

School of the Bible

Part One

2023

Jim Hoffman

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About the Book

This is volume one of three. These pages, including volumes two and three, are a compilation of my detailed lecture notes for ninety (90) college level Bible classes. It provides an overall perspective on the Bible.

- 1) Old and New Testament Surveys
- 2) Over fifty major doctrines explained.
- 3) Over forty Bible topical studies.
- 4) Twenty hours dedicated to the Creation events of Genesis.
- 5) Twenty hours dedicated to the End Time events.

You can expect to receive a well-rounded Bible education that will allow you to teach better, think better, and evangelize better. It represents 46 years of personal study and exploration of the Scriptures.

Jim is a conservative evangelical and self-described Biblicist. He is also fond of saying his approach to the Scriptures is LISWIS (let it say what it says). The author confesses to being mildly obsessed with the glory of God.

I owe a great debt to the teachings of many others. I've been writing for years and honestly do not know everyone to credit for what I've learned. The following sources I do remember, and I would like to publicly credit them by name.

- John MacArthur
- John Piper
- R.C. Sproul
- Randy Alcorn
- The "Got Questions" Website

"It is impossible to learn anything about God that does not contribute to making him more glorious."

Jim Hoffman

About the Author

James (Jim) Hoffman received his Bible education from two sources. The first was a semi-formal, well rounded one from The Harrisburg School of the Bible. The second source was the one available to all of us, the Holy Spirit.

Jim spent (6) years in the Harrisburg School of the Bible attending in the evenings while working a regular job to support his young family (Wife Jackie and sons Micah, and Seth). Jim studied at night and on the weekends while Jackie helped immensely by taking many chores from his schedule in addition to her own.

In his own words, *"I never graduated from Bible School because I couldn't afford to take the classes for credit, so I settled for auditing the courses."* After his time at the Harrisburg School of the Bible his education was self-taught. He paid attention in church, pulled together the money to buy a Strong's Concordance, a Matthew Henry Commentary, and a Vine's New Testament Dictionary of Greek Words.

The Holy Spirit is the absolute best teacher anyone can have as we use the commentaries of others, sermons, Sunday School lessons, and of course the very words of God Himself, the Holy Bible.

This curriculum was forged together by Jim when he started his own Bible School in 2018 for his church, Christian Life Assembly in Camp Hill, PA. What follows in the pages of this book was taught in two-hour lectures over ninety classes held over a three-year period.

It is the author's desire that what he shares in these pages will be used with many other sources the Lord will provide in your lifetime, to help you see that he is **bigger than you think, and better than you know!**

Opening Comments

While the events of the Old Testament may seem like a random collection of things that went well and other things that did not, rest assured that God was orchestrating his redemption plan even before Genesis 1:1!

Penteteuch	History	Wisdom	Major Prophets	Minor Prophets
Genesis	Joshua	Job	Isaiah	Hosea
Exodus	Judges	Psalms	Jeremiah	Joel
Levitics	Ruth	Proverbs	Lamentations	Amos
Numbers	1st Samuel	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel	Obadiah
Deuteronomy	2nd Samuel	Song of Solomon	Daniel	Jonah
	1st Kings			Micah
	2nd Kings			Nahum
	1st Chronicles			Habbakuk
	2nd Chronicles			Zephaniah
	Ezra			Haggai
	Nehemiah			Zechariah
	Esther			Malachi

The Old Testament was written from approximately 1400 B.C. to approximately 400 B.C. It was written primarily in Hebrew with a few small sections, (parts of Ezra, Daniel, and Jeremiah) written in Aramaic. The O.T. details for us the relationship God had with his elect people, Israel.

Bear in mind that God's choosing (electing) of a people for himself was not based upon anything other than his own sovereign choice. The people of Israel are not morally superior, more intelligent, or more gifted than others. God simply wanted a people through whom he could deliver his word, and his Savior.

What John said in his gospel, could certainly be applied to the O.T. (*John 21:25 Now there are also many other things that Jesus did.*)

Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.) The Bible makes no attempt or claim to be the place to disprove things – it was not intended to cover all the possibilities in the universe.

For example – the bible makes no claim that vampires do not exist, but that does not mean they do. The bible makes no claim that other universes exist, but that is not proof they do not. The bible is not the source of all knowledge but is the source of all wisdom. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God on all subjects covered in its texts. We should not use science as the measure for Biblical accuracy, but we should use the Bible as the measure for the science it covers. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and is therefore free from error – how could it be God-breathed and have error? (Those two thoughts are incompatible)

Genesis

Author: The author of the Book of Genesis is not identified, but most theologians credit Moses with writing the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy. We know that Moses wrote things down - Luke 16:31 *“But Abraham said, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they won’t be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”*

Date of Writing: The author does not identify when he wrote, but most scholars believe it was written between 1440 and 1400 B.C. when Moses was leading the Israelites through the wilderness.

Genesis – the early history period:

- Creation (Genesis chapters 1-2)
- The Fall of man (Genesis chapters 3-5)
- The Flood (Genesis chapters 6-9)
- The Dispersion (Genesis chapters 10-11)

Creation (Genesis 1:1 – 2:3)

The method of creation – “God said and it was so.” Also known as Ex Nihilo or “out of nothing.” (*Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made of things that are visible.*)

There is a temptation, even in Christian circles, to look to science to validate the creation events – do not fall for that! If we believe the Bible is the Word of God, then we should take him at his word. Science catches up with the Bible, the Bible does not catch up to science.

Creation cannot be proven via science – it was a spectacular, supernatural, miraculous act.

Scientific evidence is testable, repeatable, and observable – miracles are not.

Job 38:16 “Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep?” What the book of Job recorded for us around 1400 B.C. was not scientifically proven until over 3,000 years later in the 1930’s when the bathysphere was invented. The bathysphere allowed scientists to explore the ocean floors and, just as the book of Job tells us, they found springs on the floors of the oceans.

Fact - The universe, everything material thing that exists, living or not, was made by God by the word of his mouth without any pre-existing matter.

Colossians 1:15 Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, 16 for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we cannot see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. 17 He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

The first words of the Bible are, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” There is no effort made to explain the existence of God – He is presented from the beginning as the existing Creator of the universe. God does not have to defend his existence – He is, and his very existence speaks for itself through his creation.

Romans 1:20 For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So, they have no excuse for not knowing God. 21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. 22 Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. 23 And

instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

Creation (Genesis chapters 1-2)

- All things that were made, were made by God in (6) solar days. (*John 1:1 In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He existed in the beginning with God. 3 God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.*)
- The world was free of sin and defect.
- Man (and woman) were both made in the image of God.

Made in the image of God – we were created as eternal, personal, rationale, relational, beings and intended to be creative and productive. Except for mankind and angels, everything that was made is temporary – plants, animals, sun, moon, stars etc.... And all will one day will be burned up. The “uncreation” is described in *2nd Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.*

But mankind will not be “uncreated” and cannot be destroyed by fire because we are eternal beings. (*Daniel 12:2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*) All souls will spend eternity somewhere – be it Heaven or Hell.

There is no such thing as not existing once a person is conceived in the womb.

In the original creation, there was no sin – and therefore no pain, sorrow, or death. (Those same conditions will return on the new earth; Rev 21:4) As God created, he pronounced “*it was good*” at the end of each day, and then said, “*it was very good*” at the end of the sixth day. (Not just man, but everything) Then on one day, seemingly out of nowhere, sin enters and everything that was good was suddenly changed.

The Fall of man - The impact of the fall has touched every part of the universe. It is accurate to say that absolutely everything wrong in our world is because of sin. The only way to make sense of the world we know is to understand the fall. Without the fall, you might have to conclude that God erred in his creation because there must be a reason for that which was “very good” to now be so very wrong.

World view – what we believe about the state of man, whether he is inherently good or inherently evil, will shape how we look at life in this world and will dictate what remedies we will advocate to address the world’s problems.

The Fall of man (Genesis chapters 3-5)

Genesis 2:15 The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. 16 But the Lord God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— 17 except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

Die? What is “die”? Nothing had ever died in Eden.

Genesis 3:1 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” 2 “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. 3 “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said,

'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"
4 *"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. 5 "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."* 6 *The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful, and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So, she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. 7 At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So, they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.*

Romans 5:12 When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

1st Corinthians 15:21 So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. 22 Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.

The words "sin" and "fall" do not appear in Genesis 3 – it is the New Testament that provides those details of the events of Genesis 3.

Adam did not break Moses' law because it did not exist at the fall – but Adam did break God's law.

Romans 2:14 Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. 15 They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.

Just as there was a priesthood before we ever had the book of Leviticus, there was the moral law of God before there was a Moses.

The fall of man also meant the fall of the entire creation – everything changed.

Romans 8:18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Ever since the fall of man in the garden, every person must contend with a nature that is now bent (inclined) towards sin. Even babies, though appearing to be magnificently innocent, are all inheritors of the sin nature of their parents.

Romans 3:10 As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous—not even one."

As a result of the fall, mankind will have to deal with death and a frustrating proclivity towards sin. **As a result of the fall**, women will have pain at childbirth, and will struggle with the headship of their husbands, and men will have to deal with a cursed earth. But there is hope – *Genesis 3:15 "And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."*

Protoevangelium means "First Gospel" - indeed a body of truth emerged as God slowly revealed more and more of his redemption plan as the centuries rolled by.

The word protoevangelium means "first gospel" and was announced to give hope to Adam and Eve that while their sin

would devastate mankind, and the earth, that a day of redemption is coming. The “seed of the woman” will crush the serpent’s head. It points directly to Jesus and the “first gospel”. What Adam and early generations passed down as the gospel evolved over time as God “filled in the blanks” about the promised Messiah. Over the centuries God’s redemption plan was revealed in small bites, until Jesus came and offered himself on the cross.

We read in the Bible about the law, about animal sacrifices, about types, and lots of things that were intended to point us to Christ. (*John 16:12 I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. Hebrews 10:4 For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*)

The Flood (Genesis chapters 6-9)

Genesis 6:5 The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. 6 So the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. 7 And the Lord said, “I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.” 8 But Noah found favor with the Lord.

Sin had progressed over the generations from Adam to Noah – left unchecked, it always does. God was not “sorry” in the sense that he thought he had erred, he was sorry because it broke his heart that he would have to judge their sin so harshly.

Exodus 33:11 As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live.

Genesis 6:14 "Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. 15 Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. 16 Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper. 17 Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. 18 But I will confirm my covenant with you. So, enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. 19 Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. 20 Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. 21 And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals." 22 So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

The flood was worldwide –

Genesis 7:11 When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. 12 The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

*Genesis 7:17 For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. 18 As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. 19 **Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth,** 20 rising more than twenty-two feet above the highest peaks.*

The Noahic covenant -

Genesis 8:18 So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. 19 And all the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair. 20 Then Noah built an altar to the

Lord, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. 21 And the Lord was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. 22 As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day, and night."

In this covenant God promised that He would never again send a worldwide flood to destroy the earth. He did not promise he would never again judge the world but did exclude a worldwide flood as the means he would use.

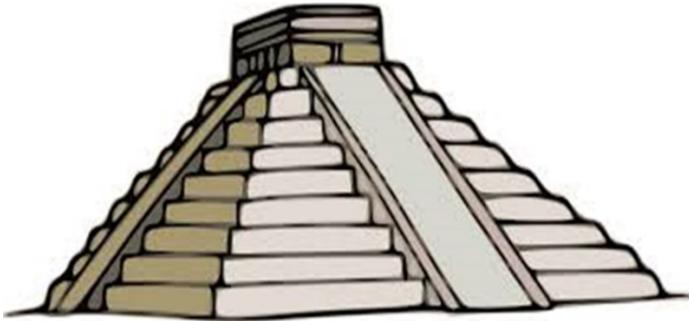
The Dispersion (Genesis chapters 10-11)

- The genealogies of Japheth, Shem (the Godly line), and Ham.
- *Genesis 10:32 These are the clans that descended from Noah's sons, arranged by nation according to their lines of descent. All the nations of the earth descended from these clans after the great flood.*

Genesis 11:1 At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. 2 As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia and settled there. 3 They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire." (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) 4 Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world." 5 But the Lord came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. 6 "Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! 7 Come, let's go down and confuse the people with

different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other." 8 In that way, the Lord scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why the city was called Babel, because that is where the Lord confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

The tower of Babel was never intended to reach heaven but was to be a means of resisting the judgment of God should he ever send another flood. The rebels knew of the great flood in Noah's day and were now planning, not to obey God and avoid judgment, but were planning how to cope with God's judgment when it fell again. A good illustration of how mankind knows the consequences of sin, but still wants to cling to it despite the danger it would bring to their doorsteps.



The judgment on the world at the tower of Babel was one of mercy. There is evidently some connection between the collaboration of sinful men, and the extent of their sin. To slow down man's march toward another worldwide judgment God confused their languages and dispersed them.

Genesis patriarchal history records the lives of four great men:

- Abraham (Genesis 12:1-25:8)
- Isaac (Genesis 21:1-35:29)
- Jacob (Genesis 25:21-50:14)
- Joseph (Genesis 30:22-50:26)

Abraham (Genesis 12:1-25:8)

Abraham was not a Jew, but a gentile called out of paganism in the Ur of the Chaldees. Without any godly background, one day God calls Abram, he answers, and leaves for parts unknown to him. (Amazing!) Heb 11:8 It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. Given his day and the dangers of travel, Abraham took no small step when he left his homeland to follow the God whom he barely knew.

Abrahamic covenant -

Genesis 12:1 The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you." 4 So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. 5 He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan.

- I will make you into a great nation.
- I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others.
- I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who treat you with contempt.
- All the families on earth will be blessed through you.

Genesis 14:17 After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18 And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High,

brought Abram some bread and wine. 19 Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20 And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you." Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

Aaron, while in the loins of Abraham, paid tithes to a priest of a different order that would later be described as an eternal priesthood, specifically Christ's priesthood.

Melchizedek – this would seem a little out of place to introduce a priest of God before there was ever what most would call the law of God. But remember, the Ten Commandments and the Levitical law were not the first existence of God's moral laws – they have existed forever. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, who was the king of Salem and a priest of the God, Most High. (Genesis 14:18)

Genesis 15:4 Then the Lord said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir." 5 Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!" 6 And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.

Romans 4:1 Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? 2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. 3 For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."

Abraham is promised a son through Sarah when he was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90.

Genesis 18:10 Then one of them said, "I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!" Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. 11 Abraham and

Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. 12 So she laughed silently to herself and said, "How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?" 13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?' 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

The rest of the book is the story of Abraham's descendants in their trials and triumphs with God always present to ensure his redemption plan is not frustrated in any way.

Isaac is born. Isaac has two sons, Esau, and Jacob. (Both of the sons were very flawed individuals)

Jacob was a deceiver, but still chosen by God and used by God.

Joseph is born as the 11th of Jacob's sons and is the favored one.

In Jacob's time there was a severe drought that forced he and his family to look to Egypt for food. By providence, God already had Joseph in a place of power in Egypt to preserve his people.

(Genesis 50:19 But Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.)

Genesis ends with Israel in a foreign land (Egypt) living on the provision of God through Joseph. Seventy Israelites went into Egypt seeking food and water, and God will greatly multiply his people using a heathen government in a spirituality hostile environment. Though living in a strange and pagan land, Israel receives the blessings of God and prospers.

For much of church history Christians have had to endure under repressive conditions, often under governments hostile to their

faith. But the church has marched on and grown. If those conditions become our conditions, we will too!

Huge parts of the bible are the accounts of God moving the chess pieces of history around the board of the universe to ensure that his plan to redeem mankind moves forward right on schedule.

Exodus

There are two primary partitions to the book of Exodus:

- Part I – (chapters 1-19) the rescue of Israel from Egypt and is written in the form of a story.
- Part II – (chapters 20-40) the giving of the “Law” and is written as such in stipulations, sanctions, and pronouncements.

Date of Writing: The Book of Exodus was written by Moses between 1440 and 1400 B.C. while leading the Israelites through the wilderness.

Author: Moses was the author of the Book of Exodus.

Exodus 17:14 After the victory, the Lord instructed Moses, “Write this down on a scroll as a permanent reminder and read it aloud to Joshua: I will erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”

Exodus 34:27 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write down all these instructions, for they represent the terms of the covenant I am making with you and with Israel.”

Covenants – there are as many as 8 such agreements in the Bible, but we mostly speak about only 2, the old and new.

- A covenant is an agreement between God and mankind – the old covenant was destined to fail because it called for man to be blessed based upon his obedience to God.
- The new covenant cannot fail because the blessings to mankind are based on the obedience of Christ.

2nd Corinthians 3:6 He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life. 7 The old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the

people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses' face. For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away. 8 Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life? 9 If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God! 10 In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way. 11 So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever!

The old covenant, often called "the law," was never intended to save anyone – its purpose was to show mankind that apart from Christ all are lost and cannot be saved by the law.

Galatians 3:19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

The inspiration of the scriptures - Only the original autographs (original manuscripts written by the apostles, prophets, etc.) are under the divine promise of inspiration and inerrancy.

When God told Moses to "write this down" Moses was hearing directly from God's audible voice, but this was not true for most of the Bible.

The rest of the Bible was given to us by verbal plenary inspiration – this does not mean dictation but carries the sense of the writers being divinely guided (carried along) by the Holy Spirit as they wrote.

The Bible is God's Word to humanity. It was written by human authors, but God prompted and guided them to write what they did. Every word, word form, and word placement found in the Bible's original manuscripts was divinely and intentionally

written. This is the orthodox view of the church and is known as verbal plenary inspiration. (From Got Questions website)

Verbal Plenary Inspiration also means that every word was from the vocabulary and experiences of the writer, and every word written was the exact word God wanted. So, if you were to ask, "Who wrote Exodus," both Moses and God are the correct answer.

2nd Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

- Think of "inspired" as God-breathed or God-Spirited.
- *2nd Peter 1:20 Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, 21 or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.*

The word "exodus" means departure. In time it was understood that the exodus would be from Egypt. (*Genesis 15:13 Then the Lord said to Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years."*)

The "exodus" was a part of the process God used to fulfill his promise to Abraham - *Genesis 12:1 The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you."*

At the end of Genesis, the descendants of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob, are in Egypt living rather well on the power of God's blessing on Joseph.

Exodus 1:8 Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. 9 He said to his people, "Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are. 10 We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don't, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country."

The walk of the believer is not static – the descendants of Joseph living in Egypt may have thought that life is good and will always be good. But God's plan for his people was bigger than an easy life in Goshen – his plan necessitated that his people move on to something better. As we will see, what lies ahead for them will include enough pain to cause them to want to move on.

Pain is a great catalyst for change – it is often comfort that causes us to be complacent while pain is the thing that forces us to shift and move. The same One who fashioned us in the dark knows exactly what stimuli each of us needs to bring about the changes he wants to make in our lives.

The Egyptian (let's shrink the Israelite population) plan involved infanticide whereby the Egyptian mid-wives were instructed to kill all the newborn Hebrew males.

Exodus 1:15 Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah: 16 "When you help the Hebrew women as they give birth, watch as they deliver. If the baby is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." 17 But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king's orders. They allowed the boys to live, too.

Now here is something unusual for us to observe – Shiphrah and Puah disobeyed the King and even lied about it, but God blessed them for it. (An example of Acts 4:19, should we obey God or men?)

Exodus 1:20 So God was good to the midwives, and the Israelites continued to multiply, growing more and more powerful. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

One of those little Israelite boys who survived the infanticide policy, was God's chosen vessel, Moses, to deliver God's people from slavery.

Exodus 2:7 Then the baby's sister approached the princess. "Should I go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" she asked. 8 "Yes, do!" the princess replied. So, the girl went and called the baby's mother. 9 "Take this baby and nurse him for me," the princess told the baby's mother. "I will pay you for your help." So, the woman took her baby home and nursed him. 10 Later, when the boy was older, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her own son. The princess named him Moses, for she explained, "I lifted him out of the water."

Sometimes God's plans are even better than we had hoped – in this case, Moses will get to live, his own mother will get to nurse him, and she will be paid for it to boot!

(Exceedingly, abundantly, above all we could ask or think!)

Wasn't it lucky that Shiphrah and Puah were the midwives? Wasn't it lucky that Pharaoh's daughter just happened to be at the river at the right time? "No" to both above – instead, what we see is God moving the living chess pieces around the board according to his plan.

Divine Providence is seen best by looking backward in time.

Exodus 2:23 Years passed, and the king of Egypt died. But the Israelites continued to groan under their burden of slavery. They cried out for help, and their cry rose up to God. 24 God heard their

groaning, and he remembered his covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 He looked down on the people of Israel and knew it was time to act.

In the natural, it would be easy to think that God had forgotten his promise and Abraham and his line actually didn't have a promise at all but merely a fading legend – but that would be wrong!

Oh, the irony of God using Pharaoh's own daughter to raise the one who would break the chain of Egyptian slavery on the Israelites! Pharaoh must have regretted having allowed this Hebrew child to be raised and educated on his "dime" a thousand times.

Isaiah 55:8 "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. 9 For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

The time comes when Moses had to flee Egypt because he had killed an Egyptian who was mistreating the Israelite slaves. He spends 40 years on the "back side of the desert" tending sheep and building a new life – He had no idea what was still ahead of him. Moses encounters God through a burning bush and gets a taste of the power and holiness of God – Moses is now roughly 80 years old when he finds the will of God for his life.

If Moses was 80 when he found God's will for his life, then surely, it's not too late for any of us to find and do his will.

(Moses lived to be 120)

Exodus 3:7 Then the Lord told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the

power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. 9 Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. 10 Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.”

There is something for us in these words that may not be obvious, **“I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them”**.

The Israelites had been in slavery now close to four-hundred years, and God speaks of it as though he is responding to their cries in a timely fashion. Four-hundred years? Right on schedule? Oh, yes!

Pharaoh’s response to the plagues –

Exodus 4:21 And the Lord told Moses, “When you arrive back in Egypt, go to Pharaoh, and perform all the miracles I have empowered you to do. But I will harden his heart so he will refuse to let the people go.” God hardened Pharaoh’s heart and then, after witnessing the mighty power of God, Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

Exodus 8:32 But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.

Exodus 5:1 After this presentation to Israel’s leaders, Moses and Aaron went and spoke to Pharaoh. They told him, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may hold a festival in my honor in the wilderness.” 2 “Is that so?” retorted Pharaoh. “And who is the Lord? Why should I listen to

him and let Israel go? I don't know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go."

Pharaoh does not know God or anything about Him – in fact, in Pharaoh's world, he is God. He is going to cooperate; he just doesn't know it yet!

All ten of Egypt's plagues were targeted against its false gods. One at a time, Jehovah showed his total dominance over the best of their so called "deities."

The 10 Plagues brought upon Egypt for Pharaoh's disobedience.

- Water turned into blood
- Frogs
- Lice
- Flies
- Diseased livestock
- Boils
- Thunderstorm of hail and fire
- Locusts
- Darkness for three days
- Death of the first born

As God was sending the plagues upon Egypt a couple of things were happening.

- God was demonstrating his absolute power over all the things Egypt trusted in as 'gods.'
- God was sending justice on a nation that had enslaved and murdered innocent people.
- God was demonstrating his mercy – the plague that killed the first born could have just as easily killed all.

The first "Passover." (Can you see Jesus in the Passover?)

- *Exodus 12:5 The animal you select must be a one-year-old male, either a sheep or a goat, with no defects.*

- *Exodus 12:6 Take special care of this chosen animal until the evening of the fourteenth day of this first month. (Scrutinized, and observed over time to be without defects)*
- *Exodus 12:8 They are to take some of the blood and smear it on the sides and top of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the animal. (Blood had to be applied to be effective and likewise for Jesus' blood)*

Exodus 12:31 Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron during the night. "Get out!" He ordered. "Leave my people—and take the rest of the Israelites with you! Go and worship the Lord as you have requested. 32 Take your flocks and herds, as you said, and be gone. Go, but bless me as you leave." 33 All the Egyptians urged the people of Israel to get out of the land as quickly as possible, for they thought, "We will all die!" 36 The Lord caused the Egyptians to look favorably on the Israelites, and they gave the Israelites whatever they asked for. So, they stripped the Egyptians of their wealth!

Pharaoh is finally willing to let Israel go with an odd request – He says to Moses, "Go, but bless me as you leave." **I am not sure we can claim repentance on Pharaoh's part, but we can easily see he recognized who was God, and it wasn't him!**

Exodus 12:40 The people of Israel had lived in Egypt for 430 years. 41 In fact, it was on the last day of the 430th year that all the Lord's forces left the land. 42 On this night the Lord kept his promise to bring his people out of the land of Egypt. So, this night belongs to him, and it must be commemorated every year by all the Israelites, from generation to generation.

Genesis 15:12 As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. 13 Then the Lord said to Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as

slaves for 400 years. 14 But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end, they will come away with great wealth.

Egypt lost all their cheap labor, and when that dawned on them they change their minds and decide to test God again. (Fools!)

Exodus 14:5 When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds. "What have we done, letting all those Israelite slaves get away?" they asked. 6 So Pharaoh harnessed his chariot and called up his troops. 7 He took with him 600 of Egypt's best chariots, along with the rest of the chariots of Egypt, each with its commander. 8 The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, so he chased after the people of Israel, who had left with fists raised in defiance.

Exodus 14:10 As Pharaoh approached, the people of Israel looked up and panicked when they saw the Egyptians overtaking them. They cried out to the Lord, 11 and they said to Moses, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren't there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt? 12 Didn't we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, 'Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It's better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!'"

Getting out of the slavery of sin is hard and a task too large for the flesh – Israel tasted freedom and, also sort of yearned for the familiarity and sufficiencies of Egypt. They did something called, "Satisficing" – accepting an available option as "good enough."

Exodus 14:13 But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. 14 The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."

There are times when we are to stand still and let God do his work for us, and there are times when we are to “partner” with Him. The very next words God has for Moses are “get moving.” (Exodus 14:15)

Faith is doing everything we can for ourselves while trusting God to do what we cannot do.

Hebrews 11 – the evidence offered here might lead you to conclude that while faith is a noun, it leads to verbs.

- by faith that Abel brought
- by faith that Noah built a large boat
- by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him
- by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice
- by faith that Moses’ parents hid him for three months
- by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea

James 2:17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Exodus 14:15 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving! 16 Pick up your staff and raise your hand over the sea. Divide the water so the Israelites can walk through the middle of the sea on dry ground. 17 And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will charge in after the Israelites. My great glory will be displayed through Pharaoh and his troops, his chariots, and his charioteers. 18 When my glory is displayed through them, all Egypt will see my glory and know that I am the Lord!”

Pharaoh and his army are proof that God can and will use anyone or anything to display his glory – after all, that is the purpose of all creation.

The glory of God is all that he is – omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, gracious, merciful, kind, loving, and the list goes on. There is nothing we can do to add to his glory, he is already perfect, and he wants for nothing.

So, when we say we want to bring glory to God, what we should be thinking is that we want to reveal Him, for when he is seen, his glory is seen through his attributes, speaks for itself.

Nothing is more important than revealing God!

A pattern of groaning and complaining sets in -

Exodus 16:1 Then the whole community of Israel set out from Elim and journeyed into the wilderness of Sin, between Elim and Mount Sinai. They arrived there on the fifteenth day of the second month, one month after leaving the land of Egypt. 2 There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron. 3 "If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt," they moaned. "There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death."

Exodus 16:4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Look, I'm going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. 5 On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual."

God sends the Israelites quail and bread (manna) each day to sustain them. Manna, in Hebrew means, "what is it?"

Would it be too obvious to point out here that the Ten Commandments had not been given yet, but there seems to be a sabbath rest built into the rhythm of the manna and quail?

“On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual.”

When we get to the Ten Commandments, we will note that the 4th one starts with “Remember the sabbath”.

Exodus 17:2 So once more the people complained against Moses. “Give us water to drink!” they demanded. “Quiet!” Moses replied. “Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the Lord?” 3 But tormented by thirst, they continued to argue with Moses. “Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Are you trying to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?”

The pattern of complaining and yearning for the “good old days” continues. When the new life gets hard, the old life of sin beckons.

Israel’s first war – *Exodus 17:8 While the people of Israel were still at Rephidim, the warriors of Amalek attacked them. 9 Moses commanded Joshua, “Choose some men to go out and fight the army of Amalek for us. Tomorrow, I will stand at the top of the hill, holding the staff of God in my hand.” 10 So Joshua did what Moses had commanded and fought the army of Amalek. Meanwhile, Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed to the top of a nearby hill. 11 As long as Moses held up the staff in his hand, the Israelites had the advantage. But whenever he dropped his hand, the Amalekites gained the advantage. 12 Moses’ arms soon became so tired he could no longer hold them up. So, Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side of Moses, holding up his hands. So, his hands held steady until sunset. 13 As a result, Joshua overwhelmed the army of Amalek in battle.*

Israel arrives at Sinai – *Exodus 19:1 Exactly two months after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived in the wilderness of Sinai. 2 After breaking camp at Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and set up camp there at the base of Mount Sinai.*

It took Israel just 2 months to arrive at Mt Sinai and the plan was for them to spend 10 months at Mt Sinai hearing from God before going into the land he promised.

Due to unbelief, they will spend 39 extra years going in circles as the unbelieving generation dies off before entering the promised land.

“Through the circumstances they experienced, Israel had learned how God provided food and water. They had to learn through warfare that God would also bring about defeat of hostile neighbors.”

Unknown

A spiritual Israel has always enjoyed God’s supernatural power in battle.

Exodus 19:3 Then Moses climbed the mountain to appear before God. The Lord called to him from the mountain and said, “Give these instructions to the family of Jacob; announce it to the descendants of Israel: 4 ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. 6 And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.’ This is the message you must give to the people of Israel.”

Priests before the priesthood was officially setup? Yes, God has always granted access to himself for those who believe in him and seek him by faith. (See Gen 14 example of Melchizedek)

The 10 Commandments List, Short Form:

- You shall have no other gods before Me.
- You shall not make idols.
- You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
- Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

- Honor your father and your mother.
- You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- You shall not covet.

The Law of God is Present in the Souls of all People

Romans 2:14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.

The Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue, are a summary of the 613 laws given under the Old Covenant. The first 4 deal with how we are to relate to God and the last 6 are to govern our relationships with each other.

Later, Jesus will further simplify them for us when he says in *Matthew 22:36* “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” *37 Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”*

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.” ... AND ...” Love your neighbor as yourself.” These two will keep us busy the rest of our lives! It is a common error to think that keeping the 10 commandments is the way to enter Heaven – on the contrary, they are merely intended to show us the impossibility of that.

Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

It was God Himself who spoke the Ten Commandments directly to the people of Israel in Exodus 20, verses 1 through 17. However, the Israelites were so terrified to be so close to God as to hear his voice that they beg for an intermediary in verses 18 and 19.

So, God allows Moses to be the intermediary and from chapter 20 and verse #22, through chapter 31 and verse #18, God speaks directly with Moses giving him his law.

The rest of Exodus is dedicated to “the Law,” its scope, and directions for building the Tabernacle. One example is how to deal with personal injuries and limitations on damages – this is where we get the “eye for an eye” concept. An “eye for an eye” was intended to put a limit on the amount justice one may exact on the offender – if you poke out my eye, I have the right to your eye, not your life!

Regarding the Tabernacle and how it was to be constructed and used – one broad stroke for our understanding is what God described to Moses was the structure God saw in Heaven.

Hebrews 8:5 They serve in a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven. For when Moses was getting ready to build the Tabernacle, God gave him this warning: “Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain.”

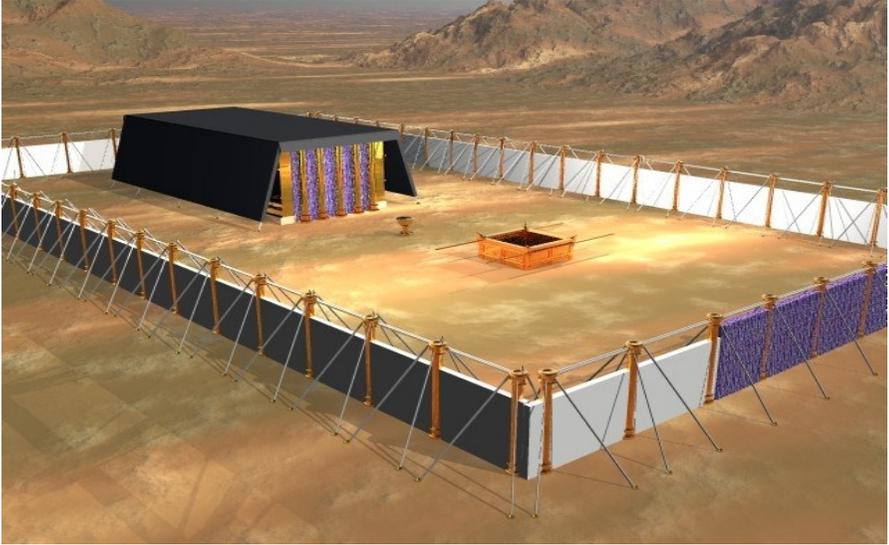
Perhaps the most profound thing to discover regarding the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and later the Temple in Jerusalem, is that they were mere pictures of what already existed in heaven.

Acts 17:24 “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, 25 and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs.”

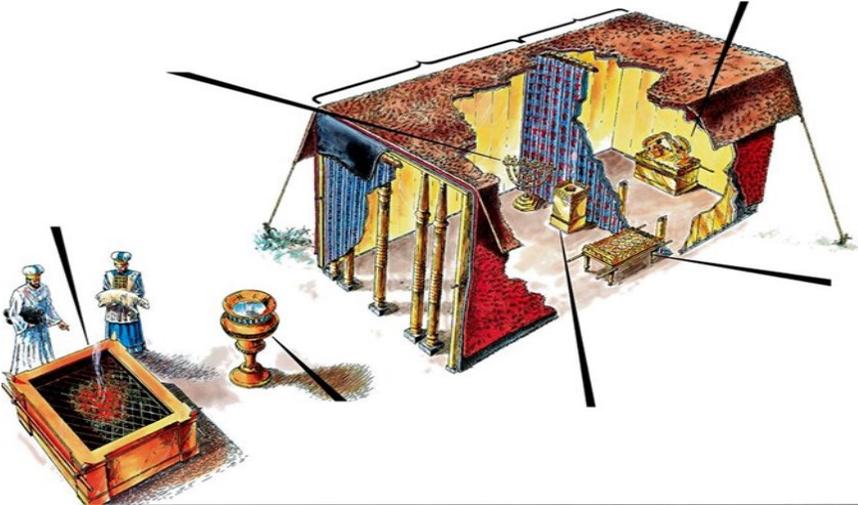
1st Corinthians 6:19 Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?

Exodus 40:34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 36 Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. 37 But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. 38 For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

The Tabernacle



The Tabernacle of Witness



Some perspective on the importance of the Tabernacle – God took roughly 2 chapters of the scriptures to tell us about the creation of the universe and everything in it. Compare that to the

50 chapters he uses to describe the Tabernacle and the work that was to happen there.

The Tabernacle is not more important than creation, but it points to the suffering and ministry of Jesus Christ which is infinitely more valuable than creation itself.

Without redemption and the glory that comes with it, history would be but a tale of a world with a glorious beginning that ended in defeat and decay.

The **Brazen Altar** was where the animal sacrifices were slaughtered and burned.

The one bringing the offering would lay his hand upon the head of the offering thus identifying with the sacrifice. In picture, his sin and guilt were being moved from himself to the animal.

Isaiah 53:6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

The Laver - a large bowl filled with water located halfway between the brazen altar and the Holy Place for the priests to wash their hands and their feet before entering the Holy Place.

The laver serves as a reminder that people need cleansing before approaching God.

John 13:10 Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean."

The Lampstand - After washing, the priests could enter the Holy Place, which was the first room in the tent of the tabernacle.

The lampstand was the only source of light in the Holy Place, so without it, the priests would have been groping around in the dark.

John 1:9 The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

The Table of Showbread - stood on the right side of the Holy Place across from the lampstand and held 12 loaves of bread, representing the 12 tribes of Israel.

The table and the bread were a picture of God's willingness to fellowship with man.

John 6:35 Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

The Golden Altar of Incense - God commanded the priests to burn incense on the golden altar every morning and evening at the same time the daily burnt offerings were made.

The incense was a symbol of the prayers and intercessions of the people going up to God as a sweet fragrance.

Psalm 141:2 Accept my prayer as incense offered to you, and my upraised hands as an evening offering.

The Holy of Holies and the Veil - Within the Holy Place of the tabernacle, there was an inner room called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place.

The word "veil" in Hebrew means a screen, divider, or separator that hides. What was this curtain hiding? Essentially, it was shielding a holy God from sinful man.

Hebrews 9:7 But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

The Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat - Within the Holy of Holies was one piece of furniture comprised of two parts: the Ark

of the Covenant and the atonement cover (or “mercy seat”) on top of it.

The mercy seat was the lid for the ark. On top of it stood two cherubim (angels) at the two ends, facing each other.

Exodus 25:22 I will meet with you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover (mercy seat) between the gold cherubim that hover over the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark of the Covenant



When God gave his “law” to Moses there were two primary types of laws.

- **Apodictic Laws** – these were unconditional demands of God expressed positively (You shall love the Lord thy God) and negatively (thou shalt not commit adultery).
- **Casuistic Laws** – much like case law of today. Used to establish God’s wisdom based on principle.

Up until Exodus 18, Moses was the judge, jury, and executioner (so to speak). Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law helped Moses set up what we might call a court system to spread-out the judicial load. Think of the Law of God as paradigmatic – meaning that for the most part not every possible way one might offend another

person is noted, however there is a pattern (paradigm) to follow. In our court systems today, wrong doers often get off on technicalities because of the precise nature of how our laws are written. Not so with God's casuistic laws.

Example of "apodictic" laws – Exodus 22:18 "You must not allow a sorceress to live." Pretty clear, no ambiguity.

- **Example of "casuistic" laws** – *Exodus 21:33 "Suppose someone digs or uncovers a pit and fails to cover it, and then an ox or a donkey falls into it. 34 The owner of the pit must pay full compensation to the owner of the animal, but then he gets to keep the dead animal."*
- **In the casuistic example** – there is a principle to follow that says if you cause harm to another (financial or otherwise) you are responsible to make restitution for your damages.

When most people think of the "law" they think primarily of the Ten Commandments – that is but a partial picture. The "law" required obedience, it required sacrifices, and it required rituals and all sorts of restrictions for the O.T. believer to be in a place to receive God's blessings. What the law really did was to serve as a reminder to Israel that we all sin and come short of the glory of God – it was set-up to demonstrate how sinful we are.

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

The "old covenant" and "the law" – how are they related? Think of the "law" as the old covenant – it was an agreement between God and Israel that could be stated as "if you (Israel) do this, I (God) will do that." The offer from God was a serious one, but never one

that was in any danger of being kept by Israel because the blessings were based on full obedience to all God's commands.

