the lost must stand before a “great white throne” from which no rewards will be received, but only the harsh sentences required by the Law of God.

**“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God...”** (Re.20:11–12a).

This judgment is universal only in that every man and woman who is not in Christ must stand before it without exception.

**“ ...and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and [*Hades*] delivered up the**

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<sup>131</sup> More on Heaven and the capital city, New Jerusalem, will be found in Book III, Chapter 20.7.

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**dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Re.20:12–13).**

The first criteria to be used in judging them are to prove that they are not written down in the Lamb’s book of life. Since none will be found written down there, the other books that record every deed of their life will be consulted. However, as we already know, “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Ro.3:20). As a result, those records can only be used to determine their degree of punishment. We can only imagine the horrible thoughts that are in the minds of those as they hopelessly stand before the great white throne for their sentence to be declared.

### **The Doctrine of Hell**

In order for there to be a Heaven for the redeemed, it is absolutely necessary that there be a corresponding place of incarceration for those who would only pollute Heaven should they be allowed entry there as well. Hell is often referred to as “outer darkness” that indicates loneliness beyond belief or “the lake of fire.” Jesus related Hell to Gehenna the garbage dump in the Hinnom valley about Jerusalem that burned with fire continually, and had a worm that lived below the garbage that the fire never touched and it therefore never died (Mk.9:44). One thing that the redeemed can rejoice in is that death and the bottomless pit that held Satan’s legion of demons will be cast into the Lake of fire with the reprobate.

**“And death and [*Hades*] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Re.20:14,15).**

The unredeemed man will be condemned to wander in outer darkness beyond the light of God and apart from his presence in a state of perpetual agony in the Lake of Fire.

**“...the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Re.21:8).**

This second death or eternal death differs greatly from physical death, which is the separation of the spirit and soul from the mortal body. It is everlasting separation from the grace of God. Once the grace of God is completely removed, they will suffer a living Hell without end. That is indeed, what we all deserve from God's bar of justice. Hell is first reserved for Satan, his angels, the sons of Satan, his followers, and his willing slaves. That is the destiny of all men, who have rejected the great salvation that Jesus Christ has so graciously offered.

### ***Doctrine of Resurrection Essential to the Christian Faith***

The teaching of the resurrection of the body along with the attending doctrines of Heaven and Hell are essential doctrines of the Christian faith. There were those in the early Church at Corinth that doubted the resurrection. That doubt brought forth more clarity regarding the necessity of resurrection in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul asks, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead" (1Co.15:12)?

Why not then, just live for the pleasures of this world (rather than being identified with the dead) if the dead do not rise? As Paul goes on to ask, "... why stand we in jeopardy every hour" (1Co.15:30)? Paul said that he died daily, and for what purpose did he fight with evil men at Ephesus if men do not rise from the dead? Indeed, why should he bother? Rather, Paul says, that we may as well "eat, drink; for to-morrow we die" (1Co.15:32). What purpose do we have in professing Christ Jesus if we die (according to the law of sin and death in our flesh) and do not rise again to life?

Paul goes on to say in verses 13 through 17 of First Corinthians that the resurrection of Christ is fundamental to their professed belief. "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep [have died] in Christ are perished" (1Co.15:17-18). We do not believe that our hope that we shall live in Christ is rooted only in this mortal span of years; rather, we know that this hope will extend onward after the death of our mortal bodies, and that it will be fully realized in eternity. For, "If

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in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1Co.15:19). Our hope is for a life beyond this life that we now have in our mortal bodies; otherwise, the life which Christ offers us is temporal, fleeting, without meaning, and is false, not eternal or real.

Through an abundance of Scripture and the assurance of the witness of the Holy Spirit within us, we can be very confident that we do not believe in a man-made philosophy that is suitable for this life only, but that we believe in Truth to absolute assurance of a glorious life beyond physical death in a newly resurrected physical body!

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