Deuteronomy 28:1 "If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully keep all his commands that I am giving you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the world. 2 You will experience all these blessings if you obey the Lord your God: 3 Your towns and your fields will be blessed. 4 Your children and your crops will be blessed. The offspring of your herds and flocks will be blessed. 5 Your fruit baskets and breadboards will be blessed. 6 Wherever you go and whatever you do, you will be blessed. 7 "The Lord will conquer your enemies when they attack you. They will attack you from one direction, but they will scatter from you in seven! ... (and the list goes on)

Think of the old covenant as a contract between two parties where each has significant responsibility to "keep the deal". Think of the new covenant as a contract between two parties where one party (God) does all the work to fulfill the contract, and the other party (the believer) simply trusts the first party to make the deal work. The above is a bit of an oversimplification, but not by much!

Leviticus

The book of Leviticus is about how to live a holy life before a holy God. Think of holiness as God's "otherness," or that characteristic that sets him apart as God. No one, no place, and no thing, comes close to having or being the holiness of God. It is not a book intended to encourage anyone who doesn't see its planned obsolescence.

Date of Writing: The Book of Leviticus was written between 1440 and 1400 B.C. (Leviticus means, "to the Levites") The purpose of Leviticus is to provide instruction and laws to guide a sinful yet redeemed people in their relationship with a holy God. Throughout the book there is an emphasis on the need to be holy. There are many instructions regarding making atonement for sins through sacrifices – those sacrifices were necessary for the time but were never effective for taking away sin.

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Acts 13:39 Everyone who believes in him is made right in God's sight—something the law of Moses could never do.

Romans 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh

The Feasts Form a Prophetic Calendar

- **Passover** – Jesus as our sinless substitute.
- **Unleavened Bread** – Jesus' sinless life
- **First Fruits** – Jesus' resurrection.

- **Pentecost** – The coming of the Comforter.
- **Trumpets** – Jesus' 2nd coming in the Rapture.
- **Day of Atonement** – Jesus' 2nd coming in glory to the earth.
- **Tabernacles** – Jesus will dwell with us forever.

Hebrews 10:1 The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. 2 If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. 3 But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. 4 For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Reminder – do not think of the Old Testament believer's efforts to keep the law as a way to salvation. Instead think of the Old Testament believer's efforts to keep the law as a means for fellowship. (The law was much more like 1st John 1:9 than Romans 10:9)

A fact that seems to escape so many is there has only ever been one way to be saved – by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. In the O.T. it was not known that God's promised Messiah would be named Jesus. So, the O.T. believer, Abraham for example, placed his faith in the one God promised without knowing his name.

**Today, we know the one who came, AND we know his name,
Jesus.**

So, whether one was born in Old Testament times and looked forward to the one God would send, or one was born after the cross and looked back at the one God sent (Jesus) the effect of faith in the Promised One works. Abraham was just as saved as Paul but didn't know all that Paul knew – both were saved by grace through

faith. No one was ever saved by keeping the “Law” - God’s means of salvation was always by faith, and never by works.

Atonement – The bible teaches that we have been separated from God because of sin. *Isaiah 59:2 It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.* The need for all men is to be made right, or unseparated from God – in the work of atonement by Christ for us, he has made reparations for our sins so that we can be “at one” with him. God showed the way back to him through a blood sacrifice when he dressed Adam and Eve in coats of skins in Genesis chapter 3.

When we speak of atonement for the sinner, we should really be specific and talk of substitutionary atonement.

First “atonement” – just what does it mean in a Biblical sense? It is to satisfy the justice of God; it is to make amends or reparations for sin, it is to reconcile two parties that have been separated by sin. (God and mankind)

Two words closely associated with atonement are “propitiation” and “expiation” – the first is towards God and the second is towards man. When Jesus died of the cross God’s righteous anger was appeased, it was satisfied, it was propitiated, and for the sinner, our guilt was extinguished. Some might ask you, “Why was God so angry?” and the answer is because sin is exceedingly sinful! (Romans 7:13)

Now let’s look at “substitutionary” – what is the importance of that? The term “substitutionary atonement” does not appear in scripture, but the idea most definitely does. Way back when sin was first introduced to mankind, God begins to signal that while only a bloody sacrificial atonement will do, he will accept an innocent substitute for the sinner.

Day of Atonement – on a single day of the year (Sept-Oct on our calendar) the high priest entered the Holy of Holies with blood to sprinkle on the Mercy Seat. The significance of Yom Kippur is to show us the way into God’s presence was through the blood of an innocent substitute.

In the “laws” that covered the Levitical sacrificial system God was further unveiling how man is to come into a right relationship with him – revealed a little bit at a time. First, it was the vague promise of Genesis 3:15, then it was the coats of skins used to clothe Adam and Eve, and in Leviticus we have the sacrificial system. All those old images and hints were pointing to Jesus’ day when John the Baptist would say, “behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

John 16:12 “There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. 14 He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.”

Key Verses:

Leviticus 1:4, "He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him."

Leviticus 17:11, "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

Leviticus 19:18, "'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD."

Leviticus 10:1 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense

on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. 3 Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the Lord spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.'" So, Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

"The instructions had been clear. The altar of incense was declared by God to be "most holy." When Nadab and Abihu offered strange or unauthorized fire on it, they were acting in clear defiance of God. Theirs was an act of blatant rebellion, an inexcusable profaning of the Holy Place. They committed a sin of arrogance, an act of treason against God: They profaned a most holy place. God's judgment was swift. His explanation to Moses was clear: "I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored." R.C. Sproul

Numbers

Author: Moses was the author of the Book of Numbers.

Date of Writing: The Book of Numbers was written between 1440 and 1400 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The message of the Book of Numbers, is universal and timeless. It reminds believers of the spiritual warfare in which they are engaged, for Numbers is the book of the service and walk of God's people. The Book of Numbers essentially bridges the gap between the Israelites receiving the Law (Exodus and Leviticus) and preparing them to enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy and Joshua).

1st Corinthians 10:6 These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry."

Numbers means, "in the wilderness". Israel made their lives a miserable wilderness by their disobedience.

Key Verses: *Numbers 14:30 You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. 31 "You said your children would be carried off as plunder. Well, I will bring them safely into the land, and they will enjoy what you have despised. 32 But as for you, you will drop dead in this wilderness. 33 And your children will be like shepherds, wandering in the wilderness for forty years. In this way, they will pay for your faithlessness, until the last of you lies dead in the wilderness. 34 Because your men explored the land for forty days, you must wander in the wilderness for forty years—a year for each day, suffering the consequences of your sins. Then you will discover what it is like to have me for an enemy."*

Brief Summary: Most of the events of the Book of Numbers take place in the wilderness, primarily between the second and fortieth years of the wandering of the Israelites. The first 25 chapters of the book chronicle the experiences of the first generation of Israel in the wilderness, while the rest of the book describes the experiences of the second generation. The theme of obedience and rebellion followed by repentance and blessing runs through the entire book, as well as the entire Old Testament.

In Romans 11:22, Paul speaks about the "goodness and severity of God." That, in a nutshell, is the message of Numbers. The severity of God is seen in the death of the rebellious generation in the wilderness, those who never entered the Promised Land. The goodness of God is realized in the new generation. God protected, preserved, and provided for these people until they possessed the land.

God takes obedience to him very seriously – so much so that a whole generation of Hebrews wandered in circles and died in the wilderness without ever getting to the promised land. What happened at Kadesh Barnea? – it was here that Moses sent out 12 spies to see the land God had promised. Ten came back too frightened to move forward and two believed God's promises. The land was all that they could have hoped for with one exception – there were fierce, warring people already in the land.

When the spies returned, only Caleb and Joshua believed that God could enable them to "take" the land from the peoples already there. Israel could have gone in and taken the land quite easily with God's help, but fear set in, and they were punished with 40 years of wandering and forfeiture of ever entering the land. This gives a very vivid picture of how God deals with unbelief and the rejection of his word – **He is not to be trifled with.**

Hebrews 3:5 Moses was certainly faithful in God's house as a servant. His work was an illustration of the truths God would

reveal later. 6 But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God's entire house. And we are God's house, if we keep our courage and remain confident in our hope in Christ. 7 That is why the Holy Spirit says, "Today when you hear his voice, 8 don't harden your hearts as Israel did when they rebelled, when they tested me in the wilderness. 9 There your ancestors tested and tried my patience, even though they saw my miracles for forty years. 10 So I was angry with them, and I said, 'Their hearts always turn away from me. They refuse to do what I tell them.' 11 So in my anger I took an oath: 'They will never enter my place of rest.'"

Just as unbelief kept ancient Israel out of God's promised land of rest, so too even today unbelief is what excludes people from God's promised eternal rest. When people determine that their problems are too big for God to solve, they are treated like Israel at Kadesh Barnea – the fact is that just like the unbelieving Israelites, today's unbeliever excludes himself from what God has promised. It cost ancient Israel their lives and their land – we would do well to remember how God deals with unbelief has not changed.

Deuteronomy

Author: Moses wrote the Book of Deuteronomy, which is in fact a collection of his sermons to Israel just before they crossed the Jordan.

Date of Writing: These sermons were given during the 40-day period prior to Israel's entering the Promised Land. The first sermon was delivered on the 1st day of the 11th month (1:3), and the Israelites crossed the Jordan 70 days later, on the 10th day of the 1st month (Joshua 4:19). Subtract 30 days of mourning after Moses' death (Deuteronomy 34:8), and we're left with 40 days. The year was 1406 B.C

Purpose of Writing: A new generation of Israelites was about to enter the Promised Land. This multitude had not experienced the miracle at the Red Sea or heard the law given at Sinai, and they were about to enter a new land with many dangers and temptations. The book of Deuteronomy was given to remind them of God's law and God's power.

We need to be reminded more than we need to be informed. God's requirements are not hard to understand, they are hard to obey.

The Shema

Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The old unbelieving generation of Israelites who refused to trust God and take the land are now dead, with the lone exceptions of Joshua and Caleb. Allow this to sink in – a whole generation of disobedient Israelites wandered in circles of monotonous misery over a 40-year period because they refused to obey God. It is again time to enter the land, conquer it, and begin to enjoy it – before venturing out though, God uses Moses to remind the people of his promises.

Chapters 1-4 are a summary of Israel’s history since their exodus from Egypt. God provides a strategic edge for Israel using fear - *Deuteronomy 2:25 Beginning today I will make people throughout the earth terrified because of you. When they hear reports about you, they will tremble with dread and fear. Prov 28:1 The wicked run away when no one is chasing them, but the godly are as bold as lions.*

Chapters 5 – 26 are used for Moses to repeat the laws of God that were given to him at Mt. Sinai. Please note that God is not at all reluctant to repeat himself and does so throughout the Bible. When you have a message as powerful as the words of God, we should never be shy about being repetitive – it works.

Perhaps a reason for repeating the law was the first generation seemed to have so little regard for it – they were the disobedient generation. Given the first generation’s light regard for the law, they probably failed to pass it on to their children. The word “Deuteronomy” actually means “second law.”

Chapters 27-30 are full of this proposition – If you obey God, he will bless you, and if you don’t, he will curse you.

Deuteronomy 30:19 “Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! 20 You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying him,

and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the Lord, you will live long in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

In the “Law” books we begin to see the necessity of keeping the laws of God perfectly – and we also begin to see the impossibility of doing so. (And therein lies our problem) In the “Law” books we see the tediousness of the O.T. rituals that Israel was given as a temporary means of being in a place for fellowship with God. We also see that it is repetitive, its laborious, and it had no ending – time after time the O.T. believer had to keep coming back with sacrifices for sins.

Indeed, all false religions are based on tedious, repetitive, works that lead nowhere near God or heaven – and in the end, the very things the doers thought would bring them to God only served to keep them away.

Hebrews 10:8 First, Christ said, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings or burnt offerings or other offerings for sin, nor were you pleased with them” (though they are required by the law of Moses). 9 Then he said, “Look, I have come to do your will.” He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect. 10 For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time. 11 Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. 12 But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand.

Joshua

The Book of Joshua continues the story of the Israelites after the exodus from Egypt. The book chronicles the approximately 20 years of Joshua's leadership of the people after Moses anointed him at the end of Deuteronomy.

- **Chapters 1-12: Entering and conquering the Promised Land.**
- **Chapters 13-22: Instructions for distributing the portions of the Promised Land.**
- **Chapters 23-24: Joshua's farewell address.**

Joshua 1:6 "Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. or then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

The mission of Joshua, the one for which God promised success, was to lead the Children of Israel to victory in conquering the promised land. The promise still lives for God does not promise and then fail to deliver – what he promised will be delivered to the next generation, or the next, or the next; it will come to pass. The promise was already 500 years old; it was so close to fruition 40 years ago but unrealized because of unbelief – Joshua's mission is to lead the people of God to push through their fears.

The theme of obeying the Word of God is a powerful one that we would do well to heed.

Psalm 1:1 Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. 2 But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. 3 They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.

Do not confuse wealth and health with success and prosperity – both may be a part of the blessed life, but neither is required.

The Israelites are now in the land, but what will that mean for a people who have never been anything but nomads wandering around in the wilderness of Sinai? They will now be expected to conquer the land and remember the events by marking them with piles of stones. Each time they erect a monument to God's work among them they will have something to point to as a way of remembering what God did for them – this will build their faith.

Notable Events in Joshua:

- Joshua is appointed as Moses' successor.
- Rahab conceals the spies at Jericho. (She is in Jesus' genealogy)
- The crossing of the Jordan river much like it was at the Red Sea.
- The walls of Jericho fall.
- Joshua asks that the sun stand still – and it does!
- Israel's defeat at Ai. (Caused by Achan's sin)
- The Anakims are conquered – tall people.
- The Canaanites not driven out.
- Cities of refuge set up.

Joshua is a type of Jesus – in fact, his name in Hebrew is Yeshua and Yeshua in Greek is Jesus. While Joshua led the people of God

in conquering peoples and lands, Jesus will ultimately lead God's people in conquering sin.

Romans 12:21 Don't let evil conquer you but conquer evil by doing good. - Jesus conquered sin and we are to conquer our evil behaviors through him (sanctification).

Joshua 23:14 "Soon I will die, going the way of everything on earth. Deep in your hearts you know that every promise of the Lord your God has come true. Not a single one has failed! 15 But as surely as the Lord your God has given you the good things he promised, he will also bring disaster on you if you disobey him. He will completely destroy you from this good land he has given you. 16 If you break the covenant of the Lord your God by worshiping and serving other gods, his anger will burn against you, and you will quickly vanish from the good land he has given you."

The anger of Lord burns against those who engage in idolatry not only because he forbids it, but because it is a sin that undermines our very purpose.

At the end of the book, Israel is finally home – they've claimed the land God promised and they can now settle down, build homes, farm, and maybe even rest. Joshua, as a leader should, reminds the people again of God's promises and God's law as he offers a challenge to God's people of his day and to us as well. The challenge is a rather simple one – choose who you will serve and choose wisely!

Joshua 24:14 "So fear the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. 15 But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."

Judges

Author: The Book of Judges does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the Prophet Samuel was the author of Judges.

Date of Writing: The Book of Judges was likely written between 1045 and 1000 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Judges can be divided into two sections: 1) Chapters 1-16 which gives an account of the wars of deliverance beginning with the Israelites' defeat of the Canaanites and ending with the defeat of the Philistines and the death of Samson; 2) Chapters 17-21 which is referred to as an appendix and does not relate to the previous chapters. These chapters are noted as a time “when there was no king in Israel” (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).



There were 12 or 15 Judges over Israel. Some omit Abimelech, Eli, and Samuel from the list below.

Judge	# of Years
Othniel	40
Ehud	80
Shamgar	
Debiorah	40
Gideon	40
Abimilech	3
Tola	23
Jair	22
Jephthah	6
Ibzan	7
Elon	10
Abdon	8
Samson	20
Eli	40
Samuel	12

God will raise up judges to lead and govern his people but do get the wrong impression of these “judges”. They were far more warriors than judges.

The pattern for the period of the Judges:

- REBELLION - Israel would rebel.
- RETRIBUTION - God would send retribution.
- REPENTANCE - Israel would repent.
- RESTORATION - God would restore them.

And then once they were restored and the pain of their sin had faded in their memories they would rebel again. They went through the same cycle time after time, but it was worse than you might think because each time they would start a new cycle their spiritual condition was a notch or two lower than where they started their previous cycle.

Judges 2:10 When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.

- **Moses’ generation** - “I was a slave in Egypt and God led us out!”
- **Joshua’s generation** - “We’ve come into the land and God helped us settle it.”
- **The next generation** - “We have not seen God work nor have we heard of his work.”

Judges is not the book of the bible you run to when you are feeling down – it is rather dark in that it shows Israel at some of their lowest points. They had great traditions and great leaders in the past that are now gone, and they will have to stand on their own. They will struggle and struggle and struggle.

Israel is now without a strong central government as they had with Joshua, and they still have enemies in the Promised Land

called the Canaanites. Why was the Lord so intent on driving the Canaanites out of the Promised Land? They were the people who lived in Canaan and the chief reason God wanted rid of them was the Canaanites worshipped Baal and his cohort Ashtoreth. (Idolatry)

If I were to ask us to list the most dominant sins of our culture, I wonder how many sins would be named before we would write down idolatry?

“The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him.”

A.W. Tozer

This was Israel during the time of the judges – everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes and that is never a good thing. At least (4) times in Judges we read, "**and there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**" When there is no standard beyond what each individual thinks, then you have no standard at all for right and wrong.

This is America Today

When a nation rejects the Bible, then your truth is just as good as mine. When you have no standard for truth then anything can be justified, and anything can be rationalized.

During the period of the Judges, Israel is sinking spiritually, they are constantly harassed by their enemies, and life is just not good. This period will give rise to the time when the Israelites clamor for a king to rule them like the other nations around them. When we look at how they fared under their judges it is easy to see why they wanted relief.

RUTH

Ruth 1:1 In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land. So, a man from Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab, taking his wife and two sons with him. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. And when they reached Moab, they settled there. 3 Then Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons. 4 The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her two sons or her husband.

Naomi is left alone as a widow with no real means of support. Her only connection to Ruth and Orpah is through dead men. Naomi pleads with her daughters-in-law to go back to their homes, marry someone else, and raise families. Ruth refuses to leave her mother-in-law destitute.

Ruth 1:16 But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. 17 Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"

A kinsman-redeemer is a big part of the book of Ruth - a male relative who, according to various laws of the Pentateuch, had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, in danger, or in need.

In Ruth, we find Boaz who was a wealthy relative of Naomi's – Boaz became Naomi (and Ruth's) kinsman-redeemer. Ruth willingly offers herself to be Boaz' wife. The kinsman-redeemer is

a picture of Christ who comes to redeem sinners from their trouble and rescue them from danger.

Ruth is not a Jew – she was from Moab, but my how godly she was!

Proverbs 31 tells us what a godly woman is like and there we read this, “Reward her for all she has done. Let her deeds publicly declare her praise.”

Ruth 3:11 Now don’t worry about a thing, my daughter. I will do what is necessary, for everyone in town knows you are a virtuous woman. (Spoken by Boaz)

Ruth has a child by Boaz named Obed and through him she becomes the great grandmother of David. What we ought not miss in the story of Ruth is what is pictured for us – God is the redeemer of both Jews AND gentiles. Do not lose sight of the fact that Adam, Enoch, Noah, and even Abraham were all gentiles.

1st Samuel

Samuel the prophet was the last godly judge over Israel. Now Israel would enter a time when the people wanted and needed leadership, but they decided to look for it where they should not have looked. They decided they wanted to be like the heathen nations around them who were ruled by kings.

In time they would know firsthand what the old saying, “**Be careful what you wish for**” means.

1st Samuel 8:4 Finally, all the elders of Israel met at Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel. 5 “Look,” they told him, “You are now old, and your sons are not like you. Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have.” 6 Samuel was displeased with their request and went to the Lord for guidance. 7 “Do everything they say to you,” the Lord replied, “for they are rejecting me, not you. They don’t want me to be their king any longer. 8 Ever since I brought them from Egypt, they have continually abandoned me and followed other gods. And now they are giving you the same treatment. 9 Do as they ask, but solemnly warn them about the way a king will reign over them.”

What Kings Will do to Israel

- Draft young men and women for his service.
- Tax crops and animals.
- Appropriate the best of their animals and servants.
- Place limitations on their personal freedom.

It was not God’s will that Israel be ruled by a king. He will still provide some good ones, but it was not his perfect will. There is God’s perfect will, and there is God’s permissive will for people and nations. (Choose wisely) The word of God is the will of God; combine the word of God with this principle – **Colossians 3:15**
And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For

as members of one body, you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

When there is no verse, and no clear principle, that applies directly to your question of his will, then follow the advice of Colossians 3:15. God will give you peace about a decision if it is within his will and remember, **“when in doubt, don’t”!** The Greek word for “rule” is the one we also get “umpire” from – so when you are unsure, let the peace of God make the calls in your life.

1st Samuel records the history of Israel in the land of Canaan as they move from the rule of judges to being a unified nation under kings. Samuel anoints the first two kings, Saul, and David. The book of 1st Samuel can be divided into two sections: the life of Samuel (chapters 1-12) and the life of Saul (chapters 13-31). The tragic story of Saul is a study in wasted opportunity. Here was a man who had it all—honor, authority, riches, good looks, and more. Yet he died in despair, terrified of his enemies and knowing he had failed his nation, his family, and his God.

1st Samuel 13:10 Just as Saul was finishing with the burnt offering, Samuel arrived. Saul went out to meet and welcome him, 11 but Samuel said, “What is this you have done?” Saul replied, “I saw my men scattering from me, and you didn’t arrive when you said you would, and the Philistines are at Micmash ready for battle. 12 So I said, ‘The Philistines are ready to march against us at Gilgal, and I haven’t even asked for the Lord’s help!’ So, I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering myself before you came.” 13 “How foolish!” Samuel exclaimed. “You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you. Had you kept it, the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.”

Saul’s problem was a familiar one – he refused to obey God, and in doing so set himself up for failure.

Unlike Saul, David, while he eventually had problems with sin, was seldom at odds with obedience to the Lord.

1st Samuel 13:14 (when speaking to Saul) But now your kingdom must end, for the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart.

David was not called “a man after God’s heart” because he was perfect – he was called that because of his relentless pursuit of God.

1st Samuel 16:10 In the same way all seven of Jesse’s sons were presented to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.” 11 Then Samuel asked, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse replied. “But he’s out in the fields watching the sheep and goats.” “Send for him at once,” Samuel said. “We will not sit down to eat until he arrives.” 12 So Jesse sent for him. He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes. And the Lord said, “This is the one; anoint him.”

1st Corinthians 1:26 Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. 27 Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.

There are many times when God seeks and uses the one who seems to be the least likely candidate for an important role – at least not likely in the eyes of the world.

1st Samuel 17:46 Today the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! 47 And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord’s battle, and he will give you to us!”

David had been prepared by God for what in the natural would be an impossible task – confront, defeat, and kill one who was no

doubt twice his height and 3 times his weight. Fortunately for us God specializes in overcoming long odds and slim chances! David took a chance and believed that God would either give him victory or give him rest – he went as prepared as he could and by faith trusted God to do what he couldn't do.

Hebrews 11:1 Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. 2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

2nd Samuel

2nd Samuel is the record of King David's reign. The book begins with David hearing of Saul's death and David becoming Israel's 2nd king. The book of 2nd Samuel can be divided into two main sections—David's triumphs (chapters 1-10) and David's troubles (chapters 11-20).

2nd Samuel records for us one of the Bible's most famous sins- David, at a time when he should have been in the battlefield with his men, sees Bathsheba bathing, sends for her, and commits what we might call a power rape. When Bathsheba tells David she is pregnant, David does the unthinkable – he commits murder to try to cover up his sin by conspiring to kill Uriah (Bathsheba's husband) and quickly takes Bathsheba as his wife. At this point David must have had a guilty conscience, but probably thinks the worst of the matter was behind him.

What he doesn't fully appreciate is that although he thought he had managed his sin nicely, sin is never nicely managed. While David was going on with his life, God was not about to let him get away with such treachery. David is still the man God wanted because though sinful and now exposed, he still wanted God more than his sin.

The verse that follows may well be the most understated verse in the Bible.

2nd Samuel 11:27 But the Lord was displeased with what David had done.

2nd Samuel 12:1 So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: "There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. 2 The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. 3 The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man's own plate and drank from his cup. He

cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. 4 One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, he took the poor man's lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guest." 5 David was furious. "As surely as the Lord lives," he vowed, "any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! 6 He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity." 7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man!

Just as Nathan prophesied, trouble comes to David's house and his family and never really leaves in his lifetime. You see being forgiven of sin is always possible but being rid of the temporal consequences is quite another issue. **Eternal consequences** – done and taken care of with the blood of Christ, but the **temporal consequences** of our sin may well remain.

This book provides one of the clearest references we have to God saving the unborn, and those who never mature to a place where they can understand the gospel. David speaks of the hope he has of seeing his son (who was conceived in the Bathsheba scandal) in heaven one day.

2nd Samuel 12:22 David replied, "I fasted and wept while the child was alive, for I said, 'Perhaps the Lord will be gracious to me and let the child live.' 23 But why should I fast when he is dead? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him one day, but he cannot return to me."

The rest of David's life is one tragedy after another as the consequences of his sin play out. Perhaps it was because David was known as a man in constant pursuit of God, that God could not and did not allow him to go unscathed from his sin. When we have a BIG testimony, we have a BIG responsibility to live righteously.

At the end of his life, David is still writing things like – *2nd Samuel 22:17 "He reached down from heaven and rescued me; he drew*

me out of deep waters. 18 He rescued me from my powerful enemies, from those who hated me and were too strong for me. 19 They attacked me at a moment when I was in distress, but the Lord supported me. 20 He led me to a place of safety; he rescued me because he delights in me.”

Trouble never left his house, but he continued to praise the Lord because he saw God for who he is – the glorious God of the universe who always does what it is best, and what is right.

1st Kings

1st Kings 2:3 Keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn.

Solomon was born following the “Bathsheba” scandal and was in fact Bathsheba’s son. (He was not the son conceived in David’s sin with Bathsheba) He went on to build the first permanent temple in Israel’s history as a dwelling place for God. Solomon started strong – he asked for wisdom instead of wealth and God commends him so strongly for it that he decides to give him both.

1st Kings 3:10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. 11 And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, 12 behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. 13 I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. 14 And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

To give you some idea of how quickly Solomon started to turn away from wholly following the Lord, it took him (7) years to build the temple of God and (13) years to build his own palace. Like his father David, it would be his desire for women that would be his downfall. He went from building a temple for God to building and worshipping idols. (May we all be warned)

We often wonder how such a dramatic fall can come about without the one who is falling being shocked at their own behaviors – the answer is one small step at a time.

Solomon had the pedigree to be king of Israel and had a father who God described as, “a man after mine own heart” yet his decisions would overrule his lineage with respect to the quality of his spiritual life.

Solomon is evidence that God has no grandchildren. Each generation must choose God and his ways for themselves or suffer the pain that flows from ungodly choices.

1st Corinthians 15:33 Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”

Another major takeaway of the period of the Kings is that God’s people were not always the spiritual giants one would expect from a people described as “God’s elect people.” God always maintained a remnant of people who were true to him, and he consistently used his godly ones to keep his promises intact. Israel and Judah had spiritual problems large enough to force God to eventually chasten both kingdoms by having them overrun, captured, and enslaved by heathens.

2nd Kings

2nd Kings 17:18 So the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah.

The Assyrians will conquer Israel, the northern kingdom, and the 10 tribes will be scattered throughout the earth never to be reconstituted until we get to Revelation when God seals 144,000 Jewish evangelists, 12,000 from every tribe.

The Babylonians will conquer Judah, the southern kingdom, and the 2 tribes will remain relatively intact and eventually even return to their land.

Israel and Judah

Israel, the Northern Kingdom, is comprised of all the tribes of Israel with the exceptions of Judah and Benjamin.

Judah, the Southern Kingdom, is comprised of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin – and a few godly Jews from all the tribes in the north.

Life in the divided kingdom - Prophets warn the people that the judgment of God is at hand, but they will not repent. Perhaps the last straw for the northern kingdom was the burning of their own children as sacrifices to Asherah and Baal – God hates hands that shed innocent blood. The Northern Kingdom of Israel is conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. and 136 years later the Southern Kingdom of Judah is destroyed by the Babylonians.

2nd Kings 22:1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. 2 He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn away from doing what was right.

What is interesting here is that Josiah's father and grandfather were evil kings – he had never seen what it is to obey the Lord, yet it seems to come so natural to him. Seemingly, out of the blue Josiah believes God and obeyed him from the time he was 8 years old – does that not make one wonder where that came from?

Given Josiah's unexplained love for God, one must wonder if his great grandfather, Hezekiah, had the foresight to pray for his offspring he had not even seen.

May we be so wise!

To all Christians who grew up without godly examples and influences in their lives as Josiah did, they look at Josiah and say, "I totally get that, for that is my story too"!

2nd Kings 22:9 "Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the Lord.

The major points of 2nd Kings –

- God will judge his people when they disobey him.
- What God's prophets speak will come to pass.
- God continues to keep his promises to his people.

1st and 2nd Chronicles

1st Chronicles 15:16 Then David spoke to the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their relatives the singers, with instruments of music, harps, lyres, loud-sounding cymbals, to raise sounds of joy.

Both 1st and 2nd Chronicles cover the same period of Israel's history as do Samuel and the Kings. A familiar lesson is that obedience brings blessing and rebellion brings judgment from Jehovah God – if he ignored his people's sin, he would be unjust!

Hebrews 12:7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8 If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.

The Book of 1st Chronicles was written after the exile to help those returning home understand how to worship God.

The Book of 2nd Chronicles is an appraisal of the nation's spiritual history which was inconsistent at best.

The books look back at Israel's history and forward to their 'forever king,' Messiah. They know the promises of God to them through Abraham and then reiterated to David - they can see that God has fulfilled them all but Messiah. They have the land, the people, and even the temple, but where is the King?

We have this great picture and promise from God – *2nd Chronicles 16:9* The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

Loosely translated as "God can hardly wait to find and bless those who love him wholeheartedly."

1st Chronicles 4:10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, “Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!” So, God granted him what he requested.

A good case study in rightly dividing the word of truth – the “Prayer of Jabez” was a bestselling book that sold more than 4 million copies, but is it completely accurate?

I read the book myself and enjoyed it very much, but I now have questions about it because of the phrase, “that I may not cause pain.” And while the sentiment is awesome most bible translations translate that phrase as, “so that I will be free from pain”. I checked about 25 different translations and only 1 other rendered that phrase like the NKJV.

There is a world of difference between one not wanting to cause pain, (very noble) and one not wanting to experience pain. Perhaps Bruce Wilkerson selected the phrase based on Jabez’s mother’s selection of his name when she said, “Because I bore him in pain”. Mr. Wilkerson’s use of the is not the point, my point is that not all translations of the bible are the same or equal.

Given that pain often plays a key role in moving us towards God, we should not see Jabez’s words as the secret formula for having a pain free life. Any serious praying person should not use the NKJV rendering of verse 10 because it is far more likely to be answered than asking for a pain free life for us. Here is how the ESV renders 1st Chronicles 4:10.

Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!” And God granted what he asked.

Not to be lost in this rabbit trail is the final phrase in the verse,
"So God granted him what he requested."

2nd Chronicles 7:13 When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, 14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Ezra

Ezra 1:2 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.’”

Themes of Ezra’s writings –

- **Return to Jerusalem**
- **Restore the Temple**
- **Repent of the sins that caused their exile.**

Imagine if you went into a coma as a 12-year-old and came out of it today – would you recognize the current culture?

Ezra tells us about the people of Judah when they returned from the Babylonian captivity. Seventy years in a land hostile to their faith in God, I wonder what they learned. There is a particular emphasis on the rebuilding of the temple the Babylonians had destroyed.

Ezra 3:11 With praise and thanks, they sang this song to the Lord: “He is so good! His faithful love for Israel endures forever!” Then all the people gave a great shout, praising the Lord because the foundation of the Lord’s Temple had been laid.

Ezra 7:9 ... for the gracious hand of his God was on him. 10 This was because Ezra had determined to study and obey the Law of the Lord and to teach those decrees and regulations to the people of Israel.

Notice the sequence above – Ezra experienced God’s hand on him because he studied and obeyed God’s word. He didn’t study and obey because he had God’s blessing; he had God’s blessing because he studied and obeyed.

God’s people begin to drift again – will they ever learn!

Ezra 9:1 When these things had been done, the Jewish leaders came to me and said, "Many of the people of Israel, and even some of the priests and Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the other peoples living in the land. They have taken up the detestable practices of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites. 2 For the men of Israel have married women from these people and have taken them as wives for their sons. So, the holy race has become polluted by these mixed marriages. Worse yet, the leaders and officials have led the way in this outrage."

This is how a leader owns up to the sin of his people *Ezra 9:6 "O my God, I am utterly ashamed; I blush to lift up my face to you. For our sins are piled higher than our heads, and our guilt has reached to the heavens. 7 From the days of our ancestors until now, we have been steeped in sin. That is why we and our kings, and our priests have been at the mercy of the pagan kings of the land. We have been killed, captured, robbed, and disgraced, just as we are today. 8 But now we have been given a brief moment of grace, for the Lord our God has allowed a few of us to survive as a remnant. He has given us security in this holy place. Our God has brightened our eyes and granted us some relief from our slavery..... 10 And now, O our God, what can we say after all of this? For once again we have abandoned your commands!"*

Judah had been delivered from captivity and had rebuilt the temple for worship, but they were anything but spiritually healthy as a nation.

Ezra 9:13 "Now we are being punished because of our wickedness and our great guilt. But we have actually been punished far less than we deserve, for you, our God, have allowed some of us to survive as a remnant. 14 But even so, we are again breaking your commands and intermarrying with people who do these detestable things. Won't your anger be enough to destroy us, so that even this little remnant no longer survives? 15 O Lord, God of

Israel, you are just. We come before you in our guilt as nothing but an escaped remnant, though in such a condition none of us can stand in your presence.”

This is what mass repentance looks like Ezra 10:1 *While Ezra prayed and made this confession, weeping and lying face down on the ground in front of the Temple of God, a very large crowd of people from Israel—men, women, and children—gathered and wept bitterly with him. Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, a descendant of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God, for we have married these pagan women of the land. But in spite of this there is hope for Israel. 3 Let us now make a covenant with our God to divorce our pagan wives and to send them away with their children. We will follow the advice given by you and by the others who respect the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law of God. 4 Get up, for it is your duty to tell us how to proceed in setting things straight. We are behind you, so be strong and take action.”*

The children of Israel had perpetual problems with marrying pagans. So, what is morally wrong about marrying someone who does not share your faith? It is wrong because dead people and living people have nothing in common and see everything through a different world view. (Money, children, sex, work, etc.) If you want to share everything with the one you marry, then you must marry a Christian.

2nd Corinthians 6:14 *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols?*

The children of Israel repeatedly intermarried with pagans and repeatedly fell into misery and sin. The same results should be expected today for Christians who date unbelievers,

The book closes with a list of the offenders in the pagan marriages – can you imagine what would happen in the modern church if we “outed” people for their sins?

Ezra 10:18 Now there were found some of the sons of the priests who had married foreign women: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah, some of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers. 19 They pledged themselves to put away their wives, and their guilt offering was a ram of the flock for their guilt. 20 Of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah. 21 Of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uzziyah. 22 Of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah. 23 Of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is, Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. 24 Of the singers: Eliashib. Of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 8:9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.

Themes of Nehemiah –

- **Rebuild the Temple.**
- **Restore what sin destroyed.**
- **Repent of their complicity.**
- **Return to God.**

Ezra rebuilt the Temple and Nehemiah will rebuild the walls around Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 6:15 So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. 16 When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God.

No matter the condition of Israel's heart, it was known that the God of Israel is to be feared and revered. What has happened to us today that the God of God's people seems to be so lightly regarded?

The power of God's word faithfully preached demonstrated

Nehemiah 8:1 All the people assembled with a unified purpose at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given for Israel to obey. 2 So on October 8 Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand. 3 He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning

until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law..... 5 Ezra stood on the platform in full view of all the people. When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet. 6 Then Ezra praised the Lord, the great God, and all the people chanted, "Amen! Amen!" as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Nehemiah was not at all shy about confronting the people of Israel with their sin.

Nehemiah 13:25 So I confronted them and called down curses on them. I beat some of them and pulled out their hair. I made them swear in the name of God that they would not let their children intermarry with the pagan people of the land.

In our day, we seem to soft pedal all references to sin for fear that we might offend someone – maybe that is what they need!

"If the truth offends, then let it offend. People have been living their whole lives in offense to God; let them be offended for a while."

John MacArthur

Esther

Esther 4:14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther's story is a story of the providence of God. We do not think deeply enough or often enough about the providence of God.

Ephesians 1:11 Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

One of the main characters in the book is Haman, a wicked and powerful man in Babylon who was intent on destroying the Jews. Whether he knew it or not, he was energized by Satan to thwart the promise of God that Messiah would come through God's chosen people. We see God at work to preserve his people and keep the godly line intact for the coming of the Messiah.

The book of Esther takes place in history between Ezra and Nehemiah and is the only book of the bible where God is not even mentioned. It is almost as though God is illustrating how invisible he was to his people during their exile. Queen Vashti, the queen of Persia, loses favor with King Xerxes and through lots of turns and twists Esther emerges as Vashti's replacement as queen.

Esther's story is a lot like the account of Joseph down in Egypt – in both cases a foreign king controlled the destiny of Israel. In both cases, one of God's chosen were so impressive that a foreign king favored them and preserved the people of God. Throughout history, God has been at work to call people to himself, task them with a mission, and then sustain them as they struggle through all sorts of dangers and trials.

Esther's story on the human side is compelling – a little girl loses her parents to death and is sent to live with an uncle (Mordecai) she barely knew in a land she never saw. Her beauty gets her noticed by the king who is looking for a replacement for his queen – and so Esther is forced into the king's harem. Esther's given name at birth was Hadassah - so in addition to losing her parents and her home, she even lost her name.

It would be no stretch at all to say that Esther's life was for one purpose – to save her people from extinction. She wrote no books, invented nothing new, and aside from her beauty was known for almost nothing until her moment came. When her moment in history came, she was perfectly prepared for it.

What if your life comes down to doing years and years of what seems like nothingness to prepare you for a single moment when God uses you greatly?

Job

"What is sin? It is the glory of God not honored. The holiness of God not revered. The greatness of God not admired. The power of God not praised. The truth of God not sought. The wisdom of God not esteemed. The beauty of God not treasured. The goodness of God not savored. The faithfulness of God not trusted. The commandments of God not obeyed. The justice of God not respected. The wrath of God not feared. The grace of God not cherished. The presence of God not prized. The person of God not loved. That is sin."

John Piper

Author: Ancient Jewish traditions credit Moses with writing the book.

Date of Writing: If written by Moses then the date of writing would be roughly 1440 B.C. It may have been the first book of the bible written – there is no mention of priests, or the Levitical system and it seems like Job’s understanding of God was pre-Torah.

Job 42:16 Job lived 140 years after that, living to see four generations of his children and grandchildren. 17 Then he died, an old man who had lived a long, full life.

Job lived another 140 years after his testing and when his testing started, he already had 10 grown children and had accumulated great wealth. Job could have easily been 200 when he died which would make him a contemporary of Abraham by the evidence of his lifespan.

One of the lessons of Job is that our adversary, Satan, cannot touch us or harm us in anyway without first getting permission from God.

*Job 1:8 Then the Lord asked Satan, "Have you noticed my servant, Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil."
9 Satan replied to the Lord, "Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God. 10 You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! 11 But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!"*

Job 2:4 Satan replied to the LORD, "Skin for skin! A man will give up everything he has to save his life. 5 But reach out and take away his health, and he will surely curse you to your face!" 6 "All right, do with him as you please," the LORD said to Satan. "But spare his life.

1st John 4:4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

1st John 5:18 We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them.

2nd Corinthians 4:4 Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

Satan is limited in what he can do to anyone without God's permission. If he could do whatever he wanted he would surely kill everyone as soon as they mature to an age of accountability and doom them in so doing.

Satan's goal is to be worshipped and if he can't get people to worship him, he will settle for them just not worshipping God.

If he were given God's permission, he would stop at nothing to achieve either of his goals.

Another important lesson from Job is we cannot always know the exact source of suffering in this world. Let's be clear – there are times when we know the source of suffering because we caused it, but there are many times when we suffer without knowing the exact cause. This is perhaps the most frustrating kind of suffering – the times when we, or our loved ones, suffer for no apparent reason. In other words, there is no clear “cause and effect.”

Common Sources of Suffering –

- Sowing and reaping what we've sown.
- God is disciplining us.
- Living in a sin cursed world.
- For the Glory of God.

An example of reaping what we sow is the drunkard who comes down with cirrhosis of the liver. Or the smoker who finds he has lung cancer. Or the person who overspends and suffers the consequences.

An example of God's discipline in our lives could be to purge some sin from our lives or perhaps to correct something that is lacking in our lives.

An example of suffering that comes with living in a broken world would be all the issues that come with aging – remember, it was never God's plan that we would grow old and die.

The above three seem rather common to us, but the fourth possible source of suffering is not quite as familiar to us, but perhaps should be.

There are times, and we may not even know it when it happens, when God allows (maybe even causes) suffering so he can be glorified.

John 9:1 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. 2 “Rabbi,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?” 3 “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him.”

The man in John 9 was blind from birth so that God could be glorified? Wow, given what it meant in that day to be blind, that seems so unfair. But we only struggle with what happened to this man when we do not understand the importance of God being glorified – God is glorified when he is revealed. There is nothing I can do to add glory to One who is already perfect – all I can hope to do is to reveal him. (Most likely just parts of him as people see his work in my life or hear his words from me)

The book of Job opens with a scene in heaven where God initiates a conversation with Satan over what a great believer Job was. God is setting Job up to be severely tested, and Satan takes the bait – I say the “bait” because at the end of Job’s testing and suffering every believer from that day forward can point to Job and say, **“God is in control no matter my circumstances.”** A lot of the book is a running debate between Job and his friends who insist Job must be suffering because he had sinned. WRONG!

Do not think for a moment that living a godly life is some sort of insurance policy against hardships – Job was perfect before God and lost his health, his wealth, and his family. Job serves as an example to all of us that believers are not insulated from life’s suffering, and that we need to trust God when we understand what went wrong, and even when we don’t.

John 16:33 “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart because I have overcome the world.”

When all was done and over for Job, God restores to him all that he had lost, plus some.

Job 42:10 When Job prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes. In fact, the Lord gave him twice as much as before!

But, what about his kids? God gave Job 10 more children – and this means he had a total of 20. Ten with him at the time and 10 waiting for him when he went home. (Heaven)

Psalms

Psalms take you vertically through life towards God.

They elevate your thinking of God and will give you peace as you see him more clearly.

Psalms contains the longest chapter of the Bible – Psalm 119, and it is an exaltation of the Word of God.

Psalms contains the shortest chapter of the Bible – Psalm 117, and it is a call to all nations to praise him.

Psalms contains the middle chapter and middle verse of the Bible – Psalm 118, and verse #8 “It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in people.”

When we think of Psalms we think of David as the author, and he did write more than 70 of them, but we also know that Moses, Solomon, Asaph, and the sons of Korah were authors of the Psalms as well. The 150 psalms we have in our Bible were assembled after the Babylonian captivity around 550 B.C. The Book of Psalms is a collection of prayers, poems, and hymns that focus the worshipper's thoughts on God in praise and adoration. (Think of the psalms as the Old Testament hymnal)

The title, “Psalms” means “a song sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument.” According to Paul one of the signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit is singing praise to God.

Ephesians 5:18 Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, 19 singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves and making music to the Lord in your hearts.

Certain psalms are called “Messianic” psalms because they point directly to the Messiah, who we now know as Jesus of Nazareth.

Psalm 22:15 My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead. 16 My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and feet. 17 I can count all my bones. My enemies stare at me and gloat. 18 They divide my garments among themselves and throw dice for my clothing.

Other psalms are classified as psalms of lament – these are psalms where the writer may even sound critical of the Lord as he pours out his heart to God. The writers of the Psalms were unfiltered in their cries to God because they were not required to “hold back” their emotions.

Psalm 44:13 You let our neighbors mock us. We are an object of scorn and derision to those around us. 14 You have made us the butt of their jokes; they shake their heads at us in scorn. 15 We can't escape the constant humiliation; shame is written across our faces. 16 All we hear are the taunts of our mockers. All we see are our vengeful enemies.

A lesson from the Psalms is that it is okay to tell God what you are thinking – he already knows anyway! People pay money to talk to human counselors and therapists because they can express what is in the deepest parts of their hearts and they benefit from the session with the doctor. Well, the Great Physician is always there, always available, and when we are distressed, we should feel free to “cry” out to him.

When life is hard it is almost always helpful to spend time reading the Psalms where we will see the writers pouring out their hearts to God often saying exactly what we are feeling.

Here is an example - *Psalm 145:14 The Lord helps the fallen and lifts those bent beneath their loads. 15 The eyes of all look to you in hope; you give them their food as they need it. 16 When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living*

thing. 17 The Lord is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness. 18 The Lord is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth.

The Psalms tell us that O.T. saints, David, and others, had times of struggle and depression just as they had times of great joy and victory – it comes through in what they wrote. If you have felt it, whatever the “it” may be, there is probably a psalmist that expressed it. We are not robots, we are all a bundle of feelings, thoughts, fears, and joys. In the Psalms, we learn that God can handle our expressions of those emotions and offers his peace in response.

For those who have experienced misery – *Psalm 109:22 For I am poor and needy, and my heart is full of pain. 23 I am fading like a shadow at dusk; I am brushed off like a locust. 24 My knees are weak from fasting, and I am skin and bones. 25 I am a joke to people everywhere; when they see me, they shake their heads in scorn.*

For those who are fearful – *Psalm 27:5 For he will conceal me there when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock.*

For those who have experienced loneliness – *Psalm 25:16 Turn to me and have mercy, for I am alone and in deep distress. 17 My problems go from bad to worse. Oh, save me from them all!*

For those who have experienced sorrow – *Psalm 31:10 I am dying from grief; my years are shortened by sadness. Sin has drained my strength; I am wasting away from within.*

For the brokenhearted – *Psalm 34:18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.*

Psalm 51 is one that every Christian should become intimate with, not because sin leads one to it, but because sin will drive us to it. Psalm 51 was written by David when he felt the full weight of his

sin with Bathsheba – he is crushed by the guilt of his sin and pours out his heart in a way that we can identify with.

A taste of David's repentance - *Psalm 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. 2 Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. 3 For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night.*

Psalm 119 is dedicated to exalting the Word of God – what do you think the chances of it also being the longest Psalm is a coincidence? All but 5 verses (84, 90, 121, 122, and 132) have a direct reference to the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

There is an accurate analogy between having a strong body when we eat food, and a strong spiritual life when we consume the scriptures.

1st Timothy 4:6 In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.

1st Peter 2:1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.

Here is a challenge I do not want you to accept. I want you know the difference between regular feedings on the Word of God and ignoring the Bible. You can either take my word that this is a challenge best left unaccepted, or you can accept it and prove it to yourself.

Should you accept it you will know firsthand of the cleansing and renewing effect the scriptures have on a person as well as the spiritual drift one experiences when left to his own thoughts.

Read your Bible for 30 days and assess your attitudes, thoughts, actions, and so on.

Don't read your Bible for 30 days and assess your attitudes, thoughts, actions, and so on.

You do not have to report your results because I know all too well by firsthand experience what you found.

Proverbs

Proverbs take you horizontally through life.

They give keen insights into how this life generally works, and how people behave.

Most of the Proverbs were written by Solomon – a few were written by others as identified in the book. The book was written around 900 B.C.

Ecclesiastes 12:9 Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. 10 The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

Biblical proverbs are short, pithy, sayings about how life generally works. (a great place to find advice, but probably not so great a place to construct doctrines)

Maybe the most misused Proverb of all is 22:6 *“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*

This is not an ironclad promise that if parents provide the right training their child will be a spiritual giant. If that were so, then salvation and godly living could be accomplished using a parental formula – many a parent has wished this were so.

Perhaps a better understanding of Proverbs 22:6 would be to say, **“train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old “it” (The training) will not depart from him.”** Meaning that “the training” will never leave the child’s mind and can be used by the Holy Spirit to bring a wayward son or daughter to repentance. All that said, training your children to live godly lives is always a good idea and often yields the right results – it’s just not an ironclad promise that you can use to manufacture godly kids.

1st Kings 4:29 God gave Solomon very great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge as vast as the sands of the seashore. 30 In fact, his wisdom exceeded that of all the wise men of the East and the wise men of Egypt.... 34 And kings from every nation sent their ambassadors to listen to the wisdom of Solomon.

Knowledge is nothing more than an accumulation of raw facts, but wisdom is the ability to see people, events, and situations as God sees them. Wisdom is the ability to look at life from God's point of view.

Knowledge – Understanding – Wisdom

- Knowledge is Acquiring a Set of Facts.
- Understanding is Interpreting the Facts.
- Wisdom is Being Able to Apply the Facts.

Proverbs 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: 2 To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight.

Proverbs 4:7 Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! And whatever else you do, develop good judgment. 8 If you prize wisdom, she will make you great. Embrace her, and she will honor you.

Solomon speaks on subjects like personal conduct, sexual relations, business, wealth, charity, ambition, discipline, debt, child-rearing, character, alcohol, politics, revenge, and godliness. **Put Proverbs to the test** – you will find that wisdom does not go out of style and the words Solomon wrote 3,000 years ago are as relevant today as they were in his day. People just do not change much – we get new tools, technologies, and methods, but human nature is what it is.

The “getting” of wisdom is presented in Proverbs as though it is a treasure, or a life-giving stream, or even a Savior.

*Colossians 2:2 I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself.
3 In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

*Proverbs 9:10 Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom.
Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.*

More than a few truths are repeated, and when God repeats himself, pay attention.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

Proverbs 16:25 There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

A recurring theme is that obedience to God brings his blessing. (True of the entire Bible as well)

Proverbs 9:11 Wisdom will multiply your days and add years to your life. (Generally true, but there are still wise, godly people who die young)

Proverbs 3:13 Joyful is the person who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding.

Proverbs 12:21 No harm comes to the godly, but the wicked have their fill of trouble. (Again, generally true, but consider Jesus and John 16:33)

Proverbs 11:8 The godly are rescued from trouble, and it falls on the wicked instead. (Be careful with this – what if you are in trouble? Does that mean you are wicked?)

Proverbs 13:21 Trouble chases sinners, while blessings reward the righteous. (Again, how life usually works)

The book of Proverbs is not a list of God's promises for those who live a godly life, it is a collection of principles to guide those who seek to live a godly life.

Ecclesiastes

Many believe Solomon was in a state of depression when he wrote Ecclesiastes. That would seem to fit him in his later years after pursuing every possible human pleasure in search of meaning only to come up empty. The one who started out so well asking for wisdom instead of riches, ends up in a spiritual fetal position of his own making.

In the end, Solomon understands that a life lived as though there is no God is not a life that holds any meaning or satisfaction. In the opening chapter we read - **Ecclesiastes 1:2 “Everything is meaningless,” says the Teacher, “completely meaningless!”**

But in the closing chapter we read - *Ecclesiastes 12:13 That’s the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone’s duty. 14 God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.*

We are not saved by our works, but we will be judged by our works.

Solomon finds, in the end, because there is an accounting awaiting all of us, that all of life can be meaningful either for, or against us.

Ecclesiastes 7:29 But I did find this: God created people to be virtuous, but they have each turned to follow their own downward path.

We were made to live righteously in a world where all is well, and not in one where we cry “peace, peace, but there is no peace.”

Solomon declares that “God created people to be virtuous,” and this is 100% correct – it was his design that we “glorify God and enjoy him forever”. We speak too often of sin in merely

intellectual terms – we know the Bible condemns it, why don't we?

If something is interrupting the plan of God for every human being, maybe it should be a bigger deal to us than it often is.

Ecclesiastes 8:8 None of us can hold back our spirit from departing. None of us has the power to prevent the day of our death. There is no escaping that obligation, that dark battle. And in the face of death, wickedness will certainly not rescue the wicked.

Solomon raises the subject of death and calls it a “dark battle” that we are obligated to face. We know our lives are slipping through the hourglass of time like so many grains of sand, and the older we get the more serious we should grow about death.

The Bible has good news for all who feel as though our lives are winding down, and for all who sense that death is certain, and perhaps even soon.

“Death to the Christian is the funeral of all his sorrows, and the resurrection, of all his joys.”

John Aughey

“As I go into a cemetery I like to think of the time when the dead shall rise from their graves. ... Thank God, our friends are not buried; they are only sown.”

D.L. Moody

Ecclesiastes seems like the kind of book one would write near the end of life after having the advantage of many years of observation and experience. There is no record that King Solomon ever repented and turned back to God other than the final verses of Ecclesiastes seem to hint that he did. How many do you know who started out strong, cooled off, turned away, and just seemed to fade away without ever coming back?

The big question of Solomon's life is this – just how does one go from asking for wisdom over to wealth, to asking for trouble? I believe it is fair to say that a decline like Solomon's rarely happens overnight – usually sin overtakes us a little at a time. Solomon did not just get up one morning and decide to turn away from God – such a turning takes time and is most likely the product of neglect.

Song of Solomon

Written by Solomon and sometimes called “Song of Songs” because it was probably the best of the 1,005 songs that he wrote.

1st Kings 4:32 He (Solomon) **composed some 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs.**

Written around 965 B.C. to highlight the virtues of love between a husband and wife. It is a love poem.

We should deal with what all of us want to say – Solomon, if making love to your wife is so wonderful because of the closeness it brings then why did you have 700 of them? The clear answer to that question is “LUST” – by definition, lust is wanting more of anything than you ought to have. He could have been sexually satisfied by his wife alone, but he chose to have multiple wives for one reason – because he could.

The fact that Solomon over indulged does not mean that God could not use him to write about the closest relationship on this earth. Husbands and wives, when joined in marriage, are said to be one flesh. (Genesis 2:24) Many believe that the Song of Solomon pictures Christ and his church.

Ephesians 5:31 As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.”
32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ, and the church are one.

The book begins prior to the wedding, goes into the honeymoon, and even covers a “rough patch” in their marriage. The “rough patch” is symbolic of our struggles in our relationship with God, but thankfully reconciliation is always possible.

As erotic as the verbiage is, it also provides a lot of practical insights to a successful marriage.

- Encouragement and praise, not criticism, are vital to a successful relationship.
- Give your spouse the attention he or she needs. Take the time to truly know your spouse.
- Enjoy each other. Plan some getaways. Be creative with each other. Delight in God's gift of married love.
- Do whatever is necessary to reassure your commitment to your spouse. Renew your vows; work through problems and do not consider divorce as a solution. God intends for you both to live in a deeply peaceful, secure love.

Isaiah

The author was Isaiah – *Isaiah 1:1 These are the visions that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. He saw these visions during the years when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah.*

The book of Isaiah was written between 739 and 681 B.C. Isaiah's calling was to prophesy to the southern kingdom of Judah calling them to repentance.

The story of the Old Testament is one of call after call after call from God to his people to repent – and then the New Testament opens with John the Baptist crying, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

Isaiah's ministry seemed at times to be successful and at other times he must have thought he was wasting his breath on Judah. A lesson for us from Isaiah is to never fully evaluate your ministry by what you see – looking for the results of God's call for you can be misleading at times. Instead of looking for results in your ministry, plan to be faithful and leave the results to God. (1st Corinthians 3:6-8)

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.

1st Corinthians 3

Judah was threatened with destruction by Assyria and Egypt but was spared during the days of Isaiah's ministry because of God's mercy. It is a book of judgment AND a book of hope in the eternal things of God. Only the book of Psalms is quoted more in the New Testament than Isaiah.

Three major themes emerge in Isaiah's prophecy –

- The holiness of God.
- God will not allow sin to go unchecked or unpunished.
- God's judgment on sin is a consuming fire.

Some believe that Isaiah was perhaps the greatest prophet of ancient Israel. Isaiah prophesied during some very turbulent times in which the Northern Kingdom was taken captive and the Southern Kingdom was attacked and nearly conquered. His time also coincided with great spiritual and moral decline in both Israel and Judah. (How would you like that on your resume' as a prophet?)

Isaiah 6:1 It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. 2 Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 They were calling out to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of heaven's Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!" 4 Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. 5 Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of heaven's Armies." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7 He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven." 8 Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said, "Here I am. Send me."

Their beloved king Uzziah was dead and with Northern Kingdom already falling into the hands of the Assyrians the people were uneasy. As God's prophet, Isaiah was expected to have a message for the people that would reassure them. Isaiah received a message from God that would not only disturb the people of Judah, but Isaiah himself. Their king of 52 years is gone, the nation

has been attacked, and the people are in distress. So, when Isaiah says he has seen the “sovereign” King of the universe how do you think that is received? Yes, they lost Uzziah (their sovereign king), but they now have a fresh vision of the Sovereign of the Universe!

“I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple.”

Isaiah sees the Sovereign, he is on his throne, his throne is lofty and exalted, and he is of such great power and importance that the train of his robe fills the temple of heaven. Furthermore, there are angels attending to the Sovereign of the Universe and when the Seraphim shout “holy, holy, holy” the very foundations of the temple quake.

Isaiah’s vision of God must be among the most encouraging ones ever, and the most terrifying ever at the same time. In The Revelation of Jesus Christ, we see some very impressive and holy revelations of God as well, but those are mostly visions of Jesus in judgment. John’s Revelation visions are terrifying, but in Isaiah’s vision he is completely undone due solely to the holiness of God – before God says a word, Isaiah is overwhelmed!

“For the first time in his life Isaiah really understood who God was. At the same instant, for the first time Isaiah really understood who Isaiah was.”

R.C. Sproul

Notice Isaiah’s response when he is given this vision of God in all his glory on his throne. *“Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”* Isaiah is the premier prophet of God in his day, he has delivered important messages from God, but when he sees God in his glory all he can do is condemn himself!

So why the focus on his lips? Because our lips speak what is in our hearts.

Luke 6:45 A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.

It appears Israel's greatest prophet is confessing the presence of evil in himself – it took a vision of God for him to see it so clearly. To pronounce a woe upon himself was to curse himself – he now sees himself not compared to other people but compared to God and he is “undone.”

Is this why there is pride in the church? Because we see ourselves as relatively holy compared to other people we selectively choose to measure ourselves against? After all, when we become our own standard for righteousness it becomes rather easy to measure ourselves and then see ourselves as better than we really are.

2nd Corinthians 10:12 “But when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding”.

“Writing ironically, Paul asserts that in their folly his opponents were establishing their own conduct as normative and then finding great satisfaction in always measuring up to the standard”.

Expositor's Commentary

That the world has little respect for God is seen by the way his name is treated. No honor, no reverence, and no awe before him – just casualness at best. From today's texts it is more than obvious that when God is seen and heard from, things happen in us that are inhibited by our shallow thoughts and shallow worship. One day the “glass darkly” will become transparent and we will cry out, “holy, holy, holy.”

Could the state of today's church be due to our failure to disclose and make much of God's holiness?

Like Aslan in “The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe”, God is good, but he is not safe!

A prized verse from Isaiah – **26:3 *You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!*** We all wish that our days and years were filled with peace and serenity – we wish that life was always stress free. However, we live in a sinful world where trouble is the norm and peace can be hard to come by UNLESS we learn to “fix” our thoughts on Christ.

Perhaps more than any other book in the Old Testament, Isaiah focuses on the salvation that will come through the Messiah. Isaiah’s 53rd chapter is a classic O.T. text on the suffering Messiah laying down his life for the sinner. (Also see Psalm 22) Starting in chapter 52, we see the most graphic language in the bible of what it would mean for the Son of God to become our sin offering.

Isaiah 52:13 See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted. 14 But many were amazed when they saw him. His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man. 15 And he will startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not been told; they will understand what they had not heard about. (Chapter 53) 1 Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm? 2 My servant grew up in the Lord’s presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

Isaiah 52:14 his face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man.

The suffering of Jesus should not be depicted as it often is where you see him mildly uncomfortable on the cross with a trickle of blood streaming down his body.

What is far closer to reality was Mel Gibson's "Passion of the Christ" portrayal of Jesus on the cross where his suffering was more evident than usual, but still woefully short of reality.

If we take Isaiah 52:14 literally, and I see no reason not to, then what we need to see in Isaiah's writings is a figure on the cross that resembled a piece of bloody meat – ***"so disfigured he seemed hardly human". "And from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man."***

Stressed beyond measure, beaten nearly to death, gouged with a crown of thorns, and nailed to a cross. God was showing the wages of our sin born in the body of his Son.

And let us also consider his general appearance even before going to the cross – was he really this Scandinavian looking blue-eyed blond with movie star good looks?

Isaiah 53:2 There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

What if Jesus was a short, olive skinned, overweight man with curly black hair, and a rather prominent nose?

Isaiah 53:3 He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. 4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! 5 But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. 6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all. He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

“He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.”

The essence of Calvary’s transaction is found in Isaiah’s words above – on the cross, God punished the sins, of all his people, of all times before Jesus said, **“It is finished.”**

The greatest trade in all of history is the one on Calvary where he took our sins and transferred his righteousness to us. On a transactional basis, think of Jesus paying all that he had for all that we did not want anyway.

“Of course, Protestantism really teaches a double imputation. Our sin is imputed to Jesus and his righteousness is imputed to us. In this twofold transaction, we see that God does not compromise his integrity in providing salvation for his people. Rather, he punishes sin fully after it has been imputed to Jesus. This is why he is able to be both ‘just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus’ as Paul writes in Romans 3:26. So my sin goes to Jesus and his righteousness comes to me.”

R.C. Sproul

Isaiah 53:8 Unjustly condemned; he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man’s grave. 10 But it was the Lord’s good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord’s good plan will prosper in his hands. 11 When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

The innocent, sinless, one died in our place and Isaiah says, ***“it was the Lord’s good plan to crush him.”*** Jesus, prophesied here by Isaiah, gave meaning to what John would write 800 years later on the Isle of Patmos *in Revelation 13:8 “And all the people who belong to this world worshiped the beast. They are the ones whose names were not written in the Book of Life that belongs to the Lamb who was slaughtered before the world was made.”*

Sin did not surprise God, he planned for it!

In Isaiah’s prophecy there is this great section of the Bible that is dedicated to exalting God that starts in chapter 43 and goes on for several chapters. You might call this section the **“self-exaltation of God”** for that is exactly what is happening. Isaiah is holding the pen, but God is speaking. We should embrace the self-exaltation of God as something that is essential for our own well-being – God cannot be exaggerated!

Isaiah 44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

Isaiah 45:21 Consult together, argue your case. Get together and decide what to say. Who made these things known so long ago? What idol ever told you they would happen? Was it not I, the Lord? For there is no other God but me, a righteous God and Savior. There is none but me.

Isaiah 46:9 Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me.

May God have mercy on us for every time we’ve failed to make much of him.

Jeremiah

The Book of Jeremiah was written between 630 and 580 B.C.

The author is established in the opening verse of the book – “These are the words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests from the town of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin.” Like Isaiah, Jeremiah’s prophecy is primarily to the Southern Kingdom of Judah with his writings following Isaiah’s and taking Judah right into the Babylonian captivity.

Jeremiah lived in the final days of a crumbling nation of Israel, Judah in particular. The Northern Kingdom was already under captivity to the Assyrians. Jeremiah was probably in his late teens when God called him to give the people of Judah their final warnings – repent or be punished! He is called the “weeping prophet” because he cared so deeply about the spiritual condition of his country, and it was tearing him apart to see their refusal to heed the warnings of God.

Surely, we can identify with Jeremiah when we see the spiritual condition of our country – he understood the Assyrians and Babylonians were problems, but they were not THE problem.

Like Isaiah before him, he preached for over 40 years without seeing much, if any, success – Judah was simply too far gone to come back without some major pain. In all probability, Judah’s problem may have been as simple as they no longer feared God – simple, but no small matter.

Jeremiah 3:8 She (Judah) saw that I divorced faithless Israel because of her adultery. But that treacherous sister Judah had no fear, and now she, too, has left me and given herself to prostitution.

Jeremiah 1:4 The Lord gave me this message: 5 “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born, I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.”

Sounds like Jeremiah had no choice but to be a prophet of God – there are some things too important to the redemption plan of God to be left to chance, or up to the human will. Jeremiah’s call was very similar to that of John the Baptist as described in Luke chapter 1 – **“He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth”**.

How is this for a statement about the personhood of the one in the womb?

“I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.”

Jeremiah 5:22 Have you no respect for me? Why don’t you tremble in my presence? I, the Lord, define the ocean’s sandy shoreline as an everlasting boundary that the waters cannot cross. The waves may toss and roar, but they can never pass the boundaries I set.

What would Jeremiah say to those in our day who approach God as though he is their peer? How can it be that we have so little respect for the one who commands the oceans and their waves, and they obey?

During the days of Jeremiah’s prophecy, Judah was in the midst of an idolatrous rebellion.

Jeremiah 16:10 “When you tell the people all these things, they will ask, ‘Why has the Lord decreed such terrible things against us? What have we done to deserve such treatment? What is our sin against the Lord our God?’ 11 “Then you will give them the Lord’s reply: ‘It is because your ancestors were unfaithful to me. They worshiped other gods and served them. They abandoned me

and did not obey my word.’ 12 And you are even worse than your ancestors!”

Because he was faithful in delivering God’s message to his people, he led a rather lonely life – God even forbade him to marry and have children. Rare are the people who will embrace truth when the truth is critical of them. Judgment was coming so if there is an upside to being alone and without a family it would be that he would not have to see his family ripped from him when the Babylonians invaded.

After the death of King Josiah, the last righteous king, the nation of Judah had almost completely abandoned God and his commandments. God compares Judah to a prostitute – *Jeremiah 2:20 “Long ago I broke the yoke that oppressed you and tore away the chains of your slavery, but still you said, ‘I will not serve you.’ On every hill and under every green tree, you have prostituted yourselves by bowing down to idols.”*

God was simply carrying out what his law called for as a response to idolatry – severe judgment. (See Leviticus 26) An important lesson for us from Jeremiah is that even in God’s most severe judgments he operates with grace and mercy and almost always provides a way back to himself.

Jeremiah 29:10 This is what the Lord says: “You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again.”

Why is this? Because God is jealous of his possessions, and he always looks for a way to bring them back and restore them.

Israel (technically Judah) went into 70 years of captivity in Babylon because they refused, and refused, and refused to repent. They ended up in a foreign land, under foreign rule, with foreign gods, in a foreign and hostile culture. (The ultimate tough love)

Hebrews 12:7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8 If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.

God does not chasten his people without a purpose – and his purpose is nearly always “repentance”. He wants to redeem, he wants to restore, and he wants to bless his people – if only we would let him! When God’s people get off track, we can expect that he will not let us rest until he brings us back, or until we die – choose wisely!

I know of several people who would sight Jeremiah 29:11 as their “life” verse, and it is a beloved text, but few know the context.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

These words were written to a people who had rebelled against God and were being severely punished with 70 years of hard time.

When the verse is used today it is cast as though God’s plan for you is a bright future AND one that is imminent. Jeremiah 29:11 is a promise of what God would do for His people, but the fulfillment of the promise was a full 70 years in the future. In the meantime, His people would be in captivity in a foreign land, in a foreign culture, and in a place that was not Jehovah friendly.

Like the people of Judah in Babylon, we live in a place that is ruled by the enemy.

John 17:14 I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 15 I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one.

The temptation for us at times is to hunker down, keep our heads down, and try to quietly get through life, but that is seldom God's will for us.

Look at the rest of the text starting in *Jeremiah 29:12* - *"In those days when you pray, I will listen. 13 If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. 14 I will be found by you," says the Lord. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land."*

It is a great truth to know that God has plans and a purpose for your life – but did you know that the promise is just as true in the valley as it is on the mountain top?

The children of Israel had failed God miserably and were carried off into captivity in a foreign land under a foreign government.

So, what did God say to them? He said when this is over you will be a changed people, but I will not have changed and I will hear your prayers, I will release you from captivity, and I will send you back home.

We should take heed to this because God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Another lesson from the Babylonian captivity is that sometimes God's chastening lasts more than hours, days, or even months. Israel had to endure 70 years of captivity under a heathen government and in a land that was not friendly to them. Even if they had turned back to God immediately, the punishment had to run its course to do its work – the only way to exact dross from silver is through intense heat.

Jeremiah 31:31 "The day is coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. 32 This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of

Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife,” says the Lord. 33 “But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the Lord.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,” says the Lord. “And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.”

In the Old Testament Israel broke all the covenants God made with them - In Jeremiah 31 God says “I will” seven times – do you see it? The covenant he is speaking of is the new covenant and it will not fall short because God is doing all the work.

We are saved by grace through faith and not by works!

The New Covenant was 500 years in the future, and it would be the final covenant – it included all who believe and requires nothing from us, but faith. The New Covenant is the promise that God makes with humanity that He will forgive sin and restore fellowship with those whose hearts are turned toward Him.

Luke 22:20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”
(and not the blood of animals)

In the New Covenant God Does all the Work

- **He will send his Son.**
- **His Son will fulfill his law.**
- **His Son will die for the sinner.**
- **His Son will rise from the dead.**
- **His Son’s sacrifice will be accepted.**

“The Prophet Jeremiah had a most difficult message to deliver. Jeremiah loved Judah, but he loved God much more. As painful

as it was for Jeremiah to deliver a consistent message of judgment to his own people, Jeremiah was obedient to what God told him to do and say. Jeremiah hoped and prayed for mercy from God for Judah, but also trusted that God was good, just, and righteous. We too must obey God, even when it is difficult, recognize God's will as more important than our own desires, and trust that God, in his infinite wisdom and perfect plan, will bring about the best for his children (Romans 8:28)."

Throughout the book God has been calling his people to repent. He wants them to hear from him because he can help them. Amid his calls to them he pauses for a moment and turns the tables of communication.

Jeremiah 33:2 "This is what the Lord says, He who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to create it, He whose name is the Lord: 3 'Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'"

Lamentations

The Book of Lamentations does not disclose its author but was likely written by Jeremiah between 586 and 575 B.C. Jeremiah watched as the Babylonians ran roughshod over Judah and Jerusalem even burning the city and the temple to the ground. (Solomon's temple had been standing for 400 years) What happened at the hands of the Babylonians to the people of Judah is a reminder that God keeps his promises even when the promises are not what we want.

Big Thought – even in judgment, even when great pain and distress come our way, having his will be done in our lives is always the best of all possible paths for us.

Lamentations is the account of Jeremiah's regret over the destruction of Jerusalem. It is sort of an epilogue to the book of Jeremiah – Jerusalem was more than just a religious city mentioned in the bible, to Jeremiah it was home. Imagine Jeremiah's pain when he had to stand and see the fulfillment of his own prophecies.

Five chapters, each one 22 verses long – it is an acrostic using the Hebrew alphabet. Imagine writing a poem with line #1 starting with "A", line #2 starting with "B" and so on using all 26 letters of our alphabet. (Psalm 119 is also an acrostic) The book is read annually in most synagogues to remind Jews of how Jerusalem was razed in the past.

Chapter #1 – The Place

Lamentation chapter 1 - The city is empty, the queen is now a slave, her friends are now her enemies, she has lost her home, her festivals are no more, and her sins now form the ropes that bind her.

Great, great is the regret of her people for all that has come upon this city of God was totally avoidable – sin is like that; it gives and gives and then it takes it all away.

Chapter #2 – The Punishment

Lamentations 2:3 All the strength of Israel vanishes beneath his fierce anger. The Lord has withdrawn his protection as the enemy attacks. He consumes the whole land of Israel like a raging fire.

Psalm 9:17 The wicked will go down to the grave. This is the fate of all the nations who ignore God.

Chapter #3 – The Promise

Lamentations 3:31 For no one is abandoned by the Lord forever. 32 Though he brings grief, he also shows compassion because of the greatness of his unfailing love. 33 For he does not enjoy hurting people or causing them sorrow.

God is the ultimate good father who loves his children too much to allow them to sin with impunity.

Chapter #4 – The People

Lamentations 4:5 The people who once ate the richest foods now beg in the streets for anything they can get. Those who once wore the finest clothes now search the garbage dumps for food.

I am not sure it is even possible for any people to prepare for a fall like the one the children of Israel brought on themselves. We should take note.

Chapter #5 – The Prayer

They lost their homes, they lost their wealth, they had no heat, food was scarce, their wives and daughters were raped, young boys were made slaves, and all sense of normalcy was gone.

Lamentations 5:21 Restore us, O Lord, and bring us back to you again! Give us back the joys we once had!

Lam 2:17 But it is the Lord who did just as he planned. He has fulfilled the promises of disaster he made long ago. He has destroyed Jerusalem without mercy. He has caused her enemies to gloat over her and has given them power over her.

The parent in me tugs at my heart when I read this because, as the old saying goes, “this is going to hurt me more than it does you.” God took no delight in punishing his people, but he will take delight in the “fruit” that comes from the discipline.

Notice the writer’s thoughts about God as he watches him allow the Babylonians to come and destroy Jerusalem.

Lamentations 3:22 The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. 23 Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. 24 I say to myself, “The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!”

Jeremiah, even in his grief is arguing that God is proving his mercy towards his people – this time by stepping out of the way of the Babylonians.

As Jeremiah writes each chapter of this poem, he will acknowledge that while the Babylonians were God’s tool, the pain they are feeling is coming from God. While great sorrow is the writer’s first response, he quickly begins to speak of the posture Israel must assume if they are ever to recover. The writer reminds those afflicted by the Babylonians at their door, that if they want restoration, they will have to go through a change of heart.

Lamentations 3:40 Instead, let us test and examine our ways. Let us turn back to the Lord. 41 Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven and say, 42 “We have sinned and rebelled, and you have not forgiven us.”

This is a tried-and-true formula for “getting right” with God.

Ezekiel 33:11 As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness, O people of Israel! Why should you die?

Lamentations is a book about what happens to the people of God when we love our sin more than we love him. It can happen to a nation, a church, and even an individual Christian. When we persist in sin while ignoring the warnings of God, we can expect action from our Father.

Ezekiel

Ezekiel is the author – *1:3 The Lord gave this message to Ezekiel son of Buzi, a priest, beside the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians, and he felt the hand of the Lord take hold of him.*

The Book of Ezekiel was likely written between 593 and 565 B.C. during the Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel's generation were the ones who refused to repent and suffered the brutality of the Babylonians – it was a dark, almost hopeless time in Israel.

Ezekiel was 25 years old and on track to become a priest at age 30 when the Babylonians attacked – he thought his life and career were over. He will discover God is not limited to a land where you are free, or to a land that honors what you do – he will find that God's omnipresence actually does make him "present everywhere". When God called Ezekiel, he was transformed, and he understood that one does not need institutional support and structure to have a ministry.

God had been warning his people of what was coming if they failed to repent – now Ezekiel's job is to sort of reset the repentance equation. Now the message will be – repent and God will see you through this trial and give you hope for the future. Though they have been decimated because of their sin, God is still sovereign and can bring beauty from the ashes of their sin if they will turn back to him.

While God was working through the details of Israel's history to deal with them, he was also illustrating his willingness to forgive men right up to death's door. The thief on the cross was hours from death, yet Jesus told him, "**Today you will be with me in Paradise.**" Israel may be in a bad place physically, but that does not mean God cannot make it a good place spiritually. (He often does)

Ezekiel 1:5 From the center of the cloud came four living beings that looked human, 6 except that each had four faces and four wings. 7 Their legs were straight, and their feet had hooves like those of a calf and shone like burnished bronze. 8 Under each of their four wings I could see human hands. So, each of the four beings had four faces and four wings. 9 The wings of each living being touched the wings of the beings beside it. Each one moved straight forward in any direction without turning around. 10 Each had a human face in the front, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle at the back. 11 Each had two pairs of outstretched wings—one pair stretched out to touch the wings of the living beings on either side of it, and the other pair covered its body. 12 They went in whatever direction the spirit chose, and they moved straight forward in any direction without turning around.

It is not evident in chapter 1, but in chapters 9 and 10 Ezekiel has a similar vision and at that point we learn what he is looking at are the cherubim.

Ezekiel 9:3 Then the glory of the God of Israel rose up from between the cherubim, where it had rested, and moved to the entrance of the Temple.

God's presence began to vacate the temple, and when his glory moved to the door and left, he exposed the city and its people to death and destruction. (NIV study notes)

The glory of the Lord will depart, and the ugliness of the Babylonians will come in unabated. God sent Isaiah, he sent Jeremiah, he sent Ezekiel and others to warn Judah of coming judgment if they did not repent, but they just never seemed to believe any of them.

In chapter 9 the moment arrives when the Lord departs, and the enemy is at the gates – the day Judah thought would never come arrived exactly as promised.

Ezekiel 2:1 “Stand up, son of man,” said the voice. “I want to speak with you.” 2 The Spirit came into me as he spoke, and he set me on my feet. I listened carefully to his words. 3 “Son of man,” he said, “I am sending you to the nation of Israel, a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me. They and their ancestors have been rebelling against me to this very day. 4 They are a stubborn and hard-hearted people. But I am sending you to say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says!’ 5 And whether they listen or refuse to listen—for remember, they are rebels—at least they will know they have had a prophet among them.”

This is sort of the bottom line to all the backslidden – God will convict and call, but the wayward get to respond, or not!

Ezekiel 2:5 “And whether they listen or refuse to listen—for remember, they are rebels—at least they will know they have had a prophet among them.”

No one will ever be able to justly accuse God of not providing warnings of their doom if they reject him. All have his word built into them (Romans 2:12-16), his creation is all around them, and the Holy Spirit is drawing them daily to Christ – none who are lost will have an excuse.

Chapter 28 is a dual prophecy aimed first at a man, the King of Tyre, and then to one who was created and in the garden of Eden.

Ezekiel 28:2 But you are only a man and not a god, though you boast that you are a god. (To the King of Tyre)

Ezekiel 28:13 You were in Eden, the garden of God.... They (the adornments of his position) were given to you on the day you were created. (To Satan)

The prophecy details things about both the King of Tyre and the pre-rebellion Lucifer. It describes in detail the problem with pride that each one had – the King of Tyre and Lucifer. (Take note, pride goes way beyond the “things” of this world) It is from this

prophecy that we get further insights into who Lucifer was before he fell and became known as Satan.

Many theologians believe Lucifer was the cherub that guarded the way to God – a very lofty and important position in Heaven. He is described as **“the model of perfection, full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty,”** but that was not enough for him. Just like the King of Tyre wanted more and more, so too did Lucifer want more and more – he wanted to be God.

It is a common error to think of Satan as one who is ugly – on the contrary he was and still is the “the model of perfection, full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty”.

Isaiah provides even more details on Lucifer’s fall – *Chapter 12:12*
“How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world. 13 For you said to yourself, ‘I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God’s stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north. 14 I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High.’ 15 Instead, you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths.”

Ezekiel 28:15 “You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you.”

Perhaps the saddest day in history was the day that sin entered the universe through the fall of Lucifer. To this day we do not know exactly how or why the first sin happened – there was nothing sinful in Lucifer or outside of him that could have been the cause, yet he sinned.

It seems quite evident God planned for sin to happen without causing it. For without sin, we would know nothing of his grace, his forgiveness, his mercy, his redemption, or his reconciliation.

Sixty times in Ezekiel's prophecy God says "I am the Lord" – he was not going to let them go into captivity with any other message. While the people of Judah probably thought God had given up on them, that was far from true – God does not give up on his people.

Romans 8:39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ezekiel 36:24 For I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land. 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations. 28 "And you will live in Israel, the land I gave your ancestors long ago. You will be my people, and I will be your God."

It would appear at least the above was fulfilled May 14th, 1948.

Encyclopedia Britannica 1911 edition – “the possibility that we can ever again recover the pronunciation of ancient Hebrew is as remote a possibility as that of a Jewish empire ever again being established in the middle east.”

Today, in the middle east many Jews are speaking ancient Hebrew in their ancient homeland!

A big lesson from Ezekiel's prophecy is that we must learn to persevere no matter our circumstances and be the models of those who overcome.

1st John 5:5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Ezekiel thought his life and career were over, but what he found was that God was expanding his ministry far beyond what we had ever dreamed.

Daniel

The walls of ancient Babylon were 85' thick, 300' tall, and every 65' there were watchtowers even higher. The circumference of the city was 60 miles, the whole city was surrounded by a mote, and the Euphrates River flowed through its center.

The Book of Daniel identifies the Prophet Daniel as its author in *Daniel 9:2* *"During the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, learned from reading the word of the Lord, as revealed to Jeremiah the prophet, that Jerusalem must lie desolate for seventy years."*

The book was written between 540 and 530 B.C. The book is a must read for any sort of accurate understanding of "eschatology" and the prophecies by John in The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Some have said that the best way to divide the book is the 1st half is all the stories Christians know and the 2nd half is all the prophecies Christians don't. Daniel is also filled with examples of Daniel and his friends refusing to be assimilated into a pagan culture. They even demonstrated they would rather die than bow down to worship pagan gods and just "go along" to "get along."

Sounds a little like Joseph in Egypt, and Esther in Persia does it not? Joseph, Esther, Daniel, and his friends all found favor from pagan kings in pagan lands without ever actually joining the culture they were in. That is the task of all of us today – we have not been forced to move into a pagan culture, but it has moved in on us.

When Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, conquered Judah and took as captives its people, Daniel was among the younger generation in Judah.

Daniel and his friends earned a certain privileged status in the King's court – *"1:19 The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and*

Azariah. So, they entered the royal service. 20 Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.”

Where do kids like this come from? Their parent’s generation was a big part of the problem – along with previous generations they let Judah sink so low that the only remedy was radical surgery.

God’s people would have to be cut-off from everything comfortable, everything familiar, and all that made them feel secure to be salvaged.

When the book of Daniel opens, we have at least 4 young men who were living for the Lord and able to stand up against all of Babylon’s pressures to conform. They and their countrymen are being judged and amid such persecution we have a few who seem not only unaffected by it, but ready to serve the Lord in it! Daniel and his friends seem determined to adjust and adapt while not embracing the culture around them.

“Seducers are more dangerous enemies to the church than persecutors.”

Matthew Henry

King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream and asks the impossible from his wisemen and magicians – “tell me not only what my dream means but tell me what it was”!

Daniel not only had the King’s favor for his wisdom, but he was also able to interpret dreams.

In Daniel 2:27 Daniel replied, *“There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can reveal the king’s secret. 28 But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. Now I*

will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed.”

Notice who gets the credit. “There is a God in Heaven who reveals secrets.”

Daniel 2:29 “While Your Majesty was sleeping, you dreamed about coming events. He who reveals secrets has shown you what is going to happen. 30 And it is not because I am wiser than anyone else that I know the secret of your dream, but because God wants you to understand what was in your heart. 31 “In your vision, Your Majesty, you saw standing before you a huge, shining statue of a man. It was a frightening sight. 32 The head of the statue was made of fine gold. Its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs were bronze, 33 its legs were iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and baked clay. 34 As you watched, a rock was cut from a mountain, but not by human hands. It struck the feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits. 35 The whole statue was crushed into small pieces of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. Then the wind blew them away without a trace, like chaff on a threshing floor. But the rock that knocked the statue down became a great mountain that covered the whole earth.

King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about the kingdom’s of the earth.

- **Babylon – Head of Gold – 625 BC to 539 BC**
- **Medo-Persia – Chest of Silver – 539 BC to 331 BC**
- **Greeks – Belly of Bronze – 331 BC to 63 BC**
- **Romans – Legs of Iron – 63 BC to 476 AD**
- **End-Time Kingdom – Mixture of Iron and Clay (dates ??)**

A big for lesson from Daniel’s life is that though he was forced to live in pagan conditions in a foreign society, he remained true to God. Though he was blessed and held some privileged positions in Babylon, he was like Moses in that he rejected the pleasures of sin for a season.

Hebrews 11:26 He (Moses) thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward.

Daniel's friends had a solid grasp on eternal values too ...

Daniel 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. 18 But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are a great example of trusting God to deliver them without trying to dictate how it should be done – now that is trust!

Of all the O.T. prophecies about the "end times," Daniel chapter 9 may contain the most important ones of all. It is in his chapter 9 prophecy that Daniel unlocks God's timetable for his redemption plan. As exciting as "end time" events are to talk about, never forget that the same events are still primarily about God's plan of redemption.

Daniel 9:24 "A period of seventy sets of seven has been decreed for your people and your holy city to finish their rebellion, to put an end to their sin, to atone for their guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to confirm the prophetic vision, and to anoint the Most Holy Place. 25 Now listen and understand! Seven sets of seven plus sixty-two sets of seven will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until a ruler—the Anointed One—comes. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defenses, despite the perilous times. 26 "After this period of sixty-two sets of seven, the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing, and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple. The end will come with a

flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end. 27 The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him.”

Daniel’s prophecy is a comprehensive view of God’s timetable for at least these things to happen:

- For God’s people to finish their rebellion.
- To put an end to their sin.
- To atone for their guilt.
- To bring in everlasting righteousness.
- To confirm the prophetic vision.
- To anoint the Most Holy Place. (Jesus is our tabernacle)

The drawing below will show you the following:

- The “seventy sets of seven” turn out to be 70 sets of 7 years, or 490 years in all.
- The 490 years started with the command in Nehemiah 2 to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
- 483 years counted off, Messiah was crucified, and then the countdown to the 490 years was paused awaiting a restart for the final 7-year period that will become known as “The Great Tribulation”. (We live in that pause between week 69 and week 70)

Writing Prophets:

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- Daniel
- Hosea
- Amos, and so on.

Speaking Prophets:

- Nathan
- Elijah
- Elisha
- Samuel
- And a few more.

Let's begin by stating there is nothing "minor" about what we commonly call "the Minor Prophets". The total number of chapters in the Minor Prophet books is 67 - Isaiah has 66 chapters. There are a total of 1,050 verses in the Minor Prophets and 1,291 in Isaiah. Put them together and you have a king-sized book of the Bible.

Some perspective on the prophetic books, both the major and the minor ones – we will see words like, "**the word of the Lord came to me,**" or "**in my vision I saw.**"

The usual progression was for the prophets to speak what God gave them to the people God wanted to speak to. Then later, they would write it down. Spoken to the people of the day, and then preserved in writing for the people of the future.

Hosea

Hosea 1:1 The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel.

The Book of Hosea was likely written between 755 and 725 B.C.

The book is a graphic illustration of a faithful husband's unbending love for an unfaithful wife – analogous to God and Israel. The whole analogy begins when God instructs Hosea to marry a promiscuous woman named Gomer.

Hosea 1:2 When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord." 3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

If you marry a loose woman (or man) the results of such a choice will almost certainly be unfaithfulness and heartache.

We look at what God asked Hosea to do, and we probably think, "why would God set Hosea up for such pain?". One might be tempted to say that God treated Hosea unfairly, but that is an empty charge for God is ultimately concerned for his glory and the good of his people, and that included Hosea. If making Hosea uncomfortable is what will make him see how Israel was treating God, then so be it if that is what it takes for him to passionately prophesy to Israel.

The first 3 chapters detail for us what it is like to be married to an unfaithful spouse. It is a vivid description of the relationship Israel had with God – He was ever-faithful, and she (Israel) was constantly running after other gods. Who can argue that God does not do his part in keeping his relationship intact with his people?

(2nd Tim 2:13 If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.)

Hosea 1:3 So Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she became pregnant and gave Hosea a son. 4 And the Lord said, "Name the child Jezreel (judgment is coming), for I am about to punish King Jehu's dynasty to avenge the murders he committed at Jezreel.

Hosea 1:6 Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means "not loved"), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them.

Hosea 1:8 After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. 9 Then the Lord said, "Call him Lo-Ammi (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

Hosea's **Marriage** illustrates Israel's unfaithfulness, rejection, and restoration. (1:2-3:5)

- Like Hosea's wife strayed from him and broke his heart, so Israel was unfaithful through idolatry and grieved the heart of God.

Hosea's **Message** describes Israel's unfaithfulness, rejection, and restoration. (4:1-14:9)

- A key message we have seen before, when we are unfaithful, God remains faithful and will pursue and woo his children back to himself.

Hosea was a faithful husband, as God was faithful to Israel despite the infidelity of their love objects. Hosea's prophecy reminds us that while God is a God of love, mercy, and great patience, there are limits to his patience. As two of Gomer's children's names suggest – while God will never stop loving us, he may stop showing his love for us in ways that may be painful.

Israel was habitually unfaithful and running from God, but he is ever faithful and pursues them still!

*Hosea 2:22 And they in turn will answer, 'Jezreel'—'God plants!'
23 At that time I will plant a crop of Israelites and raise them for myself. I will show love to those I called 'Not loved.' And to those I called 'Not my people,' I will say, 'Now you are my people.' And they will reply, 'You are our God!'"*

Joel

Joel is the author of the book known by his name and was likely written between 835 and 800 B.C.

God uses a locust invasion to prophesy through Joel how he deals with sin as well as a huge event in the last days. Just as the swarms of locusts came in waves so will God's judgments on sin come in waves in the Great Tribulation.

The theme of Joel is the **Day of the LORD**, a phrase that is found 5 times in Joel as well as 14 times in the rest of the prophets. In its larger meaning the term, "**Day of the Lord**," refers to an eschatological event known more commonly as the Great Tribulation.

Isaiah 13:9 Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.

Joel 1:13 Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar.

The need in Joel's day for Judah is the same as the church's need today – **REPENTANCE**. Notice who the onus is on to lead God's people in repentance, the "priests" – who is that today? Church leaders, not just the professionals, but anyone who has followers.

Joel 2:12 "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 13 and rend your hearts and not your garments."

Considering the coming judgment, the people of God are to "rend (tear) their hearts" so that they are open to the work he wants, even needs, to do in them. Joel understood that repentance can be just a show, or it can be real – there is a difference.

Joel 2:17 Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

"Between the vestibule and the altar" – to be in this spot in the temple places one directly at the entrance to the Holy Place where the priests ministered daily. It is to draw near to God – and as James said, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."

Joel 2:18 Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. (Godly jealousy)

Deliverance from the drudgeries of a sin-stained life always begins with God, "then the Lord." We may have been laboring in prayer, we were keenly aware of the spot we were in, but until God responds and begins to pour life into our hearts, we will do no better than to experience regret.

In the future "day of the Lord" when his people repent, he will step in and turn back the enemies of Israel in the valley of Armageddon.

Notice it is the "northerner" that is mentioned – probably Gog and Magog which can be traced to the areas of modern-day Russia and perhaps Turkey as well. Noah's one grandson was named Magog and he settled in the north above Israel – Gog is the land he settled.

Joel is sometimes called "the prophet of Pentecost."

Joel 2:28 "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun

shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.”

What happened in Acts is still not the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy – how do we know that? Joel tells us - **“And it shall come to pass afterward.”**

Joel’s 2:28 prophecy is for “after” some things, not the least of which is described in 2:27, “You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame.”

Joel 3:2 I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land.

Jehoshaphat means, “Jehovah is Judge.” When you see “the Valley of Jehoshaphat” you can usually assume it is synonymous with Armageddon.

Joel 3:14 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great. 14 Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.

When God speaks of judgment he often speaks in agricultural terms. If you grow a life without God, he will give you the eternity you seem to prefer – a life without him! Armageddon was the biggest agricultural valley in Israel, so it is fitting that the biggest judgment happens there as well.

Joel 3:16 The Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earthquake. But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.

As was pictured by the locusts, judgment is coming upon the land – a judgment so bad that the earth will quake. But for those willing to turn from sin to God (the definition of repentance) there is hope and a place of refuge.

Amos

The Book of Amos was likely written between 760 and 753 B.C. and was written by Amos. Amos prophesied during the reign of Uzziah over Judah (792-740 BC) and Jeroboam II over Israel (793-753 BC). Amos wrote during a time of idolatry, extravagant indulgence in luxurious living, immorality, corruption of judicial procedures and oppression of the poor. (Sounds like we in America should pay attention)

Amos was a shepherd and a fruit picker when God called him to prophesy to the northern kingdom, Israel. You might say that Amos was a redneck – he came from a remote village near Bethlehem. A farmer from a little-known village in the southern kingdom with almost no training, no experience, and no prophet's pedigree, is called by God to warn the northern kingdom of coming judgment.

God often uses the uneducated and unsophisticated. He chose David over Saul, he plucked Moses from the back side of the desert, and he chose fisherman over rabbis to found the New Testament church.

Oracles & Utterances (Chapters 1:3 – 2:16) Poetic prophecies of impending judgments on the nations that surrounded Israel. They would not escape God's judgment any more than Israel would. Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and Judah. When one sees those nations on a map they all point to Israel right at the center of culpability for sin.

The oracles to the surrounding nations announcing the judgements to come on them are followed up with a series of **sermons to Israel. (Chapters 3 – 6)** Amos 3:11 Therefore thus says the Lord God: "An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be

plundered.” The major judgment will be the Assyrian plundering and imprisonment of the whole northern kingdom.

Amos 4:6 “I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, **yet you did not return to me,**” declares the Lord. 7 “I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain would wither; 8 so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied; **yet you did not return to me,**” declares the Lord. 9 “I struck you with blight and mildew; your many gardens and your vineyards, your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured; **yet you did not return to me,**” declares the Lord. 10 “I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt; I killed your young men with the sword, and carried away your horses, and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils; **yet you did not return to me,**” declares the Lord. 11 “I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; **yet you did not return to me,**” declares the Lord. 12 **“Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!”** 13 For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth— the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name!

Amos 4:12 Prepare to meet your God, oh Israel.

These words sound as though they are coming from one who is deeply disappointed and frustrated with a people, he has been so patient with, and yet they seem to have no interest in doing the right things. One of the simplest yet clearest tests of saving faith is in the answer to this question – “do you have a desire to know and serve God?”

1st John 2:3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

“keep” = Greek “tay-reh-o” which means to guard by keeping your eye upon.

The point of John’s words is quite clear once you know the meaning of the Greek word for “keep”. If we relied on the English meaning we would all be hopeless because no one keeps his commandments. Thankfully the Greek for “keep” has to do with keeping your eye on his word and trying to align your life with the Bible – now that puts the goal of “keeping” his commandments within our reach.

Amos 5:21 “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.”

God rejected their rituals – they were very religious, but God was unimpressed and rejected their offerings.

Amos 5:23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps, I will not listen. 24 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

In a sense God was saying, “stop it with all the incidentals and start loving me and loving others or your worship is a farce.”

The sermons to Israel are followed up with a series of prophetic visions God gave to Amos concerning Israel. (Chapters 7:1 – 9:10) Dreams from God occur when one is sleeping and visions from God occur when one is awake. In this section God is going to reveal to Amos a series of visions that will come to pass against his people, Israel.

The Visions of Amos

In Amos chapter 7 Amos sees locusts coming to destroy the vegetation and Amos prays for forgiveness for his people. The Lord relents and spares them.

Again in Amos chapter 7 Amos has a vision of fire sweeping across the land destroying crops and vegetation. Amos again seeks forgiveness for his people and the Lord spares them again.

Again in Amos chapter 7 Amos has a vision of a plumb line set up by the Lord to measure the behaviors of Israel against his commandments and the punishment will be the destruction of the idols in the land. Amos does not seek forgiveness and the Lord follows through on his pronouncement.

In Amos chapter 8 Amos has a vision of Israel as a bowl of ripe fruit signaling they were ripe for judgment. God does not relent and sends judgment on his people.

In Amos chapter 9 Amos has a vision of the destruction of the Temple and it will be carried out.

Amos 8:11 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord God, "when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. 12 They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it."

This is perhaps the saddest and most subtle of the judgments God brought upon his people – it is the one that would ultimately sting the most.

The visions to Israel are followed-up with a message of hope for a repentant Israel. (Chapter 9:11-15)

Amos 9:8 "Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," declares the Lord.

When God brings his people to a place of repentance a remnant will be saved and eventually liberated.

Amos 9:13 “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, 14 and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. “They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. 15 I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,” says the Lord your God.

Wow, what a restoration Israel will experience - prosperity so great there will not be enough time to gather in all that God provides before it's time to plow again.

Principles:

- There is always a place for a faithful messenger.
- God will qualify you for the task he has for you.
- Some of God's best spokesman came from obscurity – Spurgeon, Moody, and maybe you.
- God always warns before he judges.
- Sin always has consequences, no exceptions.
- It is a great privilege to be fed from the Word of God.

Obadiah

We know exactly nothing about Obadiah beyond what he tells us as the book opens - he was a man who was given a vision by God. Obadiah means “the Lord’s servant”, or “worshiper of Yahweh” and the name was rather common in the Old Testament. It is believed the author of the book Obadiah is not any of the other Obadiah’s mentioned in the bible.

The Book of Obadiah was likely written between 848 and 840 B.C. by Obadiah, (1:1 *This is the vision that the Sovereign Lord revealed to Obadiah concerning the land of Edom.*) Obadiah is the shortest book in the O.T. and the third shortest in the Bible. (Only 2nd and 3rd John are shorter) Obadiah’s prophecy is a condemnation of Edom – the descendants of Esau. (Jacob’s twin brother)

Regarding Jacob and Esau, both were eventually given new names that would stay with them.

- Esau became Edom in Genesis 25
- Jacob became Israel in Genesis 32

8 Indictments Against Edom

Obadiah 1:12 “You should not have gloated when they exiled your relatives to distant lands. You should not have rejoiced when the people of Judah suffered such misfortune. You should not have spoken arrogantly in that terrible time of trouble. 13 You should not have plundered the land of Israel when they were suffering such calamity. You should not have gloated over their destruction when they were suffering such calamity. You should not have seized their wealth when they were suffering such calamity. 14 You should not have stood at the crossroads, killing those who tried to escape. You should not have captured the survivors and handed them over in their terrible time of trouble.”

The Edomites took pleasure in seeing their “relatives” be enslaved to others whether it was to Egypt or later to Babylon. When things would go bad for Israel, they would take pleasure to such a degree that they were described as being joyful. When Israel would get down, mostly because they deserved a spanking, the Edomites would speak about their situation in arrogant terms.

On at least one occasion it seems they actually joined in with the enemies of Israel to cause them harm.

Obadiah 1:14 “You should not have stood at the crossroads, killing those who tried to escape. You should not have captured the survivors and handed them over in their terrible time of trouble.”

In short – Esau’s descendants possessed more than just a casual dislike of Israel, but a hatred for them.

Edom is guilty of all the charges in God’s indictment of them and there is nothing vague about their behaviors towards Israel. Among any fair-minded persons, the charges against Edom are all behaviors we should find despicable. God did not set-up some vague arbitrary list of rules that Edom could not obey – no, Edom violated what we might call the bare minimum standards of human decency.

You might say, **“be warned all who take pleasure in the downfall of others, all who fail to assist the hurting, and all who turn their backs on God’s people.”** The warning is that no matter our spiritual condition our works ALWAYS matter! Whether at the Bema Seat or the Great White Throne, what we do with our time, talent, and treasure matters.

“One might imagine that, because of all the trouble Israel and Judah have suffered at the hands of the Edomites down through history, Obadiah would have written his prophecy against Edom with great antagonism: ‘These are our enemies, and they deserve this!’ This, however, does not seem to have been the

case. A sadness seems to run through the book; there is a sense that Obadiah's poetry is a lament for an entire people caught in the act of rebellion against God.”

Richard Ritenbaugh

Jonah

What is Jonah about? It is about Jonah's disobedience to one of God's missions.

What is Jonah about? It is about Jonah's cold-hearted disregard for the Assyrian people.

What is Jonah about? It's about how one of the most successful evangelists ever can still be miserable.

What is Jonah about? It's mostly about Jonah

How did Jonah survive in the whale (or fish)? There are lots of theories as to how Jonah survived for 3 days in the guts of a great fish, but no conclusive answers. Most likely answer – just as God supernaturally prepared the whale to swallow Jonah, he could have kept him alive supernaturally.

Are there great fish large enough to swallow a man whole?

Of course! Keep in mind that modern animal classification systems weren't exactly in use at the time of Jonah. Any aquatic creature could be referred to as a "fish." And we know there are whales (blue and sperm) and even sharks (great white and whale sharks) that can swallow a man whole.

The sperm whale grows to a length of up to 70 feet. Its esophagus is approximately 50 cm (20") wide and "sperm whales don't have to chew their food - so Jonah could have been swallowed whole." Two marine scientists from Sea World in San Diego hypothesize that it was a great white shark that probably swallowed Jonah. (From Answers in Genesis)

Jonah found out the hard way what Adam and Eve learned when they tried to hide in the garden, and what we all probably know intuitively – you cannot hide from God.

Jonah heads for Joppa instead of Nineveh and perhaps feels safe enough down in the ship to take a nap. The spiritual insights of the ship's crew are spot on – **“Get up and pray to your god! Maybe he will pay attention to us and spare our lives.”**

Jonah confesses that he is running from the true God, Jehovah, and since the crew had heard of the Hebrew God, they were terrified. To Jonah's credit, he does say, **“Throw me into the sea, and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault.”** The sailors, now faced with their own death, make every effort to spare Jonah's life, but finally relent and throw him into the sea.

As for Jonah, **“And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”**

No less than (4) times the word “appointed” appears in this book – it points us to the providence of God. In chapter 4 God is said to have appointed a “gourd”, a “worm”, and a “strong wind and the sun” – all to teach Jonah about his mercy to the Ninevites.

What is interesting about Jonah's arrival in Nineveh is that Dagon, the god of the Ninevites, is the “fish god.” Do you think a man with a message, who was delivered to your city via your god, could attract an audience?

Jonah 3:4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

Allow me to remind you that Nineveh was not offended by preaching on judgment – evidently the Holy Spirit had them prepared to hear the truth. For some reason we've been convinced that sinners need to be shielded from the truth.

While we are not given the exact words Jonah said, we are given this “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” Did he say more than that? Perhaps, but it is also true that when the Holy Spirit has someone prepared, they only need the basics. Romans 2:12-16 tells us the gospel is imprinted on our soul so maybe all they needed was just confirmation.

Jonah preaches, Nineveh repents, and Jonah sulks – talk about God using someone with a bad attitude! Jonah sits under a plant that he is thankful for, then the plant dies, he loses his shade, and he feels bad for the plant! God will refocus him with these words.

Jonah 4:10 And the Lord said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

Regarding the phrase, “more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left”. Scholars are split on this – was it 120,000 small children or 120,000 people who did not know right from wrong? I believe it is the former – again based on Romans 2 where we learn that people are born with a clear sense of right and wrong.

So here we find clear evidence of what seems to escape so many – that God, while blessing and using Israel in the O.T., has always been about the redemption of the Jews AND Gentiles.

Jonah 4:2 And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

Jonah was a very unusual evangelist - he feared that the Ninevites would listen to his preaching and repent.

More than 100 years after Nineveh repented, the city was destroyed, but the people of Nineveh who heard Jonah may well be our neighbors in Heaven.

Jonah 2:9b "For my salvation comes from the Lord alone."

Jonah lived after the law, and after animal sacrifices were codified in Israel, but he seems clear that salvation is, and always has been by grace through faith, not by works.

Micah

The Book of Micah was likely written between 735 and 700 B.C. and the author was Micah. (1:1 *The Lord gave this message to Micah of Moresheth during the years when Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. The visions he saw concerned both Samaria and Jerusalem.*)

Micah 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

The above was prophesied 700 years in advance of Christ's birth.

Micah 1:2 Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. 3 For behold, the Lord is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. 4 And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. 5 All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?

Once the Lord has indicted you, what will you have for an answer? The nation of Israel's sins are evidenced by what is seen in their cultural centers, Samaria and Jerusalem. Naming their chief cities as their transgressions is a way of saying apostasy, which led to cultural rot, was their problem.

Think about the situations in Samaria and Jerusalem from God's point of view. He called Israel, he blessed Israel, and he was faithful to protect and bless them when they obeyed – and in Micah's day there was plenty of history of this to prove it.

Yet, Israel was consistent in just one thing – their inconsistent obedience to God. (The worldly Christian?)

Most of his prophecies are warnings to Judah, but he also foretells the Assyrian invasion and the conquering of the Northern Kingdom. His warnings to Jerusalem (Southern Kingdom) are around their eventual enslavement to Babylon. Judah will be enslaved for one main reason - because of their spiritual condition and their spiritual leaders in particular.

There is an absolute connection between the spiritual condition of a nation and the culture of that nation.

Micah 2:1 Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand.

See what Micah says – no one had to coerce those with power to use it for their own benefit. Before they got out of bed in the morning, they were already asking themselves, “how can I steal from others today?”

Micah 3:1 And I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice? — 2 you who hate the good and love the evil.

The very ones who should have been pointing out the evil around them are the perpetrators of it! They proved their inverted morality by hating good and loving evil.

God’s judgment on Israel is going to be done by a pagan empire, Assyria. (Micah 5 and 7) How humiliating to be conquered and chastened by people who are actually more wicked than you are! There is however justice in this equation – all things being equal Assyria was worse than Israel, but all things were not equal, those with the law of God are always more accountable.

A huge lesson from Micah is that God will warn of impending judgment when sin reaches a certain point in a society. If there is repentance, his judgment can be stayed, and perhaps even avoided completely. If there is no repentance, God may not act quickly, but he will always act decisively, and on his timetable. (150 years between Israel and Judah's judgments)

Micah 6:6 What can we bring to the Lord? Should we bring him burnt offerings? Should we bow before God Most High with offerings of yearling calves? 7 Should we offer him thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for our sins? 8 No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

The formula for pleasing God is quite simple – do what he requires. (Obey him!)

Micah asks a series of rhetorical questions about how to behave in a way that pleases God. It's almost like he is intentionally asking questions he knew were the wrong ones. However, he reaches the right conclusion, **“do the right things while extending mercy and remaining humble”**.

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. 19 He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. 20 You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

The name of Micah means - “Who is like the Lord.” Both Israel and Judah will experience God's power as they are trampled under his instruments, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians. But in his closing words Micah will emphasize the mercy and compassion of God as opposed to his power.

Nahum

The Book of Nahum was most likely written between 663 and 612 B.C. - it is one of the more difficult O.T. books to determine when it was written. **It is clearly written by Nahum – 1:1** *This message concerning Nineveh came as a vision to Nahum, who lived in Elkosh.* His prophetic writings are to Nineveh, and unlike the message Jonah carried, repent, and avoid judgment, Nahum’s message is one of pure doom.

The same city, Nineveh, which repented at the preaching of Jonah, is now 150 years older and is back in the business of all sin, all the time. This time, God is not sending a warning, he is having Nahum preach doom to the people – their sin was “full.”

Nahum 1:3 The Lord is slow to get angry, but his power is great, and he never lets the guilty go unpunished.

Proverbs 17:15 He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD.

Nahum 2:10 Desolate! Desolation and ruin! Hearts melt and knees tremble; anguish is in all loins; all faces grow pale!

There is certain terror when one encounters Jehovah as your judge – and there should be! When we read, “hearts melt, knees tremble, guts are twisted, and color leaves your face” they are more than metaphors.

Nahum 3:1-4 lays out the case for the viciousness of those Ninevites God was about to judge.

The Assyrians were known for brutality – they would chop up their enemies, skin their bodies, and hang their heads on trees. They would even cut off hands, ears, noses and used the skin of their enemies to cover their furniture.

Nahum 3:1 Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder— no end to the prey! (Never enough)

Nahum 3:3 Horsemen charging, flashing sword, and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end. (No mercy)

Nahum 3:4 And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her whorings, and peoples with her charms. (Deadly and deceitful)

Nahum 3:12 – The Lord belittles their fortresses comparing them to ripe figs that fall with the slightest breeze. (pushovers)

Nahum 3:13 the Lord belittles Nineveh's armies by calling their soldiers "women." (weak)

Nahum 3:15 There will the fire devour you; the sword will cut you off. It will devour you like the locust. (Just bugs)

Nineveh is an example of a people who had worn out their welcome with God's patience. They had simply sunk too low.

Nahum 3:19 There is no healing for your wound; your injury is fatal. All who hear of your destruction will clap their hands for joy. Where can anyone be found who has not suffered from your continual cruelty?

When God gives up on you, like he did on Nineveh, there is no remedy – you will not want to repent, and you will not be able to repent. (Romans 1)

Habakkuk

The Book of Habakkuk was likely written between 610 and 605 B.C. and authored by Habakkuk. Verse 1 *This is the message that the prophet Habakkuk received in a vision.* The prophet Habakkuk decries the sins of Judah but grapples with the fact that God's chosen people will suffer at the hands of enemies even more wicked than themselves. (Babylon) It seems that God has higher standards for those who belong to him and bear his name. (Yes, he does!)

God can use evil people and nations to accomplish his purposes without endorsing everything they do.

- Egypt
- Assyria
- Babylon
- Rome

Habakkuk lived during the final decades of Judah, the southern kingdom, and saw the coming threat of Babylon. Habakkuk is all directed to God and is a series of poems, actually lamentations, where he lodges a complaint and then demands God do something about it. He accuses Israel of nothing and makes no claim to be speaking for Lord – he is simply pouring out his heart to God.

Five “woes” are pronounced on Babylon -

- Woe – The Babylonians have stolen much wealth through brute force. (Habakkuk 2:6-8)
- Woe – The Babylonians flaunted covetousness – building their own empire at the expense of others. (Habakkuk 2:9)
- Woe – The Babylonians built cities on the backs of slave laborers. (Habakkuk 2:12)
- Woe – The Babylonians got others drunk and then humiliated them in their nakedness. (Habakkuk 2:15)

- Woe – The Babylonians openly practiced idolatry.
(Habakkuk 2:19)

Given the same conditions, most nations eventually become Babylon.

Complaint #1

Habakkuk 1:2 O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? 3 Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. 4 So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

Life is bad, people are ignoring your law, violence and injustice reign, there is no justice, and you do not care.

God’s Answer

Habakkuk 1:5b For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. 6 For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own. 7 They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.

My people have sunken so low that the only way out is to bring such pain that they will have to turn to me.

Complaint #2

Habakkuk 1:12 Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.

What?! You can’t unleash a vicious, ungodly nation like Babylon on your chosen people – can you? You are going to use THEM to discipline your people!

God's Answer

God responds by appointing Habakkuk as his stenographer.

Habakkuk 2:2 And the Lord answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. 3 For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay."

God to Habakkuk, "what you seem to think is inaction is action, and what you see as a delay is my perfect timing – my ways are not your ways."

So, if you find yourself being chastened by God, don't waste your time on any unfairness you think exists – spend your time returning to God!

Habakkuk 2:4b "But the just shall live by his faith."

It is God's desire that his people practice Habakkuk 2:4 – those who have been justified by faith, must live by faith if we want a life that is blessed and used by God.

We are called to live by faith – and according to *Hebrews 11:1 Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. 2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation. 3 By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.*

Simply put, our faith informs our world view, and how we view life usually determines how we live life. We should not live for the here and now and what can be seen, but for the eternal truths that God has spoken.

Zephaniah

The book of Zephaniah was written between 635 and 625 BC. – roughly 30 years before the exile to Babylon. **Zephaniah was the author** – 1:1 *The Lord gave this message to Zephaniah when Josiah son of Amon was king of Judah.* Josiah was one of the few good kings in Judah, he began to reign at 8 years old, and without any living examples of Godly kingship, he decided to obey God.

Judah is in their usual state – that of being involved in idolatry.

Zephaniah 1:2 “I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth,” declares the Lord. 3 “I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the rubble with the wicked. I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth,” declares the Lord.

What Zephaniah prophesies above is a sort of inverse creation story – instead of creation, there is all sorts of destruction.

Zephaniah 1:7 Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near; the Lord has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests.

The scene is the Day of the Lord and all in his presence stand in hushed silence awaiting his pronouncements. The prophecy is another one with dual fulfillments – once when the Babylonians come conquering Judah, and the other time in Daniel’s 70th week.

Zephaniah 3:2 is speaking of Jerusalem, and we read, “She listens to no voice; she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord; she does not draw near to her God.”

What a scathing assessment of the people of God – listens to no one, accepts no correction, trusts no one, and has no desire to be close to God. And that folks, is a graphic picture of a people who are far from God and in desperate need of repentance.

Zephaniah 3:8 "Therefore wait for me," declares the Lord, "for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.

If the above sounds like words that might describe Armageddon, it's because that is exactly what Zephaniah is describing, Armageddon!

Zephaniah 3:9 "For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord."

We had creation in reverse in chapter 1, now we see what could be described as a reverse tower of Babel. What if the language God imposes on the masses at the end of the Day of the Lord is what they spoke pre-babel? (Or is this some sort of new Pentecost?)

Zephaniah 3:14 Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! 15 The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.

Here we see the final and total restoration of Israel and all who trust in God – it has special significance for the Jew, but there is application to all believers as well.

Zephaniah 3:17 "The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

This verse is cast in the context of the Millennial Kingdom where God and his people are once and for all done with the inconsistencies of Israel. Perhaps the best we can ever say of believers in the flesh is that at our best we are inconsistent.

Haggai

The Book of Haggai was written in approximately 520 B.C. and Haggai is the author – *1:1 On August 29 of the second year of King Darius's reign, the Lord gave a message through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest.*

Haggai was the first of the “Post Exilic” prophets – those prophets who arose and spoke after the 70 years of Babylonian captivity.

Haggai will issue calls to Israel to return to their former glory and rebuild the temple of God. Haggai's prophecies correspond to the same period as the book of Ezra and Nehemiah when Zerubbabel was allowed to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Part of his task was to convince Israel that though the temple Zerubbabel would build would not be as “plush” as Solomon's temple, it was still God's will for them to have a temple.

Hundreds of years later, the Roman King Herod would use the foundation built by Zerubbabel to erect a new and magnificent temple for the Jewish people to win their favor.

Haggai 1:4 Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins? 5 This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Look at what's happening to you! 6 You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!

When God chides Israel for living in better quarters than he was afforded, it was to spur them on to do the right thing.

Haggai's description of what was happening to people of Israel, who are now back in the land, is telling of the condition of their hearts. There is an obvious connection between how Israel was treating God and their lack of blessing.

Just prior to this, when Israel's 70 years of captivity had ended, God sent the Persians to crush the Babylonians and free the Jews from captivity. In addition, not only did the Persians free the Jewish people, but they also allowed them to return to Jerusalem and even funded the rebuilding of the temple the Babylonians had destroyed. When we show a desire to serve and honor God, he always shows up with his blessings, sometimes even using the wicked. (Persians)

Zechariah

The Book of Zechariah was likely written in two primary segments, between 520 and 470 B.C. His prophecy is to those Jews coming out of the Babylonian captivity. History shows that in this period, prophecy fell into disfavor among the Jews, leading to the period between the Testaments when no lasting prophetic voice spoke to God's people.

Zechariah lays out sort of a template for how God deals with his people – Obey and be blessed but disobey at your own peril.

Zechariah 1:2 "I, the Lord, was very angry with your ancestors. 3 Therefore, say to the people, 'This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.' 4 Don't be like your ancestors who would not listen or pay attention when the earlier prophets said to them, 'This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Turn from your evil ways, and stop all your evil practices.'"

When you hear, "obey and be blessed" do not think of health and wealth as obedience is sometimes its own blessing!

Zechariah 2:10 The Lord says, "Shout and rejoice, O beautiful Jerusalem, for I am coming to live among you."

Matthew 1:23 "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

The enormity of this promise and its reality cannot be overstated – that God would come and live with man.

Zechariah will have a series of dreams that would be like Jacob's and Joseph's – they would have both near term and future fulfillments. He will have 8 separate dreams that are not only God's communication to his people, but they are actually tied

together in twos. Dreams #1 and #8, #2 and #7, #3 and #6, and #4 and #5 are couplets – they fit together.

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the river (Euphrates) to the ends of the earth.

Chapters 9-10 describe this humble king who will ride a donkey into Jerusalem.

Chapter 11 shows the coming one as a shepherd who will care for his flock and be rejected by the people and the shepherds leading them.

God hands Messiah over to the shepherds leading Israel who are corrupt and will put him to death. At this point questions are raised – will Israel’s rejection of their king last forever? Is there still hope for them?

Zechariah 12:10 “Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died.”

Israel will “*look on the one they pierced*” when he returns in glory. At the battle of Armageddon, part of what will bring all of Israel to repentance is the return of Jesus, the one they had “*pierced*.”

Zechariah’s prophecy is a series of events that are hard to piece together – very much like our lives there is not always a neat and orderly pattern. But then the same could be said about many, if not all lives of people living in a sin cursed world. Our challenge is

to look above the chaos to a God of order who is orchestrating history even when it doesn't look like it.

Malachi

The Book of Malachi was written between 440 and 400 B.C. by Malachi – 1:1 *“This is the message that the Lord gave to Israel through the prophet Malachi.”*

Malachi will be God’s last prophet to Israel until John the Baptist shows up roughly 400 years later. As was pointed out in our lesson on Zechariah, the time between Malachi and Matthew is known as the 400 years of silence.

Malachi is the last of the post-exilic prophets. You would think that 70 years of being prisoners to the Babylonians would do a lot for your spiritual life and make one hungry for the blessings of God. But that is evidently not the case with Israel – they are spiritually dull, and far from God. It is almost as though they are numb to the things of God.

Malachi 1:2 “I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?”

God declares his love for his people and the people respond with what is just belligerence – they question God’s truthfulness. What they were saying was, “you say you love us, well prove it!” – very disrespectful.

Malachi 1:6 The Lord of Heaven’s Armies says to the priests: “A son honors his father, and a servant respects his master. If I am your father and master, where are the honor and respect I deserve? You have shown contempt for my name!”

One of the ways Israel was demonstrating their backslidden condition was in the sacrifices they offered – there was no real sacrifice in offering sick and lame animals to the Lord. (God requires our best)

A lot of the book describes a series of disputes between God and his people – God will make a claim and the people will argue with

him. What becomes clear is that sinful people do what sinful people always do – they sin. A clear indication of this is the very fact that they were willing to protest against and argue with God.

Malachi 3:8 "Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me!" But you ask, "What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?" You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me.

An old axiom, **"show me your calendar and your bank account, and I will know your spiritual temperature."** Israel is not with it spiritually as the O.T. closes, but don't think for a minute that God cannot use them anyway!

Malachi 4:6 "I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives."

Luke 1:16 (speaking of John the Baptist) And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. 17 He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord.

The O.T. closes with a message that God will send a dead prophet to awaken the people of God and 400 years later the N.T. opens with John the Baptist calling for Israel to "wake up!".

God's Call to His People as the Old Testament Closes

"O Israel," says the Lord, "If you wanted to return to me, you could. You could throw away your detestable idols and stray away no more. Then when you swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the Lord lives,' you could do so with truth, justice, and righteousness. Then you would be a blessing to the nations of the world, and all people would come and praise my name."

Jeremiah 4:1-2

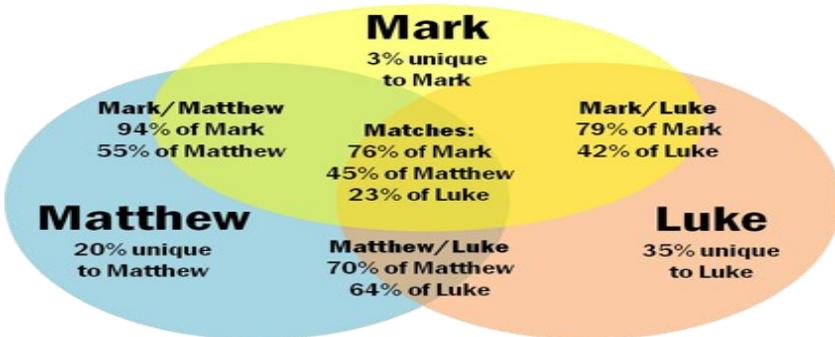
Matthew

When we left the O.T. survey study we spoke of a period of 400 years that would pass when God was silent with respect to any new revelation. When the N.T. opens, God will speak in a peculiar and new way – He will come and speak in person, in his Son.

Hebrews 11:1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. 2 And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. (Literally in person)

Why are there (4) different accounts of the life of Jesus that we call the “Gospels”? The most likely reason is that while the eyewitness testimony of one person is powerful, additional eyewitness accounts that corroborate the story are even more powerful. What one witness leaves out may well be found in the account of the 2nd, 3rd, or even the 4th one.

- **Matthew presents Jesus as King.**
- **Mark presents Jesus as a suffering servant.**
- **Luke emphasizes the humanity of Jesus.**
- **John’s gospel emphasizes the deity of Christ as the God-man.**



What are the “synoptic” gospels? The first three Gospels are called “synoptic” because they “see together with a common

view” and were written within 10 years of each other (the word synoptic literally means “together sight”). Matthew, Mark, and Luke include many of the same events of Jesus’ life, and in nearly the same chronological order.

Why are the genealogies of Jesus recorded for us, and why are they different? They are recorded to help us see that Jesus is a direct descendant of David, who was a direct descendant of Abraham, to whom the promises of God were made.

Matthew’s genealogy traces from **Abraham forward to Joseph**, and Luke’s traces from **Mary back to Adam** which would include the Messianic line through Abraham.

Matthew was written between 45 and 55 A.D. when most Christians were Jewish converts. Matthew was intent on proving that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and he uses a lot of Old Testament scriptures to prove that Jesus was the one the prophets had foretold. Matthew’s intended audience was his fellow Jews, many of whom—especially the Pharisees and Sadducees—stubbornly refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah.

Before they wrote, Jesus’ disciples taught from memory for years. Matthew connects the New Testament and the Old Testament through Jesus’ genealogy, his virgin birth, and fulfillment of prophecies. Matthew’s gospel is very much like a bridge from the Old Testament to the New Testament – he makes it clear Jesus is from the right line, his birth was the prophesied virgin birth, and that he fulfilled many other Old Testament prophecies about Messiah.

Among Matthew’s goals are – he will show that Jesus is the Messiah from the line of David, he is an authoritative teacher like Moses, and that he is Immanuel (God with us).

He will also illustrate how similar Moses and Jesus were in their missions – Moses was not Jesus, but he is an Old Testament type

of Jesus. Like Moses, Jesus will deliver from slavery, give new teaching, save from sin, and initiate a new covenant.

Matthew Parallels Jesus with Moses

Moses survives murderous attacks on babies by Pharoah, Jesus survives murderous attack by Herod.

Moses is raised as a child in Egypt, Jesus is raised as a child in Egypt.

Moses is summoned in his adult life to deliver God’s people from slavery and Jesus is summoned as an adult to deliver all people from sin’s slavery.

In his “sermon on the mount” Jesus will announce a new kingdom that is already upon them if they will receive it.

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Think “the reign of God draws near” meaning that the realm controlled by God was about to be expanded through faith in his Messiah. As his followers, we “take ground” when we obey him.

It is more than evident that the Kingdom of God was not near in the literal sense when Jesus said it was. At least not in the normal sense given that his audience was expecting a conquering king as seen Revelation 19 when he joins the battle of Armageddon.

It seems quite obvious from the New Testament and history that he was pointing to a realm where God reigns in some fashion before Armageddon – i.e., in our hearts.

In chapters 8-10 Matthew shows us how Jesus brought the kingdom right into the lives of everyday real people.

Throughout his gospel Matthew is careful to show that while the gospel is for everyone, the most fertile ground would be with the “unchurched” and the “unimportant.” In chapters 14-20 Matthew

shows us there were lots of different expectations about the kingdom Messiah would bring. The Old Testament spoke of Messiah as both a suffering servant and as a conquering king – it becomes all about the TIMING!!

Matthew was a “publican” or a tax collector – he was in a profession that was hated in Israel and for good reason. Many tax collectors cheated the taxpayers – Zacchaeus in fact felt compelled to pay back what he had stolen by a factor of 4 after meeting Christ. However, no such attachments are said of Matthew. He may have in fact been an honest tax collector. (Very much like we would say “honest politician”)

Matthew 3:11 “I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

These are the words of John the Baptist about his baptism and about the one for whom he was the forerunner – Jesus of Nazareth.

Water baptism is not uniquely Christian, it was practiced by converts to Judaism in the times of the Old Testament and it was an outward sign of an inward change – repentance.

John’s baptism was a baptism proclaiming that one has repented of his sin, and he has undergone a change of mind so strong that it will now affect his direction in life. That was essentially what John’s baptism was about – Acts 19:4 Paul said, “**John’s baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus.**”

John’s message, when he began his ministry, was an Old Testament kind of call until the day he pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God.

Matthew 4:3 During that time the devil came and said to him,

- *“If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.”* (The lust of the flesh)
- *“If you are the Son of God, jump off!”* (Lust of the eye)
- *“If you will kneel down and worship me.”* (The pride of life)

1st John 2:16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

The Beatitudes

The Sermon on the Mount – this sermon only applies to those who are willing to lead a life that is radically different from the world around us. It is a study of what it means to live a life that values what will still matter 100 years in the future over what seems convenient now. On the surface, the beatitudes seem outrageous if taken literally.

What Jesus had in mind with the Sermon on the Mount is the quality of our spiritual lives – verses 11 and 12 tell us as much.

Matthew 5:11 “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.”

Jesus is not telling us to seek to be poor as though poverty is a virtue, and he is not telling us to long for something to cause us to mourn in our lives. He is telling us the believer can and will ultimately triumph over all of life’s hard circumstances. When Jesus repeats, **“blessed are”** he is assuring us ultimate victory in all of life’s circumstances.

If we trust Jesus, then 100 years from now all the following will be true for us.

- The poor will - experience the Kingdom of Heaven
- The mourners will - be comforted
- The humble will - inherit the earth
- Those who seek justice will - be satisfied
- Those who show mercy will - receive mercy
- Those with a pure heart will - see God
- Those who work for peace will – be called children of God
- Those persecuted for doing good will - be in the Kingdom of God

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9 Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. 10 May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today the food we need, 12 and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. 13 And don't let us yield to temptation but rescue us from the evil one.

Our Father in heaven –

We are to begin praying with some heartfelt perspective on who God is. Many have found that nothing sets the table for prayer any better than focusing in on the awesomeness of God, his power, his love, his grace, his majesty, and his kindness. What an inviting picture A Father who invites us to come and assures us with words like **'ask and it shall be given unto you.'**

Hallowed be your name –

- "May your name be held in reverence"
- "May your name be respected"

Again, more focus on who it is that we are communicating with. Perhaps when we pray these words, we should consider our role in making sure that his name is respected and revered?

Your kingdom come –

- The ultimate and permanent answer to this prayer happens when Christ returns in his glorious appearing in Revelation 19.
- But like many of the O.T. prophecies, this prayer request has both a near and a far fulfillment.
- Few New Testament concepts are more misunderstood than the timing of the kingdom.

Your kingdom come –

Most likely Jesus was pointing his disciples to (3) things.

- Look forward to his reign as King of Kings in the kingdom that shall be.
- Look inward to see if He is being allowed to rule in our hearts today.
- Look around to see who can be brought into the kingdom.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven –

- ***This is being done*** God is working out his redemptive plan with certainty and nothing can stand against it or stop it.
- ***This is not being done*** Under his permissive will there is a lot that goes on that is not his perfect will.
- Should not our thinking be along the lines of 'Lord, help me to cooperate with your Holy Spirit so that your will is the norm of my life'?
- When his will is done in our lives that is one more piece of earthly real estate where this request is being answered?

Give us today our daily bread -

- How difficult is it for us to identify literally with this request?
- The idea of not having something to eat today is foreign to us, but I submit to you that if God stopped providing today, your reserves would soon dwindle and dry up.
- The longer I live the more aware I am of my need for God's provision in my life. I have worked, I have applied myself, but God has blessed.
- *Proverbs 21:31 The horses are prepared for battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD.*

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

- This is God's expectation of us and should be our desire as well.
- We do not earn or merit God's forgiveness by forgiving others, but surely there is a connection between the two.
- Jesus said that 'to love others as we love ourselves' is one of the two greatest commandments. One would think it an impossible circumstance to love others like we love ourselves and not forgive them.

When we say, "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" do not think that forgiving others is a condition to be met so we can be forgiven.

The language is aspirational in that when we know of God's forgiveness towards us it ought to remind us that our sins against God were far greater than the sins of others against us.

And lead us not into temptation –

- First, this does not mean that God would lead us into temptation unless we ask him not to.

- While God would not lead us into temptation it is all too evident that he does allow us to be tempted. (1st Corinthians 10:13)
- Could we say ... ‘lead us away from temptation’? Is it not true that ‘lead us away from’ is simply the positive version of ‘lead us not into temptation’?

But deliver us from the evil one –

- More and more I see this phrase as the external compliment to the previous phrase which is an internal struggle.
- Lead us away from the temptations that come from within and deliver us from the external attacks of the enemy.
- We know that we have been delivered from evil in an eternal sense, but our daily walk is still through a battlefield.

Discipleship

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. 25 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. 26 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?”

Many say today about some annoyance in their lives, “that’s my cross I have to bear,” but that is perhaps unknowingly mocking what Jesus meant, and ultimately what he did for us – he died.

When Jesus spoke these words, taking up a cross was not having to deal with obstinate people, or having to endure some thankless job – it meant you were on a slow walk carrying an instrument of death to your own execution. What he meant was that unless you are willing to die for following Jesus you cannot be his disciple.

(Yes, that is what it means!) There is a seriousness and somberness intended here.

Jesus never sought to hide the cost of following him – It seems to me, in our day, that we (the church at large) seek to minimize any costs for fear we will not “close the sale.”

John 16:33 “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart because I have overcome the world.”

We have not yet experienced persecution in our land, but that should not be construed to mean that we won’t.

Discipleship (being a Christian) is a serious matter, can have great cost, and is mostly about obedience. It does not always look the same, sound the same, go to the same places, dress the same, or even do all the same things. What varies very little though is that it always believes in the same Jesus and seeks to obey Him.

What follows is known as “**The Great Commission**” – it is a call to all Christians to make disciples.

Matthew 28:18 Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.

The call goes out for we, the church, to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them. So, as I understand it, the great commission includes evangelism, baptism, and lots of teaching.

Evangelism - perhaps you have a spiritual gift of evangelism, or perhaps not, but we are all to be involved in bringing people to Christ.

Baptism – it would be hard to say that one has been converted and serious about following Jesus if that one will not be baptized. (Profession is not always possession)

Teaching – you need not have a teaching gift to help to instruct new believers. (“how to” examples of obedience are powerful)

Unity in the Church

Matthew 18:15 “If another believer sins against you, go privately, and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. 16 But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. 17 If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.”

The text above only applies if you can’t forgive the person on the spot as Jesus forgave his enemies from the cross.

Jesus gave us a very simple and practical guide to unity in the church – if this is principle were followed more, we would have less strife in the church.

When another Christian offends you, and sooner or later someone will, do the hard thing – go to them directly and try to settle it. The flesh would prefer to talk about it with anyone but the offender, but that does not solve the problem and almost always exacerbates it.

So, if someone offends you, here are your legitimate scriptural options:

- Forgive them on the spot – for they know not what they did.
- Go to them and seek understanding, and reconciliation.
- If they don't listen to you – go back with witnesses.
- If they still don't listen, and the issue is important to the body of Christ, then ask the local assembly to intervene.

The Lord's Return

Matthew 24:1 As Jesus was leaving the Temple grounds, his disciples pointed out to him the various Temple buildings. 2 But he responded, "Do you see all these buildings? I tell you the truth, they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!" 3 Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, "Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?"

This passage of scripture above is commonly known as "The Olivet Discourse" because Jesus delivered it from the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem – it is about the end-times.

Matthew 24 is one of the classic texts on eschatology, the study of end time events. Jesus' disciples ask, "when" will it happen, and "what" signs should we look for? These two questions have occupied considerable conversations ever since.

As for when, we can say for certain that we are closer to the end of time than any generation has ever been – no kidding!

Matthew 24:36 "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows."

Despite the very words of Jesus that "no one knows" there have been many foolish predictions, and some are forever pointing to signs and saying, "this is it." (Often for financial gain) Now the fact that we cannot know the day, or the hour, does not mean we

cannot prepare ourselves and those around us for his eventual and certain return.

To understand Matthew 24, one must begin with the understanding that the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ occurs in two stages. **There is the Rapture of the Church, and the Glorious Appearing of Jesus – these two events are 7 years apart.** The word “rapture” does not appear in the Bible, but the concept certainly does.

A common error when studying the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 is to try to “fit” the rapture in somewhere, but the text is only addressing the time when Jesus will come in his glory – the second coming.

1st Thessalonians 4:14 For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. 15 We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. 17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.

The term “rapture” is derived from the Latin word “raptura,” and it means to “abduct,” “kidnap,” “seize” and to “catch away.” It describes what will happen in stage #1 of the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ – the living believers will be translated, (meaning their bodies will be changed into permanent ones). For those who have died believing in Christ – their bodies will be raised from the dead and united with their spirits who have been with Jesus since their death.

The Glorious Appearing of Jesus occurs 7 years after the Rapture of the church – the 7 years between these two stages is commonly known as Daniel’s 70th Week, or the Great Tribulation. At the Glorious Appearing Jesus returns to earth with his saved ones of all time to setup his earthly kingdom that will last 1,000 years. After the 1,000 years, Jesus will create a new heaven and a new earth where all the saved of all ages will live with him forever.

For an overview of the Biblical End-Time events click here:

[SOTB Images - Website of hoffmantraining!](#)

Mark

Date of Writing: The Gospel of Mark was likely one of the first books written in the New Testament, probably in A.D. 55-59.

Purpose of Writing: Whereas Matthew is written primarily to his fellow Jews, Mark's gospel appears to be targeted to the Roman believers, particularly Gentiles. He desired that they have a biographical story of Jesus Christ as Servant of the Lord and Savior of the world to strengthen their faith in the face of severe persecution and to teach them what it would mean to be his disciples.

This gospel is unique because it emphasizes Jesus' actions more than his teaching. It is simply written, moving quickly from one episode in the life of Christ to another. It does not begin with a genealogy as in Matthew, because Gentiles would not be interested in his lineage. After the introduction of Jesus at his baptism, Jesus began his public ministry in Galilee and called the first four of his twelve disciples. What follows is the record of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Mark's account is not just a collection of stories, but a narrative written to reveal that Jesus is the Messiah, not only for the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well. In a dynamic profession, the disciples, led by Peter, acknowledged their faith in him (Mark 8:29-30), even though they failed to understand fully his Messiahship until after his resurrection.

From "Got Questions" website.

Author: Although the Gospel of Mark does not name its author, it is the unanimous testimony of early church fathers that Mark was the author. He was an associate of the Apostle Peter, and evidently his spiritual son (1st Peter 5:13). From Peter he received first-hand information of the events and teachings of the Lord and preserved the information in written form. It is generally agreed

that Mark is the John Mark of the New Testament and who accompanied Paul on his 1st missionary journey.

Early church historian, Papias, describes Mark's gospel as a collection of events from Peter's point of view. Mark writes almost nothing of his impressions of Jesus, he probably had no first-hand experiences with Jesus – his writings present Jesus' actions and lets the reader interpret. His target audience seems to be gentile believers so they would have the story of Jesus to tell as they preached.

Mark 1:4 This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.

As we discussed in Matthew's gospel, John's baptism was one of repentance – it was a way of declaring publicly that one had "turned" from their sin to God for forgiveness. John the Baptist, was the cousin of Jesus and more.

He was also God's last prophet and declared by Jesus as the greatest human being to ever live. (*Matthew 11:11 "I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist."*)

"Of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist."

John was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets because he would actually see the fulfillment of many of his prophecies. Even so those who enter the kingdom of heaven are greater than he because John saw merely the shadows of what Messiah would bring and not the actual.

Jesus said this of John - *"And if you are willing to accept what I say, he is Elijah, the one the prophets said would come."* Matthew 11:14

Do not think for a moment that the Bible is teaching reincarnation – not at all. Elijah was not resurrected as John the Baptist; rather, John the Baptist was fashioned and ministered in the spirit of Elijah. (In fact, Elijah, like Enoch, never actually died.)

Speaking of John, the Baptist, ***“He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord.”*** *Luke 1:17*

When John the Baptist begins preaching publicly in roughly 28 A.D., his message is well received. It later became evident that God had broken his 400 years of silence through John. He was a Levite and could have served as a priest in the temple, but evidently forsook that for a preaching ministry in the wilderness of Judea. (Think modern day street preacher) John the Baptist had a simple but profound message – **repent, Messiah is coming!**

Mark 1:16 One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. 17 Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” 18 And they left their nets at once and followed him.

Simon and Andrew (and James and John later) hear this young rabbi say, **“come, follow me”** and they just start marching after him as though it is the most normal response one could have. Why would that be? They leave their father and the family business to follow this heretofore little-known figure, Jesus.

In Israel it was customary for Jewish boys to begin very early to memorize the Torah, (**Bet Sefer** ages 6-10). Then around age 11 or so, for those who had memorized the Torah, **Bet Talmud** would begin and run about 3 years wherein the students would memorize the rest of the Old Testament. For those who could “cut it” (memorize the O.T.) they were eligible for **Bet Midrash** where the students got to follow a rabbi around and be grilled

with questions to see if the student was smart enough to become like the rabbi.

What sort of “boggles the mind” is that given the cleansing effects of the Word of God among the Jews, how could such widespread rejection take place when he appears on the shores of Galilee?



"TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU, AND
LEARN FROM ME" - Matthew 11:29

The role of the apprentice rabbi was to learn the “yoke” of their rabbi well enough to follow it and teach it to others.

Jesus’ yoke was far higher than the typical Jewish rabbi’s and far easier to understand.

What every student longed to do was to spread the “yoke” of the rabbi they were following – yoke meaning their body of teaching. (Jesus said, “my yoke is easy”) At each point in the education system those who could not keep up were told – “**go home and learn the family business.**” The goal of every little Jewish boy who started in Bet Sefer at 6 years of age was to one day hear a rabbi say, “**come, follow me**”.

So, when Jesus is walking the shores of Galilee, he sees Andrew and Peter fishing – meaning these were ones who could not “cut it” as a traditional rabbi. So, when Jesus says, “**come, follow me**” that is just what they grew up longing to hear until they were told

at some point that they weren't good enough. So, what do we have? Again, like Amos in the Old Testament, God seems to have no problem using the uneducated and unsophisticated to do great things.

Mark 3:28 "I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, 29 but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This is a sin with eternal consequences." 30 He told them this because they were saying, "He's possessed by an evil spirit."

Much controversy exists around the idea of an "unpardonable" sin, and if it exists, just what might it be? Some even question if it can truly be committed today.

Let's start by defining the word "blasphemy" - It means to vilify, speak evil of, or rail against a person (Strong's #G988). In our above text, Jesus makes it clear that "**all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven**", but then follows up with "**but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven**". Why is it forgivable to blaspheme God (Paul admitted to it in 1st Timothy 1:13), but not forgivable to blaspheme the Holy Spirit?

When the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense – this passage seems to fail that test so we must look deeper. To blaspheme the Holy Spirit, if the sin can be committed, must be a rejection of his ministry. (See John 16:7-11) This sin is the life-long rejection of the Holy Spirit's ministry. In a word, "unbelief."

The Apostle John wrote about the Holy Spirit's role with respect to salvation – what follows is his role in the lives of all mankind prior to conversion.

John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when

he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

So, if you are at all concerned that you may have one time or another in your past blasphemed the Holy Spirit – you haven't!

Mark 7:20 And then he added, "It is what comes from inside that defiles you. 21 For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. 23 All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you."

The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day were obsessed with outward conformance to what they would call the law of God despite the fact that they had even added many rabbinical laws to the 613 in the Torah.

This obsession with externals also happens to be the hallmark of the legalistic wing of today's protestant churches. In this text, Jesus informs us that what God really cares about is the condition our inner man (woman) for it is from the inside that all our sin problems originate. He is saying that eating with unwashed hands does not affect you spiritually but thinking lustful thoughts does.

The easiest form of "spirituality" is always wrapped in externals. Whether it is something I wear (a prayer bonnet), or something I do (paint my hubcaps black), or something I do not do (never play cards). Jesus is saying that the external things, whether worn, done, or not done, are not what makes one spiritual – it is what flows to the surface of our lives from the heart within that unveils us. Like an apple tree or a tomato plant, whatever we are at our core will eventually show up on the outside – it is inevitable, here is why.

Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law, he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.



**Whatever we have
inside us eventually
shows up outside us.**

Mark 7:6 Jesus replied, “You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 7 Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God’”.

Strong words from Jesus about fake worship – He detests it and condemns it. Hypocrites are actors and Jesus wants our worship to authentically flow from a pure heart so then what is in our heart, is of ultimate importance. You may recall the words of Isaiah when he saw the Lord - ***“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”***

Mark 8:27 And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” 28 And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” 29 And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” 30 And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

1st John 5:1 Whoever believes Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

“And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.” Why would Jesus tell his disciples to refrain from publicly proclaiming him as Messiah? Because while they had it right (he was Messiah) they were just not ready to preach it because they were missing the biggest parts of the gospel message.

They were missing the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, his ascension, and the promise of his coming again. They had an Old Testament understanding of Messiah and in that time that level of understanding was sufficient to save. Furthermore, had the disciples started to assert Jesus was the promised Messiah his sacrificial death would have been even more confusing than it was.

- *Mark 9:43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off...*
- *Mark 9:45 If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off...*
- *Mark 9:47 And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. It's better to enter the Kingdom of God with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 'where the maggots never die, and the fire never goes out.'*

What? Are we to mutilate our bodies to avoid going to hell?

So what are we to do with such words from Jesus? Could he possibly want us to take him literally or should we assume by the nature of his words that we should look elsewhere, perhaps deeper, for the meaning of his instructions to cut things off?

As we just saw, Jesus makes a series of what seems like outlandish claims – his “cut it off” statements were never intended to be taken 100% literally, but they were intended to be taken 100% seriously.

This is almost like a high stakes game of “Would You Rather”.

Would you rather keep your foot, or your hand, or your eye or would you rather go to heaven? Are you willing to give up all the things that would keep you from heaven?

Jesus is not teaching self-mutilation, but he is teaching about the seriousness of losing your soul, and of being consigned for all eternity to hell.

Revelation 20:15 And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

We use the terms hell and the lake of fire interchangeably, and, with minor nuanced differences, both refer to the ultimate place of punishment for the lost.

In Jesus day, when he spoke of “hell”, he was clearly speaking of a place of fire, smoke, stench, pain, and complete discomfort. The analogy he used was “Gehenna” which pointed the listener to the city dump outside of Jerusalem.

In Gehenna there was an almost never-ending flow of dead animals, sewage, and garbage burning. The stench was overwhelming, and no one spent any more time there than they had to.

Biblical terminology on Hell:

- Hell (general all-inclusive term)
- Hades (the place of torment for now)
- Lake of Fire (the next and permanent place of judgment)

All are proper terms and uses for the eternal state that is without God, but not without punishment. When one says, “go to hell,” we know what they mean.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:22 Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was

buried, 23 and his soul went to the place of the dead. There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side.

Where was Abraham? He was in Paradise. (Romans 4:3 For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith. ") Where was the rich man? In, Hades, a place of conscious torment.

This is an important point – while the rich man went to a place of torment, it was not the Lake of Fire we find in Revelation chapter twenty. It is proper to call this place Hades, and the general state of the lost we call "hell". One day all the lost will be cast into the Lake of Fire. The rich man did not go to Hell because he was rich, and Lazarus did not go to Heaven because he was poor – there is no particular virtue in either state. What is not disclosed until their individual deaths was their spiritual condition before death.

However, while their spiritual conditions were not obvious in the text while they were living, after death we see a "night and day" difference. It becomes an unfathomable thought to ever be cast into the place of outer darkness known commonly as, "hell".

To see what happened in Luke Chapter 16 with the Rich Man and Lazarus click here - [SOTB Images - Website of hoffmantraining!](#)

Mark 13:19 For there will be greater anguish in those days than at any time since God created the world. And it will never be so great again. 20 In fact, unless the Lord shortens that time of calamity, not a single person will survive. But for the sake of his chosen ones, he has shortened those days. 21 "Then if anyone tells you, 'Look, here is the Messiah,' or 'There he is,' don't believe it. 22 For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones. 23 Watch out! I have warned you about this ahead of time!

The text above is a clear reference to The Great Tribulation – the Christian has regular tribulation in this life just because we belong to Christ. In a sense, God sees to it! (John 16:33) But the reference in this text is to a specific, unique period of 7 years in history when God will send calamity and judgment as he takes back the title deed to the earth.

“In fact, unless the Lord shortens that time of calamity, not a single person will survive. But for the sake of his chosen ones, he has shortened those days.”

Jesus is clarifying that in this 7-year period, Daniel’s 70th week, billions of people will be slaughtered. There will be a surviving company of believing people to populate the Millennial Kingdom; the time of this judgment must be limited to 7 years else all would die. In fact, God is merciful to limit this period to just 7 years even for those who are lost at that time.

Mark 15:33 At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. 34 Then at three o’clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

Psalm 22:1 “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”
(What was once prophetic, was fulfilled on the cross) Does it not seem strange that Jesus would feel abandoned on the cross?

We can say with certainty that God the Father approved of what God the Son was doing – the cross did not take them by surprise. Perhaps a better translation of “why” would be “what” – meaning that Jesus knew why his Father turned away from his sin bearing body and was asking “**what is this separation that I feel**”. For the first, and only, time in history the Father and the Son are separated, and it must feel awful. (Spiritual death)

This is the common definition of spiritual death – separation of the soul from God, just as physical death is the separation of the

soul from the body. This is the aspect of “hell” that Jesus tasted for all of humanity. Despite what the Apostles Creed says, Jesus did not descend into hell, his work of redemption was completed when he said, **“It is finished.” Luke 23:43 And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

He descended into “Paradise” which was the holding tank for the Old Testament saints as they awaited their ascension along with Jesus as described in Ephesians 4:8-10.

Mark 16:5 When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, 6 but the angel said, “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead!

When you go to a grave site you expect to read “here lies John Smith,” but at the tomb of Jesus, angels announce, “He isn’t here, he is risen!” He was dead, but now he is alive!

The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20? Why is that? It is a matter of how much weight you assign to the “oldest” manuscripts versus the “most” manuscripts. Most of the later manuscripts contain versus 9-20 of Mark’s 16th chapter. However, the oldest manuscripts, which would have been written closer in time to Mark’s original writings do not include versus 9-20.

It seems that those who translated versions like the KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, and the NLT all chose to add notes of some kind to sort of “hedge their bets” on the worthiness of the verses being included in their translations. Verses 9-20 take an odd turn to other subjects that would seem be beyond the scope of resurrection morning. In addition, verses 9-20 contain some weird things that have led to snake handling and drinking of poison.

For the most part there is nothing out of harmony with the rest of scripture other than what I just mentioned, the snakes and poison. There is nothing objectionable in these verses – Mark 16:17 *And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

Luke

Author: The Gospel of Luke does not identify its author. From Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3, it is clear the same author wrote both Luke and Acts, addressing both to “most excellent Theophilus,” possibly a Roman dignitary. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that Luke, a physician, and a close companion of the Apostle Paul, wrote both Luke and Acts (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11). This would make Luke the only Gentile to pen any books of Scripture.

Date of Writing: The Gospel of Luke was likely written between A.D. 58 and 65.

The Gospel of Luke is unique in that it is a meticulous history—an “orderly account” (Luke 1:3) consistent with the Luke’s medical mind—often giving details the other gospel accounts omit.

Luke 1:1 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

At the birth of John, the Baptist, his father Zacharias spoke these prophetic words – another example of a pre-Pentecost filling with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:67 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 68 “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For he has visited and redeemed his people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of his servant David, 70 As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, Who have been since the world began..... 76 “And you, child, will be called the prophet of

the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins”.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would come upon the people of God for specific purposes but was not obligated to stay in and with that person.

Judges 13:24 When her son was born, she named him Samson. And the Lord blessed him as he grew up. 25 And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he lived in Mahaneh-dan, which is located between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol.

Speaking of Saul – ***1st Samuel 10:9 As Saul turned and started to leave, God gave him a new heart, and all Samuel’s signs were fulfilled that day. 10 When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, they saw a group of prophets coming toward them. Then the Spirit of God came powerfully upon Saul, and he, too, began to prophesy.***

Luke 2:25 At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him 26 and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.

Again, we see the Holy Spirit preparing the world for the Savior before there ever was a Pentecost – Things will change at Pentecost when he takes up residence in the believer, but the Holy Spirit was neither absent nor silent in the Old Testament.

Luke 3:21 One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized. As he was praying, the heavens opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit, in bodily form, descended on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.

A good question at this point is, “Why did the Holy Spirit descend upon Christ?” Why must God descend upon God?

Acts 10:37 you yourselves know 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

“It’s not wrong to say that the Holy Spirit is acting in Jesus’ miracles; he is. It is wrong to say that the second person of the Trinity isn’t.”

D. Blair Smith

There is an interesting debate as to just how Jesus did his miracles and I find it interesting because what difference does it make whether you conclude he used his omnipotence or conclude he relied on the power of the Holy Spirit? In each case it is God’s power that overcomes the laws of nature to affect a healing, or a resurrection, or a production of wine or fish.

At his baptism and in the text below we see a public demonstration of the Father’s approval on the mission of Jesus.

Matthew 17:5 But even as he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him.”

Like Jesus, we as his followers should seek the approval of the Father, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is a common and thoughtless error in the church to refer to God, the Spirit, as “it”.

Do not say, “let it help you” – say, “let him help you”. Remember, the Holy Spirit is just as much God as the Father and the Son.

Luke 4:33 Once when he was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon—an evil spirit—cried out, shouting, 34 “Go away!

Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”
35 But Jesus reprimanded him. “Be quiet! Come out of the man,”
he ordered. At that, the demon threw the man to the floor as the
crowd watched; then it came out of him without hurting him
further.

A great comfort to the church ought to be that Jesus had authority over demons – he could command them to leave, be silent, or even go into pigs and they had to obey.

In speaking of demonic spirits – **1st John 4:4** *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

The demons recognized Jesus from their history with him and today they recognize the Holy Spirit in the believer. Demons are fallen angels who were defeated and cast out of heaven when they followed Lucifer in his rebellion.

Surely there was a big stir in the heavenlies when Jesus came as a man.

When Jesus says, “Be quiet! Come out of the man” the demon had to obey immediately, not because he wanted to, but because he had no choice. Now if Jesus is operating in the power of the Holy Spirit and demons must obey him, it follows they must obey us as well when we operate in the Holy Spirit’s power – but be careful. In the book of Acts, the seven sons of Sceva try casting out demons in their own power and it did not work out so well.

Acts 19:11 And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I adjure

you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.” 14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. 15 But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” 16 And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

When Jesus healed the sick in the New Testament, the healing was always instantaneous, and it was complete for the time. (Even Lazarus eventually died again)

Luke 5:12 In one of the villages, Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy. When the man saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground, begging to be healed. “Lord,” he said, “if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.” 13 Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” And instantly the leprosy disappeared.

Because Jesus said he was willing to heal the man with leprosy in Luke 5 we should not assume it is always God’s will to heal right here, and right now. We really want to believe that all the sick in our circles will be healed when we pray for them, but they will not all be healed in this life. The above is true and who better than God to make such a decision.

When we, or others are battling an illness or some other health risk we should ask for what we want and then, like Jesus, pray, “nevertheless, thy will be done”. When we pray this way, we acknowledge the sovereign wisdom resident only in God and that level of trust is a high praise to him.

Clearly, God uses two methods of healing - in one he directs healing using conventional means and in another he intervenes in the laws of nature. In one he may connect us to the right doctor, or lead us to the right medicine, or introduce us to a new therapy. In the other he chooses to act for us in person and on the spot. We are right to point out the difference in the two

methods, but we would be wrong to deny both are orchestrated by God.

Most, if not all, of the world's false religions believe in supernatural healing. The difference between Christianity and all other religions in this matter is that the false religions all believe that some ritual, or some "pomp and circumstance" must be done to persuade their god to heal. We (Christians) simply "ask, seek, and knock" with persistence.

I believe that access to God to ask for healing is provided for us in the atonement. I believe that God has promised sound and healthy bodies (at least eventually even if it's in the resurrection) for us in Christ's work on the cross. What is uncertain is the timing of his healing – sometimes he heals in this life, and sometimes he heals our bodies when we arrive home. (God gets to decide on when and how he heals)

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Why do so many Christians differ on the doctrine of divine healing? In the Evangelical and Pentecostal wings of the church there is little difference in what we believe about healing – most of our differences are around how much healing is emphasized. In general, we believe that God still heals today, and we often employ what James said with respect to anointing with oil.

James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

In my experience, miraculous healings are rare. We don't like to talk it about because some would think to utter such words would disclose a lack of faith. We want everyone who is sick and close to us to be healed, but the evidence shows few will be healed via a miracle.

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." Jesus of Nazareth

Luke 6:43 "A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. 44 A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thornbushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes. 45 A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart."

It is inevitable that whatever is on the inside of us (in our heart) will eventually show up on the outside. (Through our works and our words)

You've probably wondered about some who have professed faith in Jesus Christ for salvation who simply do not appear to be his. (They exhibit no changes in behavior) What Luke records for us is insightful – apple trees do not produce anything but apples because that is what is within them. People who know Jesus will tend to act like him because he is in them, and people who do not know him can only fake being like him for seasons.

Do not make quick judgments regarding those who profess to know Jesus – we ought to be discerning and while we cannot know another's spiritual condition for certain, we can inspect their "fruit." For the most part, we rarely must concern ourselves with the legitimacy of another person's confession of Christ unless we are charged with entrusting one of them to ministry. If we are going to give someone spiritual responsibility, then we must inspect the fruit that is coming from their lives.

You are what you consume.

Matthew 15:15 But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." 16 And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."

How we view what Jesus did for us reveals the condition of our hearts.

Luke 7:40 Then Jesus answered his thoughts. "Simon," he said to the Pharisee, "I have something to say to you." "Go ahead, Teacher," Simon replied. 41 Then Jesus told him this story: "A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. 42 But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?" 43 Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt." "That's right," Jesus said.

If we think we were already pretty good people before we professed faith in Christ, then we will likely see little reason to worship him or serve him. If, however, we know that we were wretched and lost and poor and blind and naked when he found us and saved us, then we will be motivated to worship him and serve him. In Jesus' example, I doubt that the first person knew what a scoundrel they were before they were forgiven. It can be seen in how they treated those in need of forgiveness from him.

Our Knowledge of God Informs our Worship.

Luke 10:13 "What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. 14 Yes, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you."

This is one a several texts that teach us that just as there are degrees of reward for faithful service (1st Corinthians 3) there are also degrees of punishment for the lost. (Revelation 20)

If God is just, and he is, then he must punish the more ungodly with more punishment.

Luke 12:47 "And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn't prepared and doesn't carry out those instructions, will be severely punished. 48 But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly."

Be careful here – anyone standing before God for punishment for any reason is lost and will be separated from God for eternity. (There are no pleasant spots in the Lake of Fire, but there are places and forms of more severe punishment)

Revelation 20:12 I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books.

If all judgment for the lost were the same, then what purpose would God have in opening the books? There must be a greater judgment for Adolph Hitler than there is for the little old man down the street who tried to live a good life but had never trusted in Jesus.

Few, if any, bible commentaries provide insights into exactly what the degrees of punishment might be. For that matter, the only clues we have for degrees of reward focus us on the relative

values of wood, hay, stubble, and all the way up to gold, silver, and precious stones.

If rewards have relative values, then punishments would justly follow suit – God’s justness would necessitate this.

Make no mistake about it, while we are saved by grace through faith, we will all be judged by our works. This is true at the Bema Seat and at the Great White Throne.

Luke 12:16 Then he told them a story: “A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. 17 He said to himself, ‘What should I do? I don’t have room for all my crops.’ 18 Then he said, ‘I know! I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I’ll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. 19 And I’ll sit back and say to myself, “My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!” 20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?’ 21 “Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.”

The rich man in this story, commonly known as the “rich fool” is called a fool because of his obsession with his own provision for what he thought was the right length of time. His own words, “And I’ll sit back and say to myself, ‘My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!’” The problem with “many years” is that his time horizon is short by an eternity. Yes, he could feed himself for many years, but that is to ignore his bigger and longer lasting problem – he is lost and could be called before God at any moment.

Luke 13:10 One Sabbath day as Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, 11 he saw a woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her

over and said, "Dear woman, you are healed of your sickness!" 13 Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised God! 14 But the leader in charge of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her on the Sabbath day.

No less than 14 times the Gospel writers included accounts of Jesus healing on the Sabbath so this must be an important issue.

It is unlikely that Jesus healed only on the sabbath, but it was when he did heal on the sabbath that he came under heavy criticism from the Jewish leaders. The religious leaders of Jesus' day were obsessed with externals because it is actually possible to "keep" the external rules.

Mark 2:27 Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!"

Jesus provides the needed clarity – the "sabbath" (one day in 7 for rest) was instituted way back in the Genesis account of creation. The day of rest that God observed on the 7th day of creation was to teach his newly created man and woman, that reserving one day in 7, is necessary for rest and reflection on all that God has done.

Genesis 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

Christians do not observe the sabbath, we observe The Lord's Day on Sunday and we do not adhere to the "no work" rule or none of our churches would be able to preach, teach, serve, lead, etc.... What we do on Sunday is to cease from our **normal activities** and spend some time in corporate worship reflecting on who God is, and on what he has done.

Matthew 12:12 “And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, the law permits a person to do good on the Sabbath.”

While God modeled a sabbath rest for us in Genesis, the “sabbath” that was included in the 10 commandments was for a sign between God and Israel.

Exodus 31:16 The people of Israel must keep the Sabbath day by observing it from generation to generation. This is a covenant obligation for all time. 17. It is a permanent sign of my covenant with the people of Israel.

Therefore the 4th commandment is the only commandment that is not repeated in the New Testament.

Luke 15 provides 3 parables for us that are related. In the parable of the “**lost sheep**” we find that if even 1 in a 100 sheep are lost and apart from the fold, the shepherd cares and risks his life for the one lost sheep. In the parable of the “**lost coin**,” we see that if even one of the owners 10 coins are lost, the owner will work her fingers to the bone to find the one that was lost.

When we come to the parable of the “**prodigal son**” he is not described at any time as lost, we are simply given the description of his life when he decided to leave the farm. Prodigal does not mean “wayward” as many assume – it means “**someone who spends recklessly and wastefully.**” By virtue of being born into his father’s family he had lots of resources at his disposal, but he did not want to be restrained in any way with how he used his father’s money.

When he tells his father he wants to leave the farm and do the things that he thinks will make him happy, his father does not openly object. In short order, the son is broke financially, and more importantly he is broken spiritually, and wants to come back home. He even recognizes his sin and says, “**I am no longer**

worthy to be called your son” – this is how we know his heart is in the right place.

He had no right to expect that his father would take him back even as a servant, much less as a son. It seems from the text that his father was waiting and watching for his son to return, **“And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming.”** His father rejoices over his return, he does not make him beg for his forgiveness, and even celebrates his son’s return.

The story of the prodigal son just happens to be one of the most reenacted scenes in all the bible. Testimony after testimony of kids raised in the church give their “prodigal son” accounts of their quest for the “good” life in the things of this world only to find that they were chasing after the wind and found the whirlwind. The testimonies we love to hear are the ones of those who have come back, and the prayers we still pray are for the ones who are still out there chasing the wind.

A question for us – why do we not celebrate the lives of those have not gone “prodigal” on us?

And what message do we send when there is no celebration for those who stand against evil without wavering?

Luke 20:34 Jesus replied, “Marriage is for people here on earth. 35 But in the age to come, those worthy of being raised from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage. 36 And they will never die again. In this respect they will be like angels. They are children of God and children of the resurrection.”

Jesus was asked a ridiculous question by the Sadducees to try to trap him – the Sadducees did not believe in angels, an afterlife, or a resurrection. So, they ask what they thought was a clever question about the resurrection of the dead.

Mark 12:18 And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, 19

“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. 20 There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. 21 And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. 22 And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. 23 In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.”

Part of his answer was a real dagger to their hearts because they prided themselves on knowing the scriptures and Jesus said in Matthew’s account of this, **“You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.”**

Take away #1 - Believers will not be married in heaven. Oddly enough some believers are as happy about this as others are sad about it.

Take away #2 - Jesus didn’t say we will be angels in heaven, he said, **“In this respect they will be like angels”**. They are children of God and children of the resurrection. In heaven, we will not be angels, but we will be like them in that we will be eternal beings who never die. But our status, as children of God, exceeds the status of angels – in the Kingdom we will rule over them; yes, we will have authority over angels. As for any spouses we have in this life, as good as a marriage may be, it is a temporary institution that will be replaced with even more joyous things in heaven.

Luke 23:44 It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

In the O.T., the temple was where the presence of God dwelt and there was a veil (about 60' high) in Herod's temple that served to separate men from God's most holy place.

When Jesus died on the cross, the sky was dark for three hours in the middle of the day and when he breathed his last, the curtain that separated the holy of holies from the rest of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom.

Hebrews 10:19 And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. 20 By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.

The "holy of holies" and the "most holy place" are one in the same.

While it was never said this way, in the O.T. the clear message was "stay back from God," and "don't come too close," and "keep your distance" or you will be consumed by God. On the annual Day of Atonement there was an elaborate ritual performed before the high priest could enter the "Holy of Holies" where the presence of God dwelt. Aaron was warned about entering God's Holy place on his own terms and timetable.

Leviticus 16:1 The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of Aaron's two sons, who died after they entered the Lord's presence and burned the wrong kind of fire before him. 2 The Lord said to Moses, "Warn your brother, Aaron, not to enter the Most Holy Place behind the inner curtain whenever he chooses; if he does, he will die."

So, when Jesus died, God the Father tore the temple veil (curtain) from top to bottom signifying that the message has changed – now we can all come freely whenever we choose.

Hebrews 4:16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Now that our ransom has been paid in full, no longer is the message, “**stay back, and just one man on just one day**” – now the message is **COME BOLDLY**. We can come into his presence with boldness because we have been made holy like him by the blood of Christ.

John

Author: John 21:20–24 describes the author of the gospel of John as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” and for both historical and internal reasons this is understood to be John the Apostle, one of the sons of Zebedee (John 5:10).

Date of Writing: Discovery of certain papyrus fragments dated around AD 135 require the gospel of John to have been written, copied, and circulated before then. And, while some think it was written before Jerusalem was destroyed (AD 70), AD 85—90 is a more accepted time for the writing of the gospel of John.

Purpose of Writing: The author cites the purpose of the gospel of John as follows: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

Unlike the three Synoptic Gospels, John’s purpose is not to present a chronological narrative of the life of Christ but to display his deity. John emphasized Jesus Christ as “the Son of God,” fully God and fully man – this is known as the **Hypostatic Union**.

To explain the reason for John’s gospel I will have start near the end of it – something I do with no other book of the Bible.

John 20:30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

1st John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

1st John 5:5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? Christ in Greek is Christos – the word points unambiguously to the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Son of God. (Christ is the only thing it can mean)

John's gospel is dedicated to convincing its readers that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah, and that all who trust his work at Calvary for them will be saved.

What does it mean to “believe in Jesus”? The idea of “believing” in Jesus has more mystery to it than is warranted. Something that important should be clear. We talk about “asking Jesus into our hearts,” and “having faith in Jesus,” but what does it mean to believe in him? If the words “trust” and “confidence” come to mind you are in the right place.

The Greek word for “believe” is “pisteuw” (pist-yoo-o) and one of this word's meanings is “to commit or entrust, i.e., to entrust your spiritual well-being to Christ.” (Have confidence in) To believe in Christ is to have confidence in him and his work on Calvary to the point that your hope is in nothing else. I do not hesitate for a moment to say, **“if Jesus' work on the cross is insufficient then I am lost.”**

When you strap yourself into an airplane seat you are entrusting your life to the pilot and mechanics who maintain the plane – you believe you will arrive safely at your destination based on their work, not yours!

You know that you “believe” in Jesus as your Savior when you have no back-up plan.

When Jesus is your entire strategic plan for going to heaven, you can say that you “believe” in him. When he is your hope for heaven, all by himself, with no additions, then you have saving faith.

If you search your Bible for “how to believe”, or “how to be born again” you may be disappointed to find there are no “do” steps – it is always and only by grace through faith!

Next, let's deal with the signs (miracles) Jesus did as proof he was the Son of God. Jesus provided what many in the crowds who

heard him wanted – they wanted signs, and he accommodated them and some of the signs were written down, but not all.

John 21:25 Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

In writing of Jesus' miracles, John's interests were both evangelistic and intended to provide overwhelming evidence that Jesus is the Christ. Since Jesus is the only way to God it is critically important that we have evidence on which to base our faith. In the 4 gospels there are 40 miracles identified – some scholars go so far as to say disease was all but wiped out for the duration of his ministry.

Jesus' miracles were signs of his deity – he did not do miracles without a purpose. His purposes were often the immediate dissolution of a problem and visible proof of who he was – the Son of God. Signs are never the important thing; signs merely point to that which is important – Jesus' miracles were good works to be sure, but their greater importance was signage.

The people wanted signs – in his mercy Jesus provides them.

John 4:48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."

John 5:36 But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

Water to wine – Jesus demonstrates his power to change the very composition of water to another substance. In this miracle, without a magic wand or any fanfare, Jesus wills the molecules in the water pots to change their composition from water to wine – and they do!

John 2:11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

John 4:46 So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. 47 When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. 48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." 49 The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." 50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. 51 As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. 52 So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." 53 The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. 54 This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

John 4:53 The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. 54 This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

Here Jesus demonstrates his power over space and distance – he doesn't need to touch him, he doesn't need to see the boy, all he does is say, "your son will live" and he is healed! What a disturbance was wrought in the son's body that day!

Jesus heals, he feeds multitudes, he raises the dead, he casts out demons, and single-handedly expels thousands from the temple. By the time his 3-year ministry was through, there was not one legitimate argument that could be raised in opposition to his claim to be the Son of God.

John 7:31 Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?”

John 6:26 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.” (Chasing after signs)

John 6:30 So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?” (More seeking for proof)

John 10:37 If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; 38 but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father.

It would be great to see miracles, signs, and wonders, but to believe on Christ without them – now that is faith!

John 12:36 When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. 37 Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, 38 so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” 39 Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, 40 “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.”

*John 1:1 In the beginning the **Word** already existed. The **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. 2 He existed in the beginning with God. 3 God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.*

*John 1:14 So the **Word** became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.*

We find in verses 1-3 above that the “Word” was involved in the creation of the world – that would make whoever, or whatever the “Word” is to be God. We find out in verse #14 that the “Word” is Jesus.

So, if the “Word” was God, and the “Word” is found to be Jesus, then Jesus must also be God. A great example of scripture interpreting and clarifying scripture.

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

The truth about all of us pre-salvation is not that we were spiritually sick and in need of help – no, we were dead and in need of life! One cannot even perceive of a “kingdom of God” until they are born again – until they come alive spiritually, heavenly principles and understanding cannot be grasped. They are like a foreign language. (prior to salvation we are spiritually dead, Ephesians 2:1)

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

The mystery of born of water and the spirit – there are two possible understandings of Jesus’ words, and neither one involves water baptism. Any teaching that says one must experience water baptism to be saved is false. (Think of the thief on the cross)

One possibility of his teaching is that to be saved and “born again” that he is simply pointing to the time your mother’s water broke to give you a natural birth. (After all, if you never had a first birth you cannot be born again)

The other possible teaching is that Jesus is referring to a spiritual cleansing.

John 13:10 Jesus replied, “A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean.”

When we are “made alive” by the Spirit, our whole world begins to change – we simply see everything differently than we did before.

Ephesians 5:8 For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So, live as people of light! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

We adopt a different world view after the new birth – 2nd
Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

John 3:17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. 18 There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son.

In his first advent he came to save, not to judge. When he returns, he will be coming to judge the lost and to evaluate the saved.

A wonderful progressive revelation takes place with the Samaritan woman at the well.

- *John 4:9 She said to Jesus, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman.”*
- *John 4:19 “Sir,” the woman said, “you must be a prophet.”*
- *John 4:29 Could he possibly be the Messiah?*

In John 9 we see the same progression -

- *John 9:11 He told them, "The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.' So, I went and washed, and now I can see!"*
- *John 9:17 The man replied, "I think he must be a prophet."*
- *John 9:38 "Yes, Lord, I believe!" the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.*

Both accounts tell us something about Jesus that I believe will stand the test of scrutiny. Remember the rules for the Passover lamb – the owners had to watch it for 4 days to ensure that it was perfect and without any blemishes.

Lesson for us – the closer you examine Jesus, the better he looks. (Man, prophet, Lord)

John 6:44 For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up.

This sounds rather exclusive until you read what else Jesus said 6 chapters later.

John 12:32 "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." 33 He said this to indicate how he was going to die.

John 10:27 "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, 29 for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. 30 The Father and I are one."

Not be missed here is that we, the believer, are gifts of God the Father, to God the Son.

Jesus makes an argument for our security in Christ based upon the care, and the power of God. You could say that he has already fought to the death for us on the cross. Furthermore, the Father is described as more powerful than anyone else, so we need not fear that someone will be able to wrestle us away from him.

Some have argued that while no one can “snatch” us away from the Father’s hand, we could jump. To that I say, if you want to jump, feel free – if it’s possible to lose your salvation, ceasing to believe would be the only way that can happen. Salvation is not acquired by works, and it is not kept by works – we are saved by grace through faith and have become children of God.

It is no accident that the salvation experience is called being “born again” because everyone knows what it means to be born the first time. It means that no matter what you do, you never cease to be a son or daughter of your parents. You belong to them no matter your behaviors by the fact of your birth. The same is true of the new birth – we are given a birthright and a standing in the family of God.

If we were to identify where Jesus is today, we would have to agree that he is at the right hand of the Father. (Mark 16:19) If we were to identify what he is doing at the right hand of the Father we would agree that he is praying for us. (1st John 2:1) Now, can you imagine God, the Father, not answering the prayers of God, the Son?

John 6:35a Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life.”

This “I AM” comes after Jesus’ feeding the 5,000 where he had provided miraculously for their physical needs.

John 6:35b Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. He will meet our spiritual needs – how do we know he meant “spiritual needs”? Because of the word, “never.”

John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

Except for our salvation in Jesus, the world is a dark place and the one who rejects him is doomed to spend eternity in darkness.

1st John 1:7 But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

John 10:9 Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved.

A very clear reference to the "narrow gate" through which we must enter if we are to be saved.

Matthew 7:13 "You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. 14 But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it."

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep."

Being a shepherd was a common occupation in Jesus' day and the job of the shepherd was to watch over sheep and look out for their well-being. (Sheep are incapable of this) **However, most shepherds would stop short of trading their own life for that of a sheep – they just weren't worth a life.**

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die".

When Jesus arrives on the scene at Mary and Martha's house, he is told that Lazarus is dead – mostly because he intentionally delayed coming for 2 full days.

Even when we lose our struggle with death in this life, we won't really be dead! We will never die!

John 13:7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

John 13:34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

The mark of the Christian is "love" especially love for other believers.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

Do not think of love as some sort of emotional, teary eyed, mess of emotions for others – that is not how the Bible describes love. **Love is verb, not a feeling** – love is demonstrated by doing the right things for those around us. So, yes, you can "love" someone without liking them.

1st Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.....

John 14:1 "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to

prepare a place for you? 3 When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.”

Here is the setting for Jesus’ words above – 1st century Palestine where certain Jewish customs were dominant despite the Roman occupation.

We know from other scriptures that the Church is the bride of Christ. (Ephesians 5:25-27) It was customary in Jesus’ day that when a Jewish man was engaged, he would busy himself adding on a room or two to his father’s house preparing to bring his bride to his family home. So, when Jesus says “**there is room in my Father’s house, and I go to prepare a place for you**” the disciples just may have understood the reference he was making.

Today, it is quite clear what Jesus meant – he was going away (John 13:36 “You can’t go with me now, but you will follow me later.”). And he says that if he goes away, he will prepare a place for them, and then he will return for them so that they would be with him again. (John 14:2-3) The disciples asked about the way to him, and he replies with “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”. (John 14:6)

John 14:6 Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

The teaching that confounds so many and is hated by many for its exclusivity – **there is just one way to God**. Be that as it may, it is our job to be part of those narrow-minded ones who take God at his word.

John 15:1 “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in

you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me."

The language here has a seriousness about it that baffles some, for if Jesus is all "just meek and mild" these words seem odd.

John 15:5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

In the above, Jesus was not talking about our salvation. He was talking about our life after we're saved. A non-believer cannot bear fruit, and even after we are saved, believers are not automatically fruitful. (More on this later)

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener."

What is true of grapevines, that they need to be "cut back" (pruned) to thrive, is evidently true of Christians as well. The gardener (the Father) cuts off all the unproductive branches and then cuts back even the ones that are producing so that they will produce even more.

Branches that produced no fruit are cut off and thrown into the fire. Branches that do produce fruit are cut back so they will produce more fruit. The key to producing fruit is to "abide" in the Vine (Christ). To abide is to "remain," to "endure."

Psalm 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law, he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

John 15:6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.

Does this mean that salvation can be lost due to a lack of fruit? The teaching of the "vine" is an allegory and should not be

stretched beyond certain boundaries. The warning is to Christians who do not abide in Christ that they will be unfruitful, and all their best works will be burned up at the Bema Seat as being worthless.

A lack of fruitfulness as a professing Christian usually means the professor is either still a babe in Christ or is not a possessor of Christ.

If John 15 were taken in its entirety as representative of how God deals with believers, then we would have to conclude that while we are saved by faith, we are kept by works. And if we are kept by works, then grace is nullified by our works – that is not an argument that can stand scrutiny.

2nd Corinthians 12:8 Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. 9 Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 10 That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Hebrews 12:10 For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness.

John 16:12 “There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. 14 He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.”

To a large degree this is God’s methodology in giving mankind the scriptures and the revelation of himself – as we were able to “bear” it.

If God had “dumped” the entire bible on Adam, he would not have been able to grasp it any more than the disciples would have

been able to handle all the New Testament teachings in one lump of information. Think about the great truths ahead for them – the coming of the Holy Spirit, the formation of the church, the need for missions, all the teachings on eschatology, ecclesiology, the gifts of the Spirit and so on

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth – this is a major role of the Holy Spirit - to be our teacher.

1st Corinthians 2:10 But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets.

John 14:26 But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

I do not wish to oversimplify the path to holy living, but Jesus tells us that at least part of the path is very straightforward – spend time in his word.

2nd Thessalonians 2:13b God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

Biblical sanctification is when God sets the believing sinner apart for his use, his purposes. Sanctification is instantaneous (positional), and it is also progressive (practical) as we learn little by little to obey God.

There is but one measure for gauging the effect of sanctification in us – are we becoming more like Jesus?

So, what does it really mean to be sanctified? We know we are sanctified when we are making progress towards becoming like Jesus.

Hebrews 10:14 For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

So, you see the progression above? We have already “been” made perfect, and yet we are still “being” made holy.

If I want to have any confidence at all that I am sanctified, these two things must be true of me.

- I must believe that God has already justified me in his sight and that I am now as holy (in my position) as I will ever be. (I already am sanctified by my faith in Christ’s work for me)
- I must also be cooperating with the Holy Spirit and be making progress towards Christlikeness. (Without this one I will have no confidence in my profession of faith)

John 17:21 “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

Is it not all too evident from the above, that preserving unity in the church is a powerful force of evangelism?

John 21:15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” 16 He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” 17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

What the conversation looks like in English:

- **Jesus – Peter do you love me?**
- Peter – yes.
- **Jesus – Peter do you love me?**
- Peter – yes.
- **Jesus – Peter do you love me?**
- Peter yes.

What the conversation looks like in Greek:

- **Jesus – Peter are you fully committed to me?**
- Peter – I love you like a brother.
- **Jesus – Peter are you fully committed to me?**
- Peter – I love you like a brother.
- **Jesus – Peter do you love me like a brother?**
- Peter - Yes, you know I love you like a brother.

Remember the context – the last time Jesus and Peter had an exchange was when Peter denied he knew Jesus three times. Peter is ashamed, he’s embarrassed, and probably thought his failure was fatal. Since Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus will give him three opportunities to “own” Jesus as it were.

Peter probably doesn’t trust himself enough to claim he is now fully committed to Jesus, so he dodges the question while not dodging Jesus. Jesus was surer of Peter’s commitment to him than Peter was – at least Peter wasn’t about to say he is “all in” until he can demonstrate he is. Jesus changes his “love” word in the third exchange to meet Peter where he was – effectively saying to Peter, I trust you.”

John 21:18 “Truly, truly I tell you, when you were younger, you used to put on your belt and walk wherever you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will put your belt on you and bring you where you do not want to go.” 19 Now He said this, indicating by what kind of death

he would glorify God. And when He had said this, He said to him,
“Follow Me!”

The Acts of the Apostles

YEAR (AD)	EVENT
30	Christ appears to the apostles after His resurrection (Acts 1:4-8).
31	Stephen is stoned to death.
31 - 34	Saul persecutes the Christians (Acts 8:1-3).
34	Saul has a dramatic encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus.
34	Saul escapes from Damascus in a basket (Acts 9:23-25).
34	Peter raises Dorcas (Tabitha) from the dead (Acts 9:36-43).
44	King Herod Agrippa I orders the execution of the Apostle James.
44	An angel rescues Peter from prison (Acts 12:3-10).
46 - 48	Saul's first missionary journey.
49	Paul and Peter meet at the Council of Jerusalem.
49	Paul writes his First Letter to the Thessalonians.
50	Paul writes his Letter to the Galatians.
50 - 53	Paul's second missionary journey.
53 - 57	Paul's third missionary journey.
54	16-year-old Nero becomes emperor of the Roman Empire.
55	Paul writes his First and Second Letters to the Corinthians.
57	Paul writes his Letter to the Romans.
58	Paul is arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-36).
59 - 62	Paul is taken to Rome for trial and shipwrecked on the way.
67	Nero orders the execution of both Peter and Paul.
70	The Roman Army attacks and destroys Jerusalem.

Author: The Book of Acts does not specifically identify its author. From Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3, it is clear that the same author wrote both Luke and Acts. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, wrote both Luke and Acts.

Date of Writing: The Book of Acts was likely written between 61-64 A.D.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Acts was written to provide a history of the early church. The emphasis of the book is the importance of the day of Pentecost and being empowered to be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ. Acts records the apostles being Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the rest of the surrounding world. The book sheds light on the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers, guides, teaches, and serves as our Counselor.

Acts 1:3 During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

Here we see how Jesus spent the time after his resurrection and before his ascension. During those 40 days he “talked to them (His disciples) about the Kingdom of God” meaning that he taught them things that are not recorded in the gospels.

Acts 1:6 So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”

Notice the concern of the disciples – Lord, when are you going to be King?

They were expecting, perhaps more now than ever, that Jesus was going to set up his earthly kingdom. Little did they know that at least 2,000 years would pass before his kingdom comes!

Acts 1:7 He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus tells his disciples that only the Father knows when the kingdom will come, but they are not to worry because they were about to receive power and a mission from the Holy Spirit.

Earliest days of the community in Jerusalem (1:12-7:60)

Acts 1:12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile. 13 When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying..... 14 They all met together and were constantly united in

prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

Here we have 120 believers all gathered praying in the “upper room” seeking God’s will for what to do next. Jesus told them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the power he would bring, but he didn’t tell them all the details of what that would look like, and what it would mean.

This small group of faithful believers are in new territory – one that would seem to be without the daily leadership of Jesus. Like Abraham, Moses, and many before them they were asked to move out by faith – but in this case they had Jesus’ words, “and lo I am with you always.” They knew the mission before them was to reach the world with the gospel but didn’t know the power they would receive.

Acts 2:1 On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. 2 Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. 3 Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. 4 And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

This ties into the origin of the branch of Christianity known as Pentecostalism – these believers emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit who’s “coming” to all believers is described above.

What happened on the first Feast of Pentecost after Jesus’ ascension?

The Holy Spirit came as Jesus said, and his coming was made manifest by these signs:

- A sound from heaven like a mighty rushing wind.

- What appeared to be “Tongues of fire’ was on the heads of the believers.
- All the believers spoke in foreign languages they had not learned.

By the way, we will see a similar revelation of the Holy Spirit in this new way 3 more times in the book of Acts.

- Acts 8 to the Samaritans (half-breed Jews)
- Acts 10 to the Gentiles (Cornelius and his Roman band)
- Acts 19 to some uninformed disciples of John the Baptist

The events and conditions were not identical, but there is no denying that the Spirit was given and the common sign of speaking in tongues occurred.

Acts 2:7 They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, 8 and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages!” ... (skip to verse 11) And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!

The first things ever spoken in the church in tongues had to do with “the wonderful things God has done!” Perhaps a small unnoticed detail here is that God is fluent in all languages!

That particular Pentecost ushered in the formation of the “church” – the (ecclesia) assembly of called out ones who would be used to change the world. Now that the Spirit had come, he would now take up residence in every believer to comfort, help, and enable them to serve in this newly formed body of Christ called the church.

1st Corinthians 6:19 Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. 17 He is the Holy Spirit, who

leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize Him. But you know him because he lives with you now and later will be in you.

Think about what Jesus teaches here – “*He lives with you now and later will be in you*” is about as clear as you get that Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, are the same God.

John 14:25 These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Bear in mind the disciples knew little to nothing of the Holy Spirit – Jesus just seems to drop this profound truth on them. The Holy Spirit would be their helper and teacher.

John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

What is stated above cannot be overstated in evangelism.

When the Spirit of God has someone ready to hear and receive the gospel, there is nothing you can say that would keep them from Christ.

John 16:12 I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

If Jesus were merely human, he would be thinking, “What am I doing, these men are not at all prepared for the task before them? They need more training.” But Jesus knows who is coming

and he knows their training is not over, and in fact will continue for the rest of their lives.

John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

Jesus points to the Holy Spirit as our teacher who will guide us into all truth – why didn't Jesus say he would "teach" us all truth? Because it is common for us to understand God's word via a journey as opposed to a revelation.

John 16:14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The Word of God, when spoken, taught, or preached always serves to reveal Christ and when he is revealed he is glorified. Jesus spoke only what the Father gave him, and the Holy Spirit speaks only what is given by Jesus.

Acts 4:18 So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? 20 We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard."

Romans 13:1 Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God.

The Acts 4 passage trumps the Romans 13 passage every time. Some ask, "does the Bible allow for civil disobedience?" The Bible is not silent on this - civil disobedience is permitted when the government's laws and dictates are in violation of God's laws and commands. See the Hebrew mid-wives in Exodus 1, and Rahab in Joshua 2, along with the example of the apostles in Acts 4.

Acts 4:31 After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

This is the second time the disciples were “filled with the Spirit” and what do they do? (They preach the word of God with boldness) This shows that to be “filled” with the Spirit is not a “once and done” thing. They were filled at Pentecost and here as well.

We are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit the moment we believe on Christ – at conversion, the Spirit takes up residence in us. However, being filled with the Spirit is a separate and, hopefully, repeated event that happens as we yield to him and come under his control. To find out what is meant by being “**filled with the Spirit**” we should see what it means when viewed in context.

Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The phrase “**be filled with the Spirit**” is best understood as “keep on being filled” because the original word is a verb in the present tense.

Paul tells us that to be under the control of alcohol generally alters our natural state – drunks say and do odd things. I am unconvinced there is but one outward sign or signs that are indicative of being filled with the Holy Spirit unless it is a bold witness in words or deeds to the truth. Each time the Apostles were filled they spoke the word of God boldly – then Paul tells us that Spirit-filled saints praise God, thank God, and are submissive to others.

Acts 6:2 So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, "We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. 3 And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. 4 Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word."

The apostles had more to do than they could manage so we have the appointment of deacons in the church – this shows some organizing of the local church had begun.

The word “deacon” comes from a Greek word that means, “to serve,” to be a “runner,” or a “messenger.” They were appointed to do the practical work of the ministry. And yet, what are the qualifications – to be well-respected and full of the Holy Spirit. The practical work of ministry should not be construed to mean “non-spiritual” – a minister is a servant, and one who is to make a spiritual impact through their service.

Christianity spreads in Judea and Samaria

(8:1-12:25)

Acts 7:58 "his (Stephen's) accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul."

Now we are introduced to a man named “Saul” who will later become known as Paul.

Acts 8:3 But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.

So why the change of names from Saul to Paul? *Acts 13:9 Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye.*

It was not uncommon for Jews living in a Roman world to have two names – a Jewish name and a Greek name. Because Paul became the Apostle to the Gentiles, he was likely the one to

initiate his change of names from Saul to Paul to better fit into his gentile world of ministry.

Acts 9:3 As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" 5 "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked. And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! 6 Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

This is Saul's "road to Damascus" experience where he meets the risen Christ and is dramatically and forever changed from a persecutor of the church to a builder of the church.

Saul's immediate response to this blinding light and heavenly voice was, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Interesting that he didn't say, "what do you want me to believe?" – no, all the belief necessary to produce this kind of change happened in an instant when he heard Jesus speak. We correctly say that one must believe on Jesus to be saved, and we could also correctly say that same one will want to be busy for Jesus after believing on Him.

Barnabas and Paul's First Missionary Trip

(13:1-15:35)

Acts 13:2 One day as these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them." 3 So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

We find here that God does have special assignments for some of his servants – we also see that his special work for Paul and Barnabas was revealed to them as they were praying, fasting, and worshipping. That said, anything God calls one to is "special" for the one who is called.

Acts 14:1 Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers. 2 Some of the Jews, however, spurned God's message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. 3 But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders.

In the early days of the church, before there was a written New Testament, miraculous signs often accompanied the preaching of the gospel.

Mark 16:20 And the disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs.

Notice the intended purpose of the miraculous “signs” – they were to confirm this radically new message called the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a way God was saying, “this is completely new, it is from me, and these signs are the proof.”

This is not to say that all miracles are solely for the purpose of confirming that his word is true – sometimes God heals bodies, or renews calls, or releases captives simply because his people ask. What we need to avoid is the mindset that God somehow needs to do our bidding on command as though he were our personal vending machine. He still heals, he still does signs, and he still gets to decide what is best for his glory and our good.

Paul's 2nd Missionary Trip: Asia Minor and Greece

(15:36 – 18:22)

Acts 16:14 One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying.

This is a powerful way to pray for the unsaved – ask God to “open” their heart as they hear the gospel. There is a mysterious aspect to how people get saved, and it would seem to me that the work to open a heart to his truth is at the core of that mystery. (Why do some believe, and others are unmoved?)

Acts 16:29 The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.”

Paul and Silas were jailed for delivering a slave girl from demon possession – they should have been commended but were jailed. They were in a bad situation for doing good – this is also true of all who are imprisoned for naming the name of Jesus.

If you know the story, then you know the Bible tells us that Paul and Silas were singing hymns at midnight when God sent a delivering earthquake.

We should not assume they went from being arrested for doing good to praising God all in a moment. They may well have had to work their way from being stunned and disappointed to praising God over some period of hours. (But they got to the right place)

In this story we see “**the**” question of the ages perhaps – “**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**” Let us take care in how we answer this question – when someone asks this question, they are often desperate and do not need a long and complicated answer.

We should be wise enough to say what Paul said, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.**”

In Acts 17 we find Paul on Mars Hill in Athens – the place where the wisemen of ancient Greece assembled to test the various philosophies of the day. Paul will hold them spellbound as he preaches of Jesus the Christ. Paul says I am here to tell you about the God you intuitively make room for, but do not know.

Acts 17:24 He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs.

The God they needed to know was the Creator of the universe and the one God who has no needs.

Acts 17:25 He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.

The legends of many of the ancient false gods placed demands on people to give things to them so the worshipper would profit in some way. While the true God invites us to give, the impetus in our giving is not to bribe him, but to allow us the necessary means to show our gratitude. (Informed worship)

Acts 17:26 From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.

The entire human race with all our variations, descended from just two people, Adam, and Eve. Try to take this in – what we are reading about is the very providence of God in his creative acts and of his governance in world history. (No small thing)

Acts 17:27 his purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us.

The purpose of God in creation was to have a people who would forever praise and glorify Him!

The world has been ordered towards the pleasure of God and he has been and is orchestrating the fulfillment of his will in the salvation of men.

Paul's 3rd Missionary Trip: strengthening the churches

(18:23-21:6)

Acts 19:11 God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. 12 When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled.

Again, we see God confirming his word and his messengers by giving them power to do miracles. Most New Testament miracles involved healing of the body, or deliverance from demons.

Acts 20:22 And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, 23 except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. 24 But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.

Just like Jesus knew his journey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday would cost him his life, so the Apostle Paul knew his journey back to Jerusalem would cost him his freedom.

Paul will go to Jerusalem and be arrested for nothing more than being a preacher of the gospel – the charges were a little more sophisticated than that, but preaching the truth was the real issue. He will spend most of his remaining years in confinement of one sort or the other, but he never stopped preaching and teaching. Some of his most joyful letters (epistles) were written from jail.

In Jerusalem: Paul's imprisonment and testimony

(21:7-26:32)

Acts 22:22 The crowd listened until Paul said that word. (Gentiles was the word) Then they all began to shout, "Away with such a fellow! He isn't fit to live!" 23 They yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air. 24 The commander brought Paul inside and ordered him lashed with whips to make him confess his crime. He wanted to find out why the crowd had become so furious.

This is where religious zealotry leads – to irrational and irresponsible behavior, even to demanding one die for their crime of disagreeing with the orthodoxy.

Acts 25:8 Paul denied the charges. “I am not guilty of any crime against the Jewish laws or the Temple or the Roman government,” he said. 9 Then Festus, wanting to please the Jews, asked him, “Are you willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there?” 10 But Paul replied, “No! This is the official Roman court, so I ought to be tried right here. You know very well I am not guilty of harming the Jews. 11 If I have done something worthy of death, I don’t refuse to die. But if I am innocent, no one has a right to turn me over to these men to kill me. I appeal to Caesar!” 12 Festus conferred with his advisers and then replied, “Very well! You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!”

Paul asserts his innocence again and demands his case be heard right there in Caesarea instead of back in Jerusalem. And then Paul drops a bombshell of sorts – he seems to know intuitively that Festus himself knew the Jews were railroading him.

Acts 25:10 “No! This is the official Roman court, so I ought to be tried right here. You know very well I am not guilty of harming the Jews.” If I have done something worthy of death, I don’t refuse to die. But if I am innocent, no one has a right to turn me over to these men to kill me. I appeal to Caesar!” 12 Festus conferred with his advisers and then replied, “Very well! You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!”

Paul makes it plain that he has had it with the false charges and show trials that go nowhere and demands what every Roman citizen could demand, to have his case heard by Caesar himself.

If he gets a trial in Rome, it will be before a terrible tyrant, Caesar Nero, but evidently, he wants closure and freedom to get back to his work. And then it probably hit him – I am going to Rome!

Romans 1:13 I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles. 14 For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world, to the educated and uneducated alike. 15 So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.

2nd Timothy 4:6 As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.

Paul, in the text above, is anticipating his death – tradition tells us that Paul was beheaded by Nero. What we know for sure is that Paul lived the life that he called upon others to live – he was no hypocrite.

Journey to Rome

(27:1-28:31)

In Acts 27 and 28 Paul goes to Rome so you are probably thinking that since Paul is right in the center of God’s will that he will have smooth sailing, right? (well, think again)

Acts 27:4 Putting out to sea from there, we encountered strong headwinds that made it difficult to keep the ship on course, so we sailed north of Cyprus between the island and the mainland.

For the Christian, “strong head winds” is often evidence you are going in the right direction. Paul’s life after his conversion was constant opposition.

Paul is put on a bigger ship, but the head winds worsened.

Acts 27:7 We had several days of slow sailing, and after great difficulty we finally neared Cnidus. But the wind was against us, so we sailed across to Crete and along the sheltered coast of the island, past the cape of Salmone. 8 We struggled along the coast

with great difficulty and finally arrived at Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. 9 We had lost a lot of time. The weather was becoming dangerous for sea travel because it was so late in the fall, and Paul spoke to the ship's officers about it.

So how are we to know if the head winds against us are the providential hinderances of God or dark opposition?

Acts 23:11 That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well."

Paul had clear direction from God, but there were times when he didn't know and neither do we – what then?

It's okay not to know for certain for that is when we get to knock, seek, ask, and then rely on our faith.

Never let "head winds" determine your path. If you wait until conditions are perfect, you may never move forward at all.

Acts 28:16 When we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to have his own private lodging, though he was guarded by a soldier.

The trip to Rome was treacherous, even included a shipwreck and Paul being bitten by a snake. He was chained to a Roman soldier and one can only imagine what happened to that soldier as he pondered Paul and his message of salvation through faith in Christ.

Romans

Author: Romans 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Romans as the apostle Paul. Romans 16:22 indicates that Paul used a man named Tertius to transcribe his words.

Romans 1:1 This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News.

Date of Writing: The Book of Romans was likely written A.D. 56-58.

Purpose of Writing: The main theme of this letter is obvious of course—righteousness. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Paul first condemns all men of their sinfulness. He expresses his desire to preach the truth of God’s Word to those in Rome. It was his hope to have assurance they were staying on the right path. He strongly points out that he is not ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16), because it is the power by which everyone is saved.

Romans Outline:

- Righteousness Needed (1:1 – 3:20)
- Righteousness Provided (3:21–8:39)
- Righteousness Vindicated (9:1–11:36)
- Righteousness Practiced (12:1–15:13)

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.

The gospel is “the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes.” Never ever lose sight of the basics – the truth that Jesus died for the sinner never loses its power nor its appeal. It is for all people of all times, bar none.

Romans 1:20 For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can

clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So, they have no excuse for not knowing God.

All are accountable because God has made himself known by showing himself through his creation. The wording is interesting in that God shows his “invisible” qualities through the visible things in creation.

Romans 4:1 Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? 2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God’s way. 3 For the Scriptures tell us, “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.”

Salvation through faith alone, “sola fide,” must never be assumed to be known, or assumed to be widely accepted – it is most certainly not!

There is a natural tendency to distrust anything that is given as a “free gift” and salvation is no exception. In addition, humans are prone to believe that we must do something to earn anything, including salvation. But dead people do no works, and we were all spiritually dead before we believed – so salvation by works is not just wrong, it’s impossible! (Ephesians 2:1)

Romans 6:20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. 21 And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. 22 But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life.

More scripture pointing to the necessity of a changed life for those who claim to know Christ – **“you were one thing, but now you are a completely different thing.”**

Romans 8:1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

It is quite evident from scripture that it is not God's intention to have us wondering and fretting from day-to-day about our standing with him.

1st John 5:11 And this is what God has testified: he has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. 13 I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.

Romans 11:33 Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! 34 For who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice?

When God's answers do not seem to make sense, remember, it is you, not he, who is not fully understanding. God cannot always be understood by reason – he must be believed and trusted more than understood.

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

The picture here is to be seen through the O.T. sacrificial system with the primary difference being that we are not to offer a substitute, but our very selves. And while lambs lost their lives on the alter, we are to find ours on the alter by living for him.

1st Corinthians

Author: 1st Corinthians 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of 1st Corinthians as the apostle Paul.

1st Corinthians 1:1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Sosthenes.

Date of Writing: The Book of 1st Corinthians was written in approximately A. D. 55.

Purpose of Writing: The apostle Paul founded the church in Corinth. A few years after leaving the church, the apostle Paul heard some disturbing reports about the Corinthian church.

They were full of pride and were excusing sexual immorality. Spiritual gifts were being used improperly, and there was rampant misunderstanding of key Christian doctrines. The apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians to restore the Corinthian church to its foundation—Jesus Christ.

1st Corinthians Outline:

- **Introduction (1:1-9)**
- **Responding to Reports (1:10-6:20)**
- **Responses to Paul’s Letter (7:1-16:12)**
- **Conclusion (16:13-24)**

1st Corinthians 3:12 Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. 13 But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person’s work has any value. 14 If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. 15 But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.

From the text we see there will be a judgment of our works – not to see if we get into heaven, but to test the quality of our service to Christ after salvation. There are rewards for works done for him, and loss of rewards for works that were done for purposes other than elevating Jesus. The criterion for this judgment is “what did you do with what you were given.” The above is THE text to go to for the “Bema” also known as the judgment seat of Christ - an evaluation of the believer’s works.

What did you do with what you were given?

I want the above to reverberate through our minds 1,000 times each day!

We will not be accountable for things we didn’t have or for things that were beyond our capacity to achieve. We will be accountable for our time, talent, and treasure and how we managed all three of them. The BEMA is limited to an evaluation of the believer’s works after salvation – the phrase, “Anyone who builds on that foundation,” makes the time post-salvation.

2nd Corinthians

Author: 2nd Corinthians 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of 2nd Corinthians as the apostle Paul, possibly along with Timothy.

2nd Corinthians 1:1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy.

Date of Writing: The Book of 2nd Corinthians was very likely written approximately A.D. 55-57.

Purpose of Writing: In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses his relief and joy that the Corinthians had received his “severe” letter in a positive manner. That letter addressed issues that were tearing the church apart, primarily the arrival of self-styled (false) apostles (2nd Corinthians 11:13) who were assaulting Paul’s character, sowing discord among the believers, and teaching false doctrine. They appear to have questioned his veracity (2nd Corinthians 1:15-17), his speaking ability (2nd Corinthians 10:10; 11:6), and his unwillingness to accept support from the church at Corinth (2nd Corinthians 11:7-9; 12:13). There were also some people who had not repented of their licentious behavior (2nd Corinthians 12:20-21).

2nd Corinthians Outline

- Blessing God for comforting the apostle (1:1-11)
- Reconciliation between Paul and the Corinthians (1:12-2:13)
- Paul’s ministry: Ambassador for a new covenant (2:14-6:13)
- Holiness as separation from the world (6:14-7:1)
- Appeals for the Jerusalem collection (chapters 8-9)
- Against the "super-apostles" (chapters 10-13)

2nd Corinthians 12:7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And he has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Just as we learned about suffering from Job in the O.T., so here we see that sometimes even the “best” of our brethren are called to suffer. Paul goes so far as to say that “there was given me a thorn in the flesh” as though it were a gift of sorts. As it turns out, it was a gift because he was more effective for Christ with it than he ever was without it.

So, the apostle who had been used hundreds of times by God to work healing for others, now hears “no, Paul I have a different path for you.” While others have been healed, you must be content with your pain and, in fact, you should glory in it! Paul himself declares “for when I am weak, then I am strong” – meaning, I am better off with this “thorn” than I would ever be without it.

Galatians

Author: Galatians 1:1 clearly identifies the apostle Paul as the writer of the epistle to the Galatians.

Galatians 1:1 This letter is from Paul, an apostle. I was not appointed by any group of people or any human authority, but by Jesus Christ himself and by God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.

Date of Writing: Galatians is likely the first New Testament book to be written, composed sometime soon after AD 49.

Purpose of Writing: Galatians was written because the churches of that region were facing a theological crisis. The essential truth of justification by faith rather than by human works was being denied by the Judaizers—legalistic Jews who insisted that Christians must keep the Mosaic Law. In particular, the Judaizers insisted on circumcision as a requirement for Gentiles who wished to be saved. In other words, convert to Judaism first, and then you are eligible to become a Christian.

Galatians Outline:

- The Problem of a Distorted Gospel (1:6-10)
- Paul's Authority: The Gospel and the Law (1:11-2: 14)
- Doctrinal Concerns Arising from Central Truth (3:15-5:1)
- Practical Concerns Arising from Central Truth (5:2-6:10)
- Summary Conclusion (6:11-18)

Galatians 1:6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is

preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

Paul's opinion on the importance of keeping the gospel intact and pure – no matter the cultural appeal, never compromise the truth.

If the gospel is compromised, then it is no longer the gospel. It is something altogether different. If anything is added to or removed from the gospel then we are hearing something that did not come from God. It is of the utmost importance the Church cling to the gospel of Jesus Christ no matter the intellectual, social, or popular appeal of other arguments.

Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh..... 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

The original word for “walk” in the Greek means to “regulate by” or be “directed by.”

So, what does it look like to “walk in the Spirit”? Walking in the Spirit is to submit to him as my guide and director of my steps. I must submit to his control and obey to the point that what I do is the result of his leading. I can know I am walking (living and being led by) the Holy Spirit if he is producing his fruit in me.

To walk in the Spirit is not complicated, but neither is it easy because he will be calling us to do and speak things that are at odds with our old nature. That is why we are also called to “crucify the flesh” – we crucify the flesh when we deaden ourselves to its influence. We deaden ourselves to the flesh when we engage it using the Word of God and all other available “means of grace.”

“The ‘flesh’ equates to affections and desires that run contrary to God, not only in the area of sexual activity, but in every area of life.”

Martin Luther

It seems to me that to walk in the Spirit then needs to be seen as synonymous with being filled with the Spirit. When I am controlled by the Spirit of God, I will produce fruit and avoid what the flesh yearns to do.

Ephesians

Author: Ephesians 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Ephesians as the apostle Paul.

Ephesians 1:1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

Date of Writing: The Book of Ephesians was very likely written between A.D. 60-63.

Purpose of Writing: Paul intended that all who long for Christ-like maturity would receive this writing. Enclosed within the Book of Ephesians is the discipline needed to develop into true children of God. Furthermore, a study in Ephesians will help to fortify and to establish the believer so he can fulfill the purpose and calling God has given. The aim of this epistle is to confirm and to equip a maturing church. It presents a balanced view of the body of Christ and its importance in God's economy.

Ephesians Outline

- **Thanksgiving for redemption and knowledge of heavenly mysteries in Christ (1:1-14)**
- **God has made the Gentiles alive in Christ (1:15-3:21)**
- **Christian life in the world (4:1-6:20)**

Ephesians 6:10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

1st Peter 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

For all who have tried to live for the Lord, the same number have discovered that we have opposition to living Godly lives in this world. In the verses cited above none other than Paul and Peter identify clearly who it is that contends against us – Satan himself. Our enemy is organized, and he has strategies to employ against God’s people.

The devil’s organization consists of “evil rulers” and “authorities” of the unseen world, “mighty powers” in this dark world, and “evil spirits” in the heavenly places”. His troops are part of the unseen world, which is every bit as real as the “seen” world. What Paul describes in Ephesians chapter 6 is some sort of ranking system – first “rulers”, then “authorities”, “mighty powers” and finally “evil spirits”.

There is a certain logic to the arranged evil hosts of the universe in that they are all fallen angels. Since we know that not all angels are the same or equal, then it follows that the fallen angels would not be the same or equal either. Satan, who was once Lucifer and the most beautiful angel in heaven, is the highest-ranking opponent we have and his followers in rebellion are arranged in certain ways as well.

So, if Satan has these “troops” in the unseen battle of the universe, how does he employ them? None of us are probably important enough to have a direct encounter with Satan – he is not omnipresent. In Jesus day he regularly encountered and cast out evil spirits, (demons) so it should not surprise us to learn that they are still active today.

It is certainly possible that many of the schizophrenic diagnoses we see and hear about from the mental health community are in reality cases of demon possession. We almost never hear about demon possession, but the bible lends no support to the cessation of demonic work. Demons can possess the unsaved, and oppress the saved – why else would be told to put on the armor of God?

Philippians

Author: Philippians 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Philippians as the apostle Paul, likely along with the help of Timothy.

Philippians 1:1 This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus. I am writing to all of God's holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the church leaders and deacons.

Date of Writing: The Book of Philippians was written in approximately A.D. 61.

Purpose of Writing: The Epistle to the Philippians, one of Paul's prison epistles, was written in Rome. It was at Philippi, which the apostle visited on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12), that Lydia and the Philippian jailer and his family were converted to Christ. Now, some few years later, the church was well established, as may be inferred from its address which includes "bishops (elders) and deacons" (Philippians 1:1).

Philippians Outline

- **Thanksgiving for the "partnership in the gospel" with the Philippians (1:1-11)**
- **Paul's situation: Whatever happens, it will advance the Gospel (1:12-26)**
- **Encouragement to unity in the Faith and deference to one another using the example of Christ (1:27-2:18)**
- **Timothy and Epaphroditus are to come to Philippi (2:19-30)**
- **Letter warning the Philippians against the preaching of "Judaizing" missionaries (3:1-4: 1)**
- **Exhortations and thanksgiving (4:2-4:23)**

Philippians 4:6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds

anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

If you want God's peace, then worry about nothing, and pray about everything. The problem here, of course is that this advice is much easier to say than it is to do. We worry when we do not trust. We all know intellectually at least, that to worry is a waste of time and changes nothing – and yet we all struggle to one degree or another with worry. Some good advice is – every time we find ourselves slipping into worry, start praying about that which concerns us. You will avoid the despair of worry and be doing something about the concern.

Philippians 4:8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. 9 Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

So many inputs to our thinking are from the world and tend to drag us down – instead, we are to set our minds upon things that are on the list above and, again, we are promised peace.

Most, if not all our sins originate in our minds – before we do anything, good or evil, we first have thoughts about it. If our minds are filled with the right things (true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and admirable) then our thoughts will take on the nature of those right things. There is a biblical concept of being made clean through the Word of God, so the right thoughts ultimately begin by spending time in the Word of God. (Ephesians 5:26)

Colossians

Author: The apostle Paul was the primary writer of the Book of Colossians (Colossians 1:1). Timothy is also given some credit (Colossians 1:1).

Colossians 1:1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy.

Date of Writing: The Book of Colossians was likely written between A.D. 58-62.

Purpose of Writing: The first half of the Book of Colossians is a theological treatise that includes one of the most profound presentations of Christology anywhere in the New Testament.

The second half is a mini-ethics course, addressing every area of Christian life. Paul progresses from the individual life to the home and family, from work to the way we should treat others.

The theme of this book is the Lordship of Jesus Christ and his sufficiency in meeting our needs in every area.

Colossians Outline

- **Thanksgiving: Faith, hope, and love of community (1:1-8)**
- **Prayer for the well-being of the community (1:9-14)**
- **The exalted Christ as source of our salvation (1:15-2:23)**
- **Living the Christian life (3:1-4:6)**
- **Concluding greetings (4:7-18)**

Colossians 1:15 Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, 16 for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.

The above verses give us strong hints about the supremacy of Christ - in all things he is the greatest of all and his purposes and his desires exceed by far anything that originates with us.

We live in a world that is self-absorbed and inwardly focused based on the assumption that man is the center of all things. It is simply not so – we are mere instruments of his glory and despite our high position on the creative order, we ought never to think more highly of ourselves than we should.

Romans 12:3 Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

Whether it is the seen or unseen world, it is Jesus who is supreme and when we seek to put him in his rightful place we benefit if for no other reason than our worship is more informed. God exalts himself so that he is glorified, and it is in the glorification of him that we do best and even excel. Colossians, along with Hebrews, are among the best places to go for scriptural support for the supremacy of Christ.

What follows are some quotes from John Piper on the Supremacy of Christ.

All the universe, indeed all of creation are but shadows of the supremacy of Christ.

The supremacy of his constancy is seen in his virtues, his character, and his commitments that never change.

The supremacy of his knowledge makes the Library of Congress look like a match box.

The supremacy of his knowledge makes all the information on the internet look like a 1940's Farmer's Almanac. His knowledge makes quantum physics and all that Stephen Hawking ever dreamed look like a 1st grade reader. His wisdom has never left

him perplexed or in need of counsel from anyone or anything – he is supreme.

The supremacy of his authority – He told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.” No one dare stand opposed to him. His providence is supreme – not even a single bird can fall to the ground without his knowing about it and allowing it. He holds all things together – *Colossians 1:17 He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.*

The supremacy of his justice – when he is through there will remain no open cases of injustice. Every sin will be adjudicated either on the cross or in hell itself. He will render all accounts, “settled”.

Christ is the center of all things, the measure of all things, and the creator of all things – he is supreme!

1st Thessalonians

Author: 1st Thessalonians 1:1 indicates that the Book of 1 Thessalonians was written by the apostle Paul, probably along with Silas and Timothy.

1st Thessalonians 1:1 This letter is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy. We are writing to the church in Thessalonica, to you who belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May God give you grace and peace.

Date of Writing: The Book of 1st Thessalonians was written in approximately A.D. 50.

Purpose of Writing: In the church of Thessalonica there were some misunderstandings about the return of Christ. Paul desired to clear them up in his letter. He also writes it as an instruction in holy living. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that the persecution they were receiving from their “own countrymen” (v. 2:15), the Jews who rejected their Messiah, is the same that the Old Testament prophets suffered (Jeremiah 2:30; Matthew 23:31). Jesus warned that true prophets of God would always be opposed by the unrighteous (Luke 11:49).

1st Thessalonians 4:9 But we don't need to write to you about the importance of loving each other, for God himself has taught you to love one another.

One of the hallmarks of a born-again life is an unexplainable love for others, and a preference for other Christians in particular.

1st John 3:14 If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead.

1st Thessalonians 4:11 Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. 12 Then people who are not believers

will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others. Live quietly, mind your own business, and work hard.

Now this does not sound all that spiritual or exciting, but it sure does look like the simple things might just be a part of a very powerful testimony!

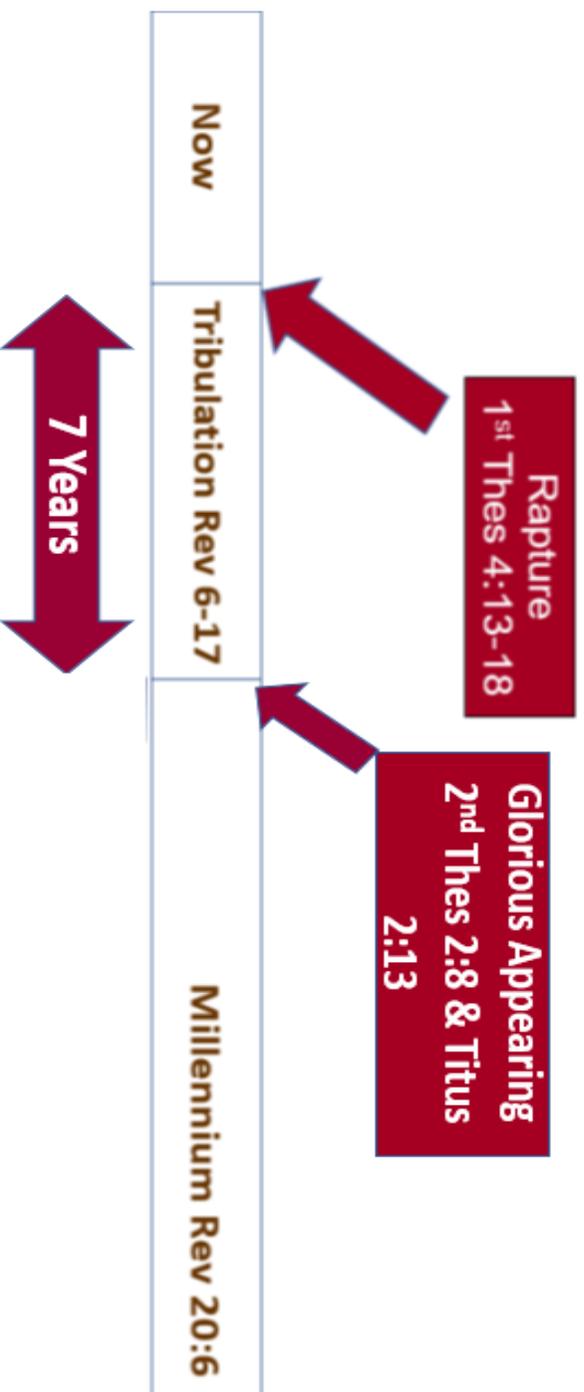
The Rapture of the Church

1st Thessalonians 4:13 And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. 15 We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. 17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. 18 So encourage each other with these words.

The next event on the prophetic calendar - The Rapture of the church:

- The archangel will shout. (Michael perhaps)
- A trumpet will sound.
- The “dead in Christ” (believers of all times) will be raised and given new glorified bodies like Jesus’ post-resurrection body.
- Living believers will be translated (changed) from their earthly bodies into glorified bodies like Jesus’ post-resurrection body.
- All saints of all times will proceed to Heaven for 7 years.

1st Thessalonians



2nd Thessalonians

Author: 2nd Thessalonians 1:1 indicates that the Book of 2nd Thessalonians was written by the apostle Paul, probably along with Silas and Timothy.

2nd Thessalonians 1:1 This letter is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy. We are writing to the church in Thessalonica, to you who belong to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Date of Writing: The Book of 2nd Thessalonians was likely written in AD 51-52.

Purpose of Writing: The church in Thessalonica still had some misconceptions about the Day of the Lord. They thought it had come already so they stopped with their work. They were being persecuted badly. Paul wrote to clear up misconceptions and to comfort them. The Book of 2nd Thessalonians is filled with information that explains the end times. It also exhorts us not to be idle and to work for what we have.

2nd Thessalonians 2:1 Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him. 2 Don't be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don't believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us. 3 Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction. 4 He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God.

Paul lets the Thessalonian believers, who had concerns that they had missed the Rapture, know that in fact the Great Tribulation had not begun. The proof that Great Tribulation had not started is that “the man of lawlessness” had not been revealed by entering

the temple and demanding worship. Paul's 1st letter to them taught of the Rapture and absent its events and absent the revealing of antichrist, they could know that the "Day of the Lord" had not begun.

2nd Thessalonians 2:5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

2nd Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

Colossians 2:14 "by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."

The phrases, "out of the way" and "set aside" come from the same Greek word – think of "standing down" or "moved away" with respect to restraint, but not removed.

You've probably heard it said that the one who "restrains" is the Holy Spirit and that is true. But not in the respect that most teach – many teach the Holy Spirit will be withdrawn from the earth during the tribulation, but if that is so then how are people saved?

John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. (see John 16 where he convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment, also Lydia in Acts 16 whose heart the Lord opened)

Be careful of teaching that claims the Holy Spirit is removed for the Tribulation for these reasons. According to Revelation chapter 7, an untold number of martyrs are under the throne of God seeking justice for their executions in the Great Tribulation. If they

were martyred in the Great Tribulation, then they must have been saved in the Great Tribulation.

I do not know how it is that an untold number of people are saved without the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit.

John 6:44 “For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me”.

2nd Thessalonians 2:13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

1st Timothy

Author: The Book of 1 Timothy was written by the apostle Paul (1st Timothy 1:1).

1st Timothy 1:1 This letter is from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, appointed by the command of God our Savior and Christ Jesus, who gives us hope.

Date of Writing: The Book of 1st Timothy was written in A.D. 62-66.

Purpose of Writing: Paul wrote to Timothy to encourage him in his responsibility for overseeing the work of the Ephesian church and possibly the other churches in the province of Asia (1st Timothy 1:3). This letter lays the foundation for ordaining elders (1st Timothy 3:1-7) and provides guidance for ordaining people into offices of the church (1st Timothy 3:8-13). In essence, 1st Timothy is a leadership manual for church organization and administration.

1st Timothy 3:1 This is a trustworthy saying: "If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position."

Before we talk other qualifications there must be a desire to lead or the person will not be successful. There is no room in the church for half-hearted efforts to lead believers in what is in fact a life and death struggle.

ELDERS (pastors in the AG world) *1st Timothy 3:2 So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. 3 He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. 4 He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. 5 For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's*

church? 6 A church leader **must not be a new believer**, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. 7 Also, **people outside the church must speak well of him** so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil's trap.

DEACONS 1st Timothy 3:8 In the same way, deacons **must be well respected and have integrity**. **They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money**. 9 They **must be committed to the mystery of the faith** now revealed and **must live with a clear conscience**. 10 **Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined**. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons.

Deacons oversee the practical aspects of the church, but do not assume that “practical” is not “spiritual”. (the 1st deacons in Acts 6 had one dominant characteristic – filled with the Spirit)

2nd Timothy

Author: 2nd Timothy 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of 2nd Timothy as the apostle Paul.

2nd Timothy 1:1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I have been sent out to tell others about the life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus.

Date of Writing: The Book of 2nd Timothy was written in approximately A.D. 67, shortly before the apostle Paul was put to death.

Purpose of Writing: Imprisoned in Rome yet again, the apostle Paul felt lonely and abandoned. Paul recognized that his earthly life was likely coming to an end soon. The Book of 2nd Timothy is essentially Paul's "last words." Paul looked past his own circumstances to express concern for the churches and specifically for Timothy. **Paul wanted to use his last words to encourage Timothy, and all other believers, to persevere in faith (2nd Timothy 3:14) and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (2nd Timothy 4:2).**

*2nd Timothy 3:1 You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. 2 **For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred.** 3 **They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good.** 4 **They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God.** 5 **They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly.** Stay away from people like that!*

A quick look at the conditions for the "last days" will inform us as to the times in which we live. However, in fairness, most generations since the resurrection could claim these same

conditions but I do believe that because of things like the internet, these behaviors are proliferating.

Titus

Author: Titus 1:1 identifies the apostle Paul as the author of the Book of Titus.

Titus 1:1 This letter is from Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. I have been sent to proclaim faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives.

Date of Writing: The Epistle to Titus was written in approximately A.D. 66.

Purpose of Writing: *The Epistle to Titus is known as one of the Pastoral Epistles as are the two letters to Timothy.* This epistle was written by the apostle Paul to encourage his brother in the faith, Titus, whom he had left in Crete to lead the church which Paul had established on one of his missionary journeys (Titus 1:5). This letter advises Titus regarding what qualifications to look for in leaders for the church. He also warns Titus of the reputations of those living on the island of Crete (Titus 1:12). In addition to instructing Titus in what to look for in a leader of the church, Paul also encouraged Titus to return to Nicopolis for a visit. In other words, Paul continued to disciple Titus and others as they grew in the grace of the Lord (Titus 3:13).

Titus is the 3rd of the “pastoral epistles” – the first two being 1st and 2nd Timothy. These three letters have much to say about order, discipline, and the governing structure of local churches. There were no separate buildings for the churches and to ever refer to a building as a “church” would have been a foreign idea. (believers are the temple of the Holy Spirit and are therefore, the church)

Titus 2:7 “in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, & sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.”

In all that Paul wrote to Titus we see a common theme – be good ambassadors for Christ in the world by living a life that is respected by the unbelieving. Do not concern yourself with being liked but do strive to be respected.

Philemon

Author: The author of the Book of Philemon was the apostle, Paul.

Philemon 1:1 This letter is from Paul, a prisoner for preaching the Good News about Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy.

Date of Writing: The Book of Philemon was written in approximately A. D. 60.

Purpose of Writing: The letter to Philemon is the shortest of all Paul's writings and deals with the practice of slavery. The letter suggests that Paul was in prison at the time of the writing. Philemon was a slave owner who also hosted a church in his home. During the time of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, Philemon had likely journeyed to the city, heard Paul's preaching, and became a Christian. The slave Onesimus robbed his master, Philemon, and ran away, making his way to Rome and to Paul. Onesimus was still the property of Philemon, and Paul wrote to smooth the way for his return to his master. Through Paul's witnessing to him, Onesimus had become a Christian (Philemon 10) and Paul wanted Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ and not merely as a slave.

Philemon 1:7 For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

A very big idea and mission comes to us in this small book – **“refresh the saints around you”**. The Greek for “refresh” is “anapauw”. The word means “to provide a place of rest and of quiet expectation”.

Wouldn't it be a great reputation for you to be the person that allows other believers to rest and recover in your presence? May we also be the ones that have encouraging expectations for our brothers and sisters without making them feel guilty or anxious.

That was Paul's assessment of Philemon, and he was counting on him to "refresh" him as well as Onesimus.

Hebrews

Author: Although some include the Book of Hebrews among the apostle Paul's writings, the certain identity of the author remains an enigma. Missing is Paul's customary salutation common to his other works.

In addition, the suggestion that the writer of this epistle relied upon knowledge and information provided by others who were actual eyewitnesses of Christ Jesus (2:3) makes Pauline authorship doubtful. Some attribute Luke as its writer; others suggest Hebrews may have been written by Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Philip, or Aquila and Priscilla. Regardless of the human hand that held the pen, the Holy Spirit of God is the divine author of all Scripture (2nd Timothy 3:16); therefore, Hebrews speaks with the same canonical authority as the other sixty-five books of the Bible.

Date of Writing: The early church father Clement quoted from the Book of Hebrews in A.D. 95. However, internal evidence such as the fact that Timothy was alive at the time the epistle was written and the absence of any evidence showing the end of the Old Testament sacrificial system that occurred with Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70 indicates the book was written around A.D. 65.

Purpose of Writing: The late Dr. Walter Martin, founder of the Christian Research Institute and writer of the best-selling book *Kingdom of the Cults*, quipped in his usual tongue-in-cheek manner **that the Book of Hebrews was written by a Hebrew to other Hebrews telling the Hebrews to stop acting like Hebrews.** In truth, many of the early Jewish believers were slipping back into the rites and rituals of Judaism in order to escape the mounting persecution. This letter, then, is an exhortation for those persecuted believers to continue in the grace of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. 2 And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe.

One of the greatest truths in human history is that God has spoken – first through the prophets, then through his Son, and now through his Spirit and his recorded word.

Hebrews 4:16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

In many ways the Levitical system shouted, “keep back, you could get hurt by God”. When the veil on the temple was torn in two, the message shifted from “keep back” to “come boldly”.

And look what we are promised when we “come boldly” – mercy and grace. When God holds back what we rightfully deserve, we experience his mercy. When God gives us that which we do not deserve, we experience his grace.

Hebrews 8:1 Here is the main point: We have a High Priest who sat down in the place of honor beside the throne of the majestic God in heaven. 2 There he ministers in the heavenly Tabernacle, the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands.

Here we see that the O.T. tabernacle was not just a tent or a building but was a replica of something that actually exists in heaven.

The O.T. Israelite was reminded of their sin problem and the ineffectiveness of the old covenant by the mere presence of the tabernacle – the proof was the repetitiveness of the sacrifices. They needed a high priest who could enter the “true” holy of holies in heaven itself with the blood of God’s Lamb. And that is

what actually happened – Jesus entered the true holy of holies, offered his own blood, and then sat down!

Hebrews 9:23 That is why the Tabernacle and everything in it, which were copies of things in heaven, had to be purified by the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven had to be purified with far better sacrifices than the blood of animals. 24 For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven himself to appear now before God on our behalf. 25 And he did not enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal. 26 If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:4 For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 That is why, when Christ came into the world, he said to God, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer. 6 You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin.”

All of the O.T. sacrifices were ineffective in removing sin from the sinner – what could be more clear, “**it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**”. The Levitical priests were not permitted to sit down because their work was never done. Christ sat down at the Father’s right hand because his work was not only effective, but it was also done!

Hebrews 10:12 But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand. 13 There he waits until his enemies are humbled and made a footstool under his feet. 14 For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy.

We see an old truth again – sanctified positionally and being further sanctified practically on an on-going and continuing basis.

Hebrews 11:35 But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. 36 Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. 37 Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. 38 They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

We have no trouble latching on to those who triumphed in this life through faith, but we do need to see that sometimes triumph looks like failure, and victory looks like defeat. (see above)

Hebrews 11:39 All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. 40 For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.

The “all these people” refers to all the examples mentioned in the chapter starting with Abel and while the early examples are easy to grasp as victories, the latter ones need to be equally embraced as victory through faith. Do not judge by earthly standards – there awaits an eternal reward for all who trust Jesus whether their circumstances make them look like they are winning or look like they are losing.

Hebrews 12:5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, “My child, don’t make light of the Lord’s discipline, and don’t give up when he corrects you. 6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.” 7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8 If God

doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.

A great disservice God could render to us would be to allow us to place our faith in him and then allow us to sin without repercussions. Thankfully, that is not God's disposition towards us when we sin – he will never let us sin without his corrective measures. The conscience (Romans 2), and the Spirit (John 16) both convict us when we sin and call us to repentance.

If we respond to his pricking of our conscience and the convictions of his Spirit within us, then we repent, we confess, we are forgiven, and we move on. (1st John 1:9) If we fail to respond to those two alerts then he will proceed to step #2 – he will begin to discipline us using the things that he knows we will respond to. Since God knows us so well that he could, and did, put us together in the dark, he knows what pressures to bring upon us in order to turn us around.

So, what if we still do not respond?

The answer to that is in this question, “what would a good parent do to correct a wayward child?”. A good parent, and God is the best ever, would continue to bring pressure, and continue to bring pressure until we turn around.

James

Author: The author of this epistle (letter) is James, also called **James the Just, who is thought to be the brother of Jesus Christ** (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). James was not a believer (John 7:3-5) until after the resurrection (Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19). **He became the head of the Jerusalem church and is mentioned first as a pillar of the church** (Galatians 2:9).

Date of Writing: The Book of James is probably the oldest book of the New Testament, written perhaps as early as A.D. 45, before the first council of Jerusalem in A.D. 50. James was martyred in approximately A.D. 62, according to the historian Josephus.

Purpose of Writing: Some think that this epistle was written in response to an overzealous interpretation of Paul's teaching regarding faith. The Book of James is directed to Jewish Christians scattered among all the nations (James 1:1). **Martin Luther, who detested this letter and called it "the epistle of straw," failed to recognize that James's teaching on works complemented—not contradicted—Paul's teaching on faith.**

While Pauline teachings concentrate on our justification with God, James' teachings concentrate on the works that exemplify that justification. James was writing to Jews to encourage them to continue growing in this new Christian faith. **James emphasizes that good actions will naturally flow from those who are filled with the Spirit** and questions whether someone may or may not have a saving faith if the fruits of the Spirit cannot be seen, much as Paul describes in Galatians 5:22-23.

James 1:13 And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. 14 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. 15 These desires give

birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

An important statement is this, “**God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else**”.

Temptation always comes from within – it may be stimulated by external influences, but always comes from inside of us.

*1st Corinthians 10:13 The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. **He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand.** When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.*

God limits the temptation to that which one can stand - the first line of defense for all Christians is, **just say “no”**. This is what Paul described above as, “**a way out.**”

Our problem in resisting sin is not that we don't know to say “no” - our problem is not wanting to say “no”!



What James said - *James 2:14 What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? 15 Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, 16 and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? 17 So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.*

What Paul said - *Ephesians 2:8* God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. *9* salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Some have held that Paul and James are somehow at odds with one another, but clearly, they are not. On the contrary, their writings complement each other with practical truth that could be stated as, "**if you are, you will**". (if you are saved, you will have good works) Simply stated, it is not possible to have saving faith unless it is accompanied by repentance and good works – we do not "work" to **get saved**, we work because **we are saved**.

"Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

1st PETER

Author: 1st Peter 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of 1st Peter as the apostle Peter.

1st Peter 1:1 This letter is from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

Date of Writing: Likely written between A.D. 60 and 65.

Purpose of Writing: 1st Peter is a letter from Peter to the believers who had been dispersed throughout the ancient world and were under intense persecution.

If anyone understood persecution, it was Peter. He was beaten, threatened, punished and jailed for preaching the Word of God. He knew what it took to endure without bitterness, without losing hope and in great faith living an obedient, victorious life.

This knowledge of living hope in Jesus was the message and Christ's example was the one to follow.

Notice what God says through Peter to the church that is enduring great persecution – He calls them to focus on the eternals.

1st Peter 1:3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, 4 and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. 5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

Persecution seems to be this powerful way of moving the church towards God in a fashion that is the most effective means available for purifying his people.

Against all intuition, persecution does not cause the church to fold up our tents and run for cover – instead, it causes us to stand even more firmly on what we know is true.

Standing for truth is one of those timeless principles that causes us to rise to the occasion for something that is big enough to be transforming.

1st Peter 2:21 For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. 22 He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. 23 He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

Philippians 1:28 Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. 29 For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.

“This is God's universal purpose for all Christian suffering: more contentment in God and less satisfaction in the world.”

John Piper

1st Peter 2:24 Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Some sectors of Christianity believe that healing for the believer is included in the atoning work Jesus did on the cross. It is not a “name it and claim it” doctrine. Your relationship with Jesus provides access to the Great Physician, come, and ask, believing that he will heal you.

Many have been healed of deadly diseases and other maladies by believing that God is as good as his word.

So, what if we pray and pray and God does not heal us? We should respond with “His grace is sufficient” and “we have a promise of a completely new body in eternity.” He is going to heal us completely and perfectly – it is just the timing that is in question.

It is no “cop out” at all to say what better healing can we have than a promotion into his presence!

2nd PETER

Author: 2nd Peter 1:1 specifically states that the apostle Peter was the author of 2nd Peter. Peter's authorship of 2nd Peter has been challenged more than that of any other book in the New Testament. However, the early church fathers found no good reason to reject it. We find no good reason to reject Peter's authorship of 2nd Peter.

2nd Peter 1:1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Date of Writing: The Book of 2nd Peter was written toward the end of Peter's life. Since Peter was martyred in Rome during the reign of Nero, his death must have occurred prior to A.D. 68. It is likely he wrote 2nd Peter between A.D. 65 and 68.

Purpose of Writing: Peter was alarmed that false teachers were beginning to infiltrate the churches. He called on Christians to grow and become strong in their faith so that they could detect and combat the spreading apostasy. He strongly stressed the authenticity of the Word of God and the sure return of the Lord Jesus.

To the false teachers that were arising in the church, Peter reminds his readers that he was an eyewitness of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

2nd Peter 1:14 For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life, 15 so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone. 16 For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes 17 when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." 18 We ourselves

heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

2nd Peter 1:19 Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, 21 or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

God's method of delivering his inspired Word is shown above.

While on occasion God said, “**write these words,**” that was not his usual method of giving mankind his word. Instead, we see, “no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God”. The usual progression was that the prophets would speak God's message and then later preserve it by writing it down.

The Holy Spirit superintended the giving of his word as the prophets wrote – He carried them along. Why have confidence in the Bible and why should you believe it? Because science and history validate it. We have hundreds of prophecies fulfilled perfectly, and not a single prophecy ever, not even one, that was wrong!

2nd Peter 3:9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

If you ever wonder, why it has been 2,000 years and counting as the church waits for Jesus to fulfill his “I will come again” promise – the answer is above. It seems no more complicated than God is patiently waiting for more people to come into the kingdom.

1st John

Author: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John have from earliest times been attributed to the apostle John, who also wrote the Gospel of John. The content, style, and vocabulary seem to warrant the conclusion that these three epistles were addressed to the same readers as the Gospel of John.

Date of Writing: The Book of 1st John was likely written between A.D. 85-95.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of 1st John seems to be a summary that assumes the readers' knowledge of the gospel as written by John and offers certainty for their faith in Christ. The first epistle indicates that the readers were confronted with the error of Gnosticism, which became a more serious problem in the second century. As a philosophy of religion, it held that matter is evil, and spirit is good. The solution to the tension between these two was knowledge, or gnosis, through which man rose from the mundane to the spiritual. In the gospel message, this led to two false theories concerning the person of Christ, Docetism—regarding the human Jesus as a ghost—and Cerinthianism—making Jesus a dual personality, at times human and at times divine. **The key purpose of 1st John is to give believers assurance of their salvation.**

The Gnostic believes in acquiring special, mystical knowledge as the means for salvation. According to Gnostic beliefs, there is a Great God that is good and perfect, but impersonal and unknowable. The creator of the universe was actually a lesser deity—a cheap knock-off of the “true God”—who wanted to create a flawless material universe but botched the job. Instead of having a utopia, we ended up with a world infected with pain, misery, and intellectual and spiritual blindness; all matter is now corrupt and evil. However, when this lesser deity created man, he accidentally imbued humanity with a spark of the “true” God’s

spirit, making man an inherently good soul trapped in the confines of an evil, material body.

1st John has at least three “tests” for us that can help us to gain assurance of our salvation.

Test #1 - *1st John 2:3 And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. 4 If someone claims, “I know God,” but doesn’t obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth.* Wait, John says I can have assurance if I obey his commandments – the problem is I don’t obey them well at all.

This test, however, need not crush us – the Greek word that is translated to the English as “obey” does not mean “a strict adherence to”, it means “to guard with the eye”.

We know from Romans 7 that Paul struggled with obedience so should we say that John was simply wrong? No!

John is telling us the obedience he is talking about is our desire to adhere to God’s commands. The test is this – **“do I have a desire to obey God?”**.

Test #2 – *1st John 3:9 Those who have been born into God’s family do not make a practice of sinning, because God’s life is in them. So, they can’t keep on sinning, because they are children of God.*

This one is easier to see – the question is not, “do I sin,” the question is **“do I practice sin”**? In other words, is the general “tenor” (continuous, unwavering, course) of my life one of a pursuit of sin, or one of pursuing righteousness? (this one is easy to see if we are honest)

Test #3 – *1st John 3:14 If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead.*

1st Thessalonians 4:9 But we don’t need to write to you about the importance of loving each other, for God himself has taught you to love one another.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

This one is quite clear – another way to be assured that you have saving faith is found in how we treat other Christians. Not how much we like them, but in how well we treat them. Not a task to be done, but an experience to enjoy.

All the tests notwithstanding, you are not saved by passing any of the “tests”, you are saved by grace through faith – John simply wants to assure you that your faith is real.

If you desire to obey God, are not pursuing sin, and if you love other Christians, you should be confident your faith in Jesus is saving faith.

2nd John

Author: The Book of 2nd John does not directly name its author. **The tradition from the earliest days of the church states that the author was the apostle, John.** There have been various conjectures over the years that another disciple of Christ named John may have been responsible for this letter. However, all the evidence points to the author as John the beloved disciple who also wrote the Gospel of John.

Date of Writing: The Book of 2nd John would most likely have been written at about the same time as John's other letters, 1 and 3 John, between A.D. 85-95.

Purpose of Writing: **The Book of 2nd John is an urgent plea that the readers of John's letter should show their love for God and his son Jesus by obeying the commandment to love each other and live their lives in obedience to the Scriptures.** The Book of 2nd John is also a strong warning to be on the lookout for deceivers who were going about saying that Christ had not actually risen in the flesh.

2nd John 1:10 If anyone comes to your meeting and does not teach the truth about Christ, don't invite that person into your home or give any kind of encouragement. 11 Anyone who encourages such people becomes a partner in their evil work.

While we are to love our brothers and even our enemies, we are not to help, support, or encourage anyone who is teaching heresy. Assisting someone to stay in their error and spread it, is not love!

3rd John

Author: The Book of 3rd John does not directly name its author. **The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that the apostle John is the author.** There have been occasional doubts raised by those who thought it possible that this was written by another disciple of the Lord named John, but all the evidence points to the author being John, the Apostle.

Date of Writing: The Book of 3rd John would most likely have been written at about the same time as John's other letters, 1st and 2nd John, between A.D. 85-95.

Purpose of Writing: John's purpose in writing this third epistle is threefold. **First, he writes to commend and encourage his beloved co-worker, Gaius,** in his ministry of hospitality to the itinerant messengers who were going from place to place to preach the Gospel of Christ.

Second, he indirectly warns and condemns the behavior of one Diotrophes, a dictatorial leader who had taken over one of the churches in the province of Asia, and whose behavior was directly opposed to all that the apostle and his Gospel stood for.

Third, he commends the example of Demetrius who was reported as having a good testimony from all.

3rd John 1:9 I wrote to the church about this, but Diotrophes, who loves to be the leader, refuses to have anything to do with us. 10 When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the evil accusations he is making against us. Not only does he refuse to welcome the traveling teachers, he also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church. 11 Dear friend, don't let this bad example influence you. Follow only what is good. Remember that those who do good prove that they are God's children, and those who do evil prove that they do not know God.

It is appropriate at times to call out bad behavior and evil for what it is. There is way too much at stake for church leadership to be passive in the face of error and evil.

Jude

Author: Jude 1 identifies the author of the Book of Jude as Jude, a brother of James. This likely refers to Jesus' half-brother Jude, as Jesus also had a half-brother named James (Matthew 13:55). Jude likely does not identify himself as a brother of Jesus out of humility and reverence for Christ.

Jude 1:1 This letter is from Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James. I am writing to all who have been called by God the Father, who loves you and keeps you safe in the care of Jesus Christ.

Date of Writing: The Book of Jude is closely related to the book of 2nd Peter. The date of authorship for Jude depends on whether Jude used content from 2nd Peter, or Peter used content from Jude when writing 2 Peter. The Book of Jude was written somewhere between A.D. 60 and 80.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Jude is an important book for us today because it is written for the end times, for the end of the church age. The church age began at the Day of Pentecost. Jude is the only book given entirely to the great apostasy. Jude writes that evil works are the evidence of apostasy. He admonishes us to contend for the faith, for there are tares among the wheat. False prophets are in the church and the saints are in danger. Jude is a small but important book worthy of study, written for the Christian of today.

Jude 1:3 Dear friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people. 4 I say this because some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God's marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude is calling for the church to remain faithful to the end in their faith in Jesus Christ – for many were turning away from the faith.

If any come teaching the grace of God is a license to do whatever your flesh desires, that one is an apostate.

Apostate comes from two Latin words – APO and STASIS and means to depart from a previously held stance. Heretics were coming in preaching a departure from the stand of the church – this is still a threat to this day.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Author: Revelation 1:1,4,9 and 22:8 specifically identify the author of the Book of Revelation as the apostle John.

There is ample evidence as to the author of this book of prophecy.

Date of Writing: The Book of Revelation was likely written between A.D. 90 and 95.

Purpose of Writing: The Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to John by God **“to show his servants what must soon take place.”**

This book is filled with mysteries about things to come. It is the final warning that the world will surely end, and judgment will be certain. It gives us a tiny glimpse of heaven and all the glories awaiting those who keep their robes white. Revelation takes us through the great tribulation with all its woes and the final fire that all unbelievers will face for eternity. **The book reiterates the fall of Satan and the doom he and his angels are bound for.** We are shown the duties of all creatures and angels of heaven and the promises of the saints that will live forever with Jesus in the New Heaven and Earth. **Like John, we find it hard to describe what we read in the book of Revelation.**

Revelation 1:19 “Write down what you have seen—both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen.”

John had just seen the Glorified Jesus in all his majesty, next he will be told what to write to the 7 churches, and then he will be given a revelation of the future. He was to write of his vision of Jesus, what is happening now, the letters to the churches, and things that will happen. Those statements make up the rest of the only prophetic book of the New Testament.

Revelation 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.

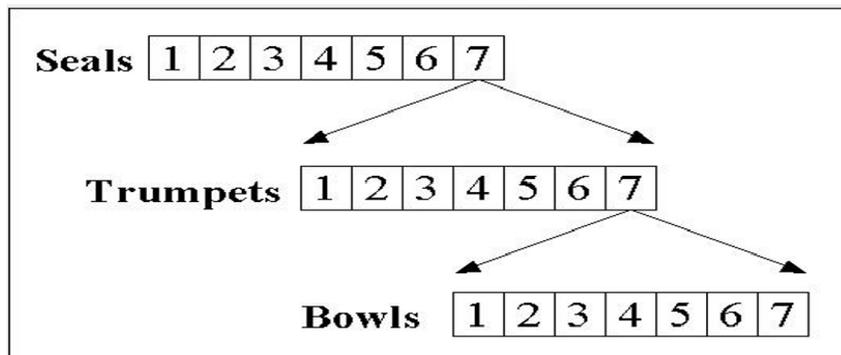
If chapter 1 was the vision of Jesus, and if chapters 2-3 are the letters to the churches, (and they are) then chapter 4 starts the final part of the outline – **things that will happen.**

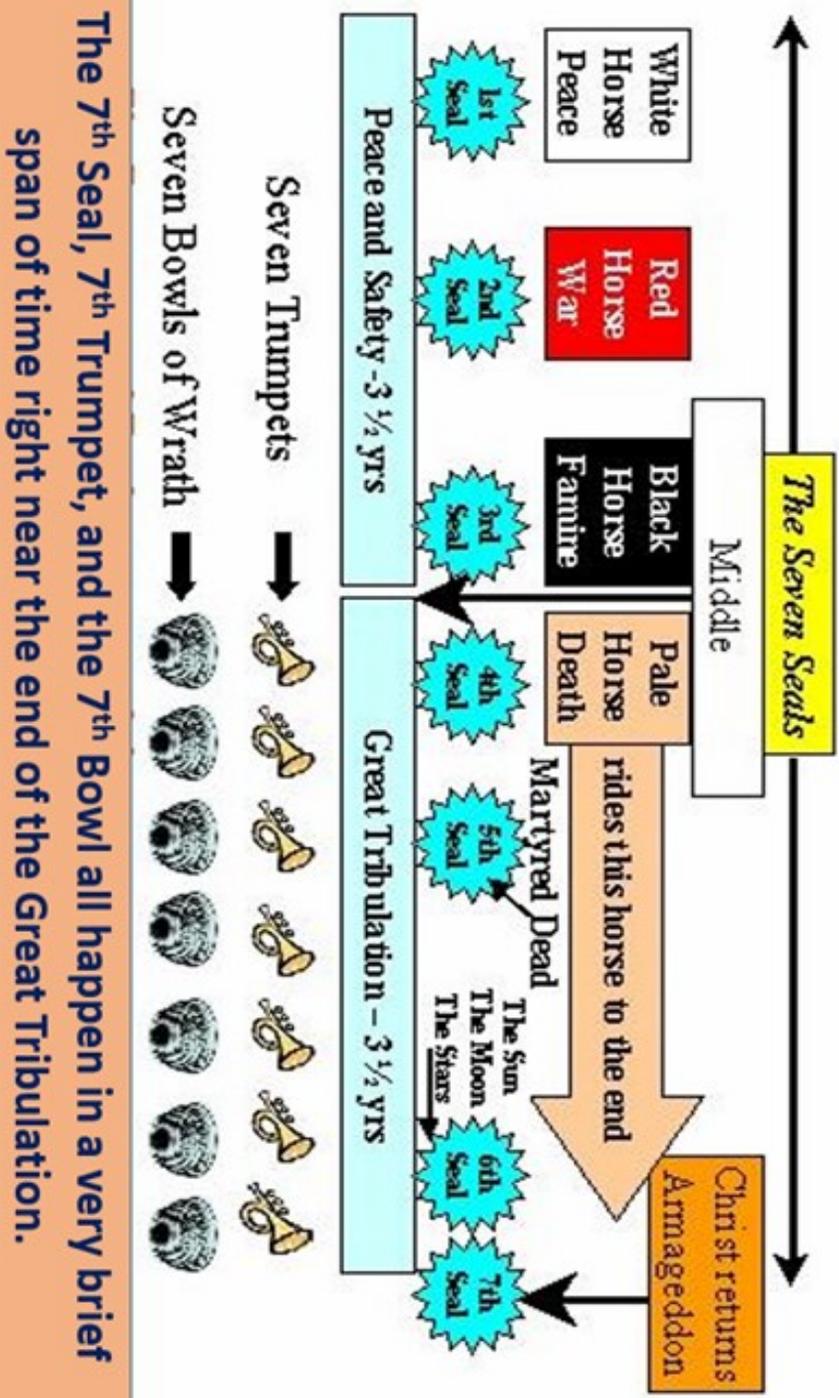
Chapter 4 begins with the Rapture of the Church – Revelation 4:1
After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven!
And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

Starting in chapter 5 we have this great scene in the throne room of God, and we learn of the scroll, or the “book” – as it turns out the “book” is the title deed to the earth and Jesus is about to break it open and take back the earth from the devil.

The scroll or the “book” is said to have seals as would any last will and testament (or perhaps deed) of John’s day. When Jesus begins to break the seals, judgment begins to pour out on the earth and as the seals are broken the judgments increase in frequency and in intensity. In other words, as the seals, trumpets, and bowls are unleashed they get worse and come more rapidly.

Revelation 5:1 I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?”





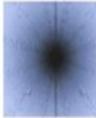
The 7th Seal, 7th Trumpet, and the 7th Bowl all happen in a very brief span of time right near the end of the Great Tribulation.

Scope of Trumpet Judgments



7 Bowls of Wrath

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
						
						
Rev. 16:2	Rev. 16:3	Rev. 16:4-7	Rev. 16:8-9	Rev. 16:10-11	Rev. 16:12-16	Rev. 16:17-21
Malignant ulcers appear on those with the mark of the Beast.	Sea turns to blood, all living creatures in the sea die.	Drinking water turns to blood, men given blood to drink.	The sun becomes extremely hot, and scorches men.	Antichrist's kingdom struck with darkness.	Euphrates river dried up, armies gathered for Armageddon.	Worldwide earthquake, cities collapse, 120lb. hailstones fall from the sky

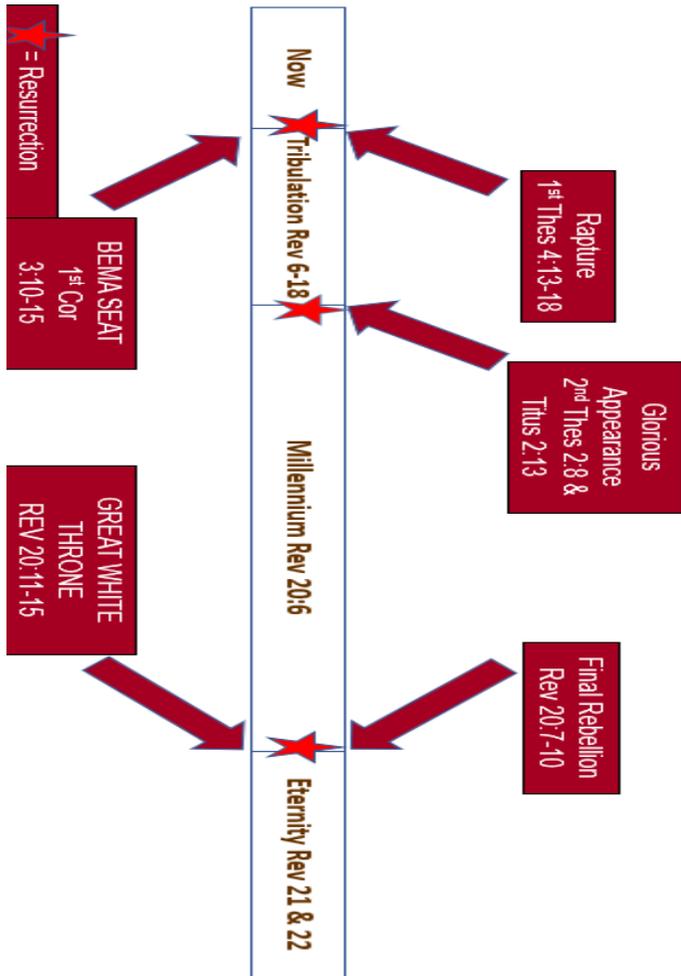
Scope of Bowl Judgments



Displayed below are what may be the 10 End-Time Economic regions of the world under the reign of the Beast.



The Chronology of the 'End Times'



Revelation 22:18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

The warnings above are not limited to The Revelation of Jesus Christ, but apply to the whole bible. The Word of God is the Word of God whether we are handling Genesis, Psalms, or Revelation.

Soteriology Part One

Soteriology is the study of the doctrine of salvation. Soteriology discusses how Christ's death secures the salvation of those who believe. It helps us to understand the doctrines of regeneration, redemption, justification, sanctification, propitiation, substitutionary atonement, and more.

Saved from what?

A Life of
Sin

The Lake
of Fire

Salvation is the total work of God on behalf of the sinner from the sinner's conversion to his glorification.

*Romans 8:29 For those whom he **foreknew** he also predestined to be **conformed** to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he **predestined** he also **called**, and those whom he called he also **justified**, and those whom he justified he also **glorified**.*

“According to the broadest meaning as used in Scripture, the term salvation encompasses the total work of God by which he seeks to rescue man from the ruin, doom, and power of sin and bestows upon him the wealth of his grace encompassing eternal life, provision for abundant life now, and eternal glory.”

Charles Ryrie

The word “salvation” in our bibles comes from the Greek word *soteria*, meaning “salvation as the present possession of all Christians.”

The word “salvation” communicates at least –

- Redemption
- Reconciliation
- Propitiation
- Conviction
- Repentance
- Faith
- Regeneration
- Forgiveness
- Justification
- Sanctification
- Glorification

In this study we will focus on the two major aspects of salvation –

- **The work that God did on behalf of the sinner** that allows him (the sinner) to fulfill his God-given destiny of glorifying God and enjoying him forever.
- **The work that the redeemed are now capable of**, and responsible to fulfill, because of salvation.

Reasons Why God Would Want to Save Us

An important question – given our affinity for, and attraction to sin, **why would God want to save us?**

Reason #1 - (and maybe the only one necessary) Saving sinful people gives God pleasure.

*Ephesians 1:4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. **This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.***

Reason #2 - Saving sinful men glorifies God - *Philippians 2:9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, 10 that at the name of*

Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There just is not much, if anything, that trumps the glory of God – for when he is revealed, a lot of good things happen.

Reason #3 – The saving of undeserving and hopelessly lost sinners reveals the love of God. There are lyrics to a song that read, “he gave his son, what more could he do – oh, how he loves you and me”.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Reason #4 – The free gift of salvation manifests the grace of God.

Romans 5:15 But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. 16 And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins.

The idea that salvation is a free gift is a completely foreign concept to all other religions in the world. Men know intuitively that they are at odds with the Creator and Judge of the universe, so some try to “make peace” with the one they know exists. The problem is all of man’s efforts to make peace with God are rooted in what man thinks will “pay his debt”; namely works.

A classic scriptural example of mankind sensing God exists and wanting to appease his anger towards their sin is seen on Mars Hill in Acts 17. Statues and shrines are erected to every known god plus one more engraved with, “To the Unknown God”.

All the world's religions, with the lone exception of Christianity, have devised ways that man thinks will please God.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Never in 6,000 years has man ever come up with anything but religions of works. The only mind wherein a sinless substitute was ever considered is God's!

Reason #5 – God, in sending his only Son to die in the place of the sinner, manifests his holiness. We've already established that God saved us because creating us in his image gave him great pleasure. (Ephesians 1:5)

When sin entered the human race, mankind became estranged from God and unable to fellowship with him - Some have chosen to see this as a failure on God's part because he gave mankind the power of moral choice.

God, who is all-knowing and all-powerful, does not need to accept the results of man falling into a sinful state. He made men and women for his own glory and pleasure, but he is also bound by his word. ("without holiness, no one will see the Lord") The most important things we need God always supplies and when we needed righteousness, he supplied it in Christ.

The "Tenses" of Salvation

There are three "phases", or perhaps better stated as "tenses", of our salvation. We will deal with these three terms in more detail, but for now, here is a list of the phases.

- Phase 1 of salvation - Justification
- Phase 2 of salvation - Sanctification
- Phase 3 of salvation - Glorification

Phase #1, We have been saved from the penalty of sin – Romans 8:1 *"So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to*

Christ Jesus.” The Bible actually describes our salvation as something that is done, and effective for us right now. (and it is!) And yet, at the same time, it becomes quite evident that being born again is not the end, but just the beginning.

Paul, when writing to the church at Ephesus, certainly made salvation sound like a past action – “***Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith.***”

The following is especially interesting because it was spoken by Jesus before he ever went to the cross.

John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.”

Phase #2, We are being saved from the power of sin. We were saved from sin’s penalty when we believed in Jesus, and we are presently being saved from the power of sin.

Philippians 2:12 Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. 13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

Perhaps the most accurate statement we can make is that whereas before salvation we had no choice but to sin, now that we have been saved, we have the power to choose not to sin.

Romans 8:5 Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. 6 So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. 7 For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never

will. 8 That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

Phase #3, We will one day be saved from the presence of sin.

This is the future tense of our salvation. It will actually come in two stages for most believers.

Stage #1 will be at the death of the believer who will experience *2nd Corinthians 5:8 "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."*

Stage #2 will be at the Rapture where all the saints of all time will receive new bodies (like Jesus' body) and be with him forever.

How many times have you looked around at the heartache, the injustices, the pains, the drudgeries, and the sinfulness of this life and thought I can't wait until I am free of this!

We have this sense that the lives we have always known, though refreshed by the presence and power of his Holy Spirit, are still but a shadow of what God designed for us. In our souls we hunger and thirst for something we've never had, but strangely seem to know it well enough to miss it and long for.

"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

C. S. Lewis

It is normal to long for that place, that space, where sin will be but a distant memory – a relic of the past.

Romans 13:12 The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.

1st Peter 1:5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

1st John 3:2 Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.

Philippians 3:12 I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. 13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

Some perspective from the Latin that helps us to remember some great truth.

- Pre-salvation we were “Non Posse, Non Peccare” – (not possible to not sin)
- Once saved, we are “Posse, Non Peccare” – (possible not to sin)
- When in glory, we will be “Non Posse Peccare” – (not possible to sin)

The Sufficiency of Christ

Salvation is the work of God on our behalf – Jonah 2:9 “But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. **Salvation is of the Lord.**”

The saving work of God is so complete, even from our first moment of the new birth, that **we are considered completely equipped in Christ.**

Ephesians 1:3 “All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.”

There is nothing that can be or should be added to the work of Christ on the cross – Jesus' cry from the cross of “it is finished”

was not about the end of his suffering, it was about the completion of his work of redemption.

Paul's letter to the Galatian church was written to address this very issue – there were teachers in the region of Galatia teaching “grace plus” doctrines. Anytime someone says anything like, **“it’s good to trust Jesus but you also must _____”** (fill in the blank) run from them.

The instant you add anything to the work of Christ for salvation, you are wrong and are opposing God.

Baptism, church attendance, tithing, serving, and the like are all good, but play no role in acquiring our salvation. All of those, and other types of good works, are to flow from a saved life. They are not enhancements to the work of Christ, or even necessary for salvation.

The Sin Problem

Isaiah 59:1 Listen! The Lord’s arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call. 2 It’s your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

1st John 3:4 Everyone who sins is breaking God’s law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God.

Romans 5:12 When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

We need to reconcile 1st John 3:4 and Romans 5:12 – one says that “sin is breaking God’s law” and the other informs us that Adam sinned.

The problem is “Adam sinned before the ‘law’ was given.”

Romans 5:13 Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. 14 Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time

of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did.

The way we reconcile these two truths is to understand that the moral laws of the universe are encoded into our DNA and always have been according to the text of Romans chapter 2.

Romans 2:12 When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God’s written law. And the Jews, who do have God’s law, will be judged by that law when they fail to obey it. 13 For merely listening to the law doesn’t make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in his sight. 14 Even Gentiles, who do not have God’s written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. 15 They demonstrate that God’s law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.

Romans 3:10 As the Scriptures say, “No one is righteous— not even one.”

Romans 3:23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.

The problem of sin is no small one at all – accepting the Biblical view of sin is a huge factor in how one views the world and its problems.

Sin affected man’s relationship with God – *Genesis 3:8 When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees.*

Adam and Eve knew intuitively that something had drastically changed – they no doubt felt like David did after his sin with Bathsheba; dirty. So, they tried to hide from God and mankind has been trying to hide from God, or push him out of their thinking, ever since.

Sin has affected our nature – after the fall, Adam and Eve had a different nature, no longer innocent and sinless, but now they felt shame and felt distanced from God.

Due to sin, they will have to deal with foul thoughts, urges to sin they had never known, and fear of what “death” would mean – it was part of the fall. They will now be attracted to sin and sin will consistently crouch at their doorposts waiting for opportunities to seize them.

Sin has affected our minds and causes our thinking to become futile apart from Christ. This effect of sin upon our minds has brought us to thinking of God irrationally.

It is not that we cannot reason, but we actively resist reasonable thinking when it comes to God and spiritual matters. And, of course, there is the constant and nagging sense that we’ve been distanced from God – and we are!

“As a consequence of the Fall of Man, every person born into the world is enslaved to the service of sin as a result of their fallen nature and, apart from the efficacious or prevenient grace of God, is utterly unable to choose to follow God, refrain from evil, or accept the gift of salvation as it is offered.”

Unknown

At conversion, the believer is given a new nature that will have to co-exist with the old nature (the flesh) until the day God calls him home.

The old nature is drawn to sin like a magnet while the new nature has an affinity for righteousness.

Even the Apostle Paul, a writer of much of the New Testament, gave testimony to his own personal struggle with the sin nature.

Romans 7:18 And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. 19 I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong,

but I do it anyway. 20 But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. 21 I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. 22 I love God's law with all my heart. 23 But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.

**Two natures beat within my breast,
One is cursed, the other is blessed.
The one I love, the other I hate,
And the one I feed will dominate.**

A battleground within the believer is established between our old fleshly nature and our new godly nature – and every day the two natures enter into war.

So how do we win this war? ***Ephesians 4:21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, 22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. 23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.***

All who have tried to execute what Paul says in Ephesians 4 (what we just read) – know it is not as easy as Paul makes it sound.

So, I give you perhaps a new term – “**the means of grace**” which is to say there are certain things through which God injects his grace into us to help us live victorious lives.

There is not a fixed list of these in scripture, but we can come to know them by experience. These disciplines are not magic – they are not a substitute for a salvation experience with Christ, but they work for the believer who works at them.

From what I have been taught by others and have experienced for myself, here are the 5 means of grace that I have found to be unerringly, and amazingly effective.

- Bible Reading
- Prayer
- Worship
- Service
- Fellowship

Sin has affected our bodies – God clearly stated that if Adam disobeyed his command about the Tree of Life that he would die. **Genesis 2:17b** *“If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”*

So, when many read Genesis 2:17 they think “struck by a lightning bolt, dead on the spot” sort of judgment, but that is not the way it was. On the day that Adam and Eve disobeyed God they did not die physically on the spot, but the process of death began.

Death has three realities – physical, spiritual, and eternal and they can compound.

The root of every disease is sin, and we all know that unless the Rapture occurs in our lifetime, not one of us will avoid sickness and **physical death**.

Spiritual death is what Adam and Eve experienced – a separation from God. This separation has passed on to us as their descendants.

Eternal death is what awaits the sinner who experiences physical death without dealing with his spiritual death, which is his inherited separation from God.

Hebrews 2:14 Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. 15 Only in this

way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

Eternal death and eternal life are real and permanent conditions.

Matthew 25:46 “And they (the unrighteous) will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.”

Daniel 12:1b But at that time every one of your people whose name is written in the book will be rescued. 2 Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace.

Sin has even affected the environment – because of man’s sin, all of creation was affected as well.

Genesis 3:14 Then the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild.”

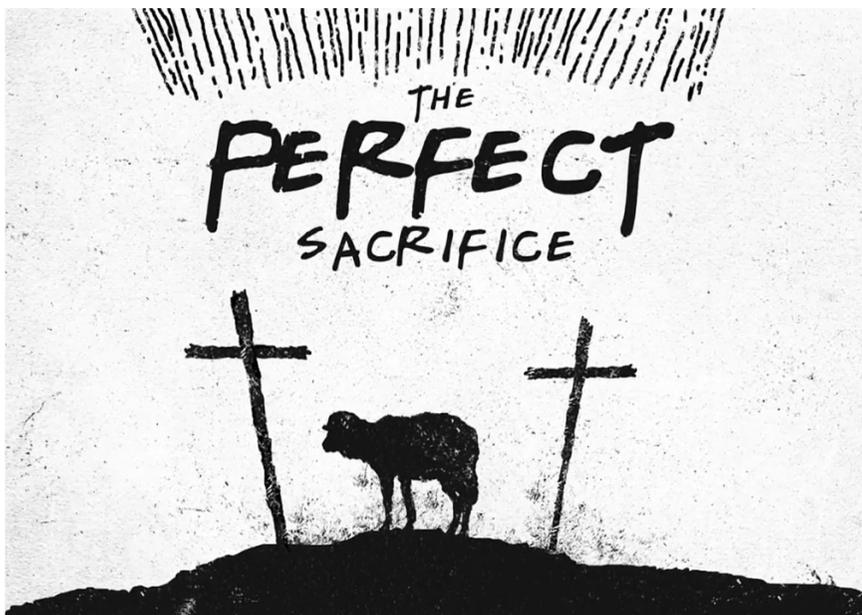
Romans 8:19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Every earthquake, every tsunami, every volcanic eruption, every drought, and every other “natural” evil we experience is rooted in sin through the fall of man. Just as certainly as death passed upon all men, a form of death passed upon creation as well. What we generally call, “nature” is not what it was intended to be.

And while our world is beautiful even under the curse of sin, just wait until you see it unencumbered by sin!

Soteriology Part Two

Soteriology is the study of the doctrine of salvation. Soteriology discusses how Christ's death secures the salvation of those who believe. It helps us to understand the doctrines of regeneration, redemption, justification, sanctification, propitiation, substitutionary atonement, and more.



“A preacher may induce a man to believe what Scripture says about his lost condition, persuade him to bow to the divine verdict, and then accept Christ as his personal Savior. No man wants to go to hell and is assured intellectually that Christ stands ready as a fire escape, on the sole condition that he jump into his arms (“rest on his finished work”), thousands will do so. But a hundred preachers are unable to make an unregenerate person realize the dreadful nature of sin or show him that he has been a lifelong rebel against God or change his heart so that he now hates himself and longs to please God and serve Christ. Only the Spirit can bring man to the place where he is willing to forsake

every idol, cut off a hindering right hand or pluck out an offending right eye.”

A. W. Pink

Said another way - It is one thing to want Jesus as a Savior, and quite another to bow to Him as Lord.

Redemption

One of the New Testament Greek words used for redemption is “Agorazo” - This word comes from agora which means “marketplace.” It literally means “to purchase, buy from the marketplace.”

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”.

1st Corinthians 6:20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that he might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

Redemption is a particular kind of deliverance, a deliverance that results from the payment of a great price.

The word redeem means “to buy out.” The term was used specifically in reference to the purchase of a slave’s freedom. The application of this term to Christ’s death on the cross is quite telling. If we are “redeemed,” then our prior condition was one of slavery. God has purchased our freedom, and we are no longer in bondage to sin, or to the law.

We were all once slaves to sin – we were all but powerless to effect any change in our lives, or in our ultimate destination. In redemption, much like the dirty soda bottles that I used to pull out of sewers and take to the local grocery store, God picks us up, cleans us up, fills us up, and makes us useful for his purposes.

1st Peter 1:18 Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is one of the key words of Scripture because it means the sinner, separated, and alienated from God by the barrier of sin, can be restored to fellowship with a holy God.

2nd Corinthians 5:18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

It was God who planned, initiated, and executed the necessary work through Christ to reconcile us to Him.

Two parties are reconciled when the offended party's terms are met – when they are, the relationship is materially changed.

Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

It is through reconciliation, which literally means “made friendly again”, that we have peace with God. What do we mean by “made friendly again”? Does that mean we were once on good terms with God? (not us, but our representative, Adam, was)

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Make no mistake about it, reconciliation is the work of God on behalf of the sinner – all the praise and glory goes to Him!

Colossians 1:19 For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, 20 and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

2nd Corinthians 5:19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

2nd Corinthians 5:21 For he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

God's method of reconciliation was the "cross" – it was on Calvary that God's Son became our sin offering.

When we were far from God, lost, and clueless as to our condition before him, he sacrificed for us, pursued us, and even helped us to believe so that we could be reconciled.

At least one purpose in reconciliation is seen in *Ephesians 2:10* "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

Another is seen in *2nd Corinthians 5:17* "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

A third purpose is seen in *1st Corinthians 1:2* "I am writing to God's church in Corinth, to you who have been called by God to be his own holy people. He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus."

Propitiation

The word propitiation carries the basic idea of appeasement or satisfaction, specifically toward God. Propitiation is a two-part act that involves appeasing the wrath of an offended person and being reconciled to him.

The word propitiation is used in several verses to explain what Jesus accomplished through his death on the cross. Most religions hold that “God” needs to be appeased because he is angry with our behaviors.

Non-Christian religions look for and develop ways their god can be appeased through some sacrifice of their own, be it works or an offering. Christianity recognizes that propitiation (atoning) cannot be accomplished by man but must be an intervention of God himself for man.

1st John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Propitiation, in large part, has to do with satisfying the anger of God towards our sin.

Psalm 7:11 God is an honest judge. He is angry with the wicked every day.

1st John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and he himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

Two words closely associated with atonement are “propitiation” and “expiation” – the first is towards God and the second is towards man. When Jesus died of the cross God’s righteous anger was appeased, it was satisfied, and for the sinner, our guilt was extinguished. (God was propitiated and we were expiated) Some

might ask you, “Why was God so angry?” and the answer is because sin is exceedingly sinful!

Conviction

Conviction of sin is one of the primary ministries of the Holy Spirit to both the sinner and the saint.

1st John 16:5 “But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. 6 Instead, you grieve because of what I’ve told you. 7 But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the Advocate won’t come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment.”

Conviction is far more than feeling sorry for our sins, and far more than pangs of guilt – they can both be initiated by the alarms God built into our consciences. The word “convict” is a translation of the Greek word “elegew”, which means “to convince someone of the truth; to reprove; to accuse, refute, or cross-examine a witness.” The Holy Spirit acts as a prosecuting attorney who exposes evil, reproves evildoers, and convinces people they need a Savior.

No one comes to Christ without the conviction of the Holy Spirit – *John 16:8 “And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment.”*

Acts 16:14b “As she (Lydia) listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying.”

Since we are spiritually dead apart from Christ, we need the help of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to our sin, to the great affront to God that it is, and to run to him for atonement for our sins.

When Isaiah saw God in his glory, *“Then I said, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of*

Heaven's Armies." Isaiah was an O.T. saint and a prophet of God, but when he saw the chasm between, he and God, he felt conviction and repented on the spot. Every day, all day, the Holy Spirit is reminding us of our sin, not to crush us, but to purify us.

Repentance

The Greek word for repentance is "metanoia" and it means to have a change of mind. Biblical repentance is a change of mind regarding our sin that is so strong it produces a change in our actions.

Acts 26:20 I preached first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that all must repent of their sins and turn to God—and prove they have changed by the good things they do.

Repentance is what we will do all of our lives as God reveals our sin to us – we will repent, and repent, and repent. The ability to repent (experience a radical change of mind) is a gift that God gives to all.

Acts 11:18 When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life."

It is God's desire that all repent, (have a radical change of mind about our sin) and turn to Him.

2nd Peter 3:9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

Romans 2:4 Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

True repentance always produces a change in us – no change of mind and no change of actions means one has not repented.

Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize, he denounced them. “You brood of snakes!” he exclaimed. “Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? 8 Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.”

Repentance is not ever seen as a burden, but as a privilege – it is the supernatural response to the kindness and mercy of God.

Faith

Hebrews 11:1 Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. 2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation. 3 By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

We are saved by faith, we are kept by faith, and we are to live by faith. It is the starting and ending point of the Christian life.

1st Peter 1:5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

It is a huge mistake to think that we are saved by faith in the finished work of Christ, and then believe that what was given to us by faith must be kept by works.

As powerful and appealing as godly living is, godly living does not save us, nor does it keep us saved. This is not to say that we can profess Christ and then go about our lives as usual – **there must be change and there must be intent to obey God.** Without a desire to obey God, there can be no assurance of salvation and most surely indicates an unredeemed soul.

1st John 2:3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:

What James had to say is no contradiction – James would agree with Paul that we are saved by faith and kept by faith.

The clarity that James offers is what one theologian penned, “**we are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone**”.

*James 2:17 **So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds**, it is dead and useless. 18 Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.”*

Regeneration

Regeneration is synonymous with being “born again”.

Ephesians 2:1 Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins.... 4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead.

Regeneration, also known as the new birth, is necessary for salvation – it is a one-time act of God on behalf of the believing sinner.

Regeneration is a radical change – we were dead (spiritually) and after believing in Jesus we are made alive (spiritually). There are few things more radical than the difference between being dead and being alive.

John 3:3 Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

When we are “made alive” by the Spirit, our whole world changes – we simply see everything differently than we did before.

Ephesians 5:8 For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So, live as people of light! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

We adopt a different world view after the new birth – 2nd *Corinthians 5:17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

While our awakening is sudden and radical, (think of a baby emerging from the womb) not everything changes on day #1 for the believer.

Just as a newborn baby struggles to walk, talk, and interrelate, so too new Christians are not the finished product.

Growing in Christ is a real thing and takes commitment and time. (Sanctification)

Forgiveness

Forgiveness in the Bible is a “release” or a “dismissal” of something. The forgiveness we have in Christ involves the release of sinners from God’s just penalty and the complete dismissal of all charges against us.

Romans 8:1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

Psalms 103:12 He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

Without forgiveness, salvation is impossible for it is forgiveness that frees us from sin’s consequences. Forgiveness facilitates the restoration of fellowship with God for the repentant sinner, or saint. We have a sin nature that is at constant odds with our new nature – the old nature wants to sin, and the new nature wants desperately to please God.

1st John 1:8 If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. 9 But if we confess our sins to

him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

If Jesus died for all my sins, past, present, and future, then why do I still have to ask for forgiveness when I sin – weren't all my sins paid for?

While it's true that Jesus paid the price for all our sins, it's also true there is a difference between being saved and having fellowship. If we sin and fall over dead with a heart attack before we can confess it and repent, we will still go to heaven. Unconfessed sin is not an issue of our standing with God, but it is an issue of our state with God.

John 13:8 "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." 9 Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!" 10 Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you."

We are washed in the blood of Jesus when we believe, so there is no need for another bath, but there is a need to wipe off the dust of sin.

Justification

Justification is a declarative act of God on behalf of the believing sinner that makes him righteous before the judge of the universe.

Romans 4:3 For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."

The righteousness of Christ is credited, "added" to our account before God and his righteousness becomes ours.

2nd Corinthians 5:21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (double imputation)

The Levitical system of sacrifices prepared the world for the Lamb of God – our sin offering. Our faith does not become our righteousness, our faith in the finished work of Christ acquires his righteousness for us.

If a criminal stood up in court and declared himself to be exonerated from all charges against him, no one would release him from custody because him saying it does not make it so.

However, even in a natural courtroom, if the judge were to make the same declaration, the criminal, though guilty of all charges against him, would be released. This is all the more true when the Judge of the universe declares the guilty sinner to be righteous.

Sanctification

Biblical sanctification is when God sets the believing sinner apart for his use – said another way, “his purposes”.

Hebrews 10:10 For God’s will was for us to be made holy (sanctified) by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.

1st Corinthians 1:30 But by his doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

The first understanding of sanctification is positional sanctification – this is where God declares the sinner to be holy, and based upon God’s declaration, he is holy. **The second understanding of sanctification is practical sanctification** – we must engage every day in a battle with our old sin nature.

Positional sanctification is a work of God on our behalf and is “once and done”, whereas practical sanctification is the work God does in us day-to-day as we cooperate with Him. (grow in grace)

1st Peter 1:14 So you must live as God’s obedient children. Don’t slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn’t know any better then. 15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. 16 For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.”

Hebrews 12:4 Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.

Paul expounds upon both positional and practical sanctification in his letter to the Ephesian church. He saved us – and our works prove we are saved.

Ephesians 2:8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Practical sanctification, also called progressive sanctification, is a combination of God’s work in us through his Holy Spirit and our efforts to obey Him.

John 14:25 “These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Before we were saved, our behaviors bore witness of our separation from God – after we are saved, our behaviors ought to bear witness to our separation from the world.

Sanctification is instantaneous (positional), and it is also progressive (practical) as we learn little by little to obey God. From this word sanctification, we derive the word “saint” which can be used to describe all Christians.

There is but one measure for gauging the effect of sanctification in us – are we becoming more and more like Jesus?

Romans 8:29 For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren.

We would be on safe ground to say that if a professed Christian is not making progress towards being like Jesus, there is little reason to believe they have saving faith.

The Doctrine of God

It would be strange if an infinite God wasn't strange to us because everything, we understand in this world is finite. We have no normal way to relate to a God who is not finite. All our attempts to explain who he is fall short and are found wanting because he is in his own category. It would be like trying to place a value on a piece of real estate that has no "comps". (comparable properties)

Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."

As soon as one makes an image of God, he necessarily makes God appear finite and "less than" who he is by even the hint of a comparison and a whisper of being contained.

"To even attempt to write down all there is to know about God seems a bit presumptuous in that his ways are not our ways, his judgments are past finding out, there is none like him, and it will take all of the ages to come to find out how good he is!"

Unknown

Theology is the study of God - Christian theology is simply an attempt to understand God as he is revealed in the Bible.

No theology will ever fully explain God and his ways because God is infinitely and eternally higher than we are. Therefore, any attempt to describe him will fall short.

Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways!

“I don't want a small God. I don't want a God that can be contained within the confines of my own brain and imagination. I don't want to find an end to my God or my Savior, Jesus Christ. I don't want a God that can be quantified, digested, and distilled in the confines of man's inventions and imaginations. I want a God who I am always learning about. Who is capable of surprising me at any time, any place, and in any way. When I pray, I want my prayer to be heard by a God that is not limited to what I imagine is possible. I want the God that I have. I want the God of the Bible. Why would you want anything less?”

Gregory Baker

The Bible begins with no defense of God's existence – it simply states, “In the beginning, God”. There is no verbiage like “you're not going to believe this, but there is a God, and he created all there is”. None of that is written – the Bible begins with the assertion that God exists and he is the Creator, case closed.

God wants to be known – if this were not true, we would not know him.

God reveals himself in nature, he pursued Adam and Eve after the fall, he has intervened in history, he visited us in person (Jesus), and he is ever present in the person of the Holy Spirit. God pursues us like the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son and when our hearts are renewed, we pursue him.

The study of theology is nothing more than digging into God's Word to discover what he has revealed about himself. When we do this, we come to know him as Creator of all things, Sustainer of all things, and Judge of all things. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all things. When Moses asked who was sending him to Pharaoh, God replied “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). The name I AM indicates personality. God has a name, even as he has given names to others. The name I AM stands for a free, purposeful, self-sufficient personality. God is not an

ethereal force or a cosmic energy. He is the almighty, self-existing, self-determining Being with a mind and a will—the “personal” God who has revealed himself to humanity through his Word, and through his Son, Jesus Christ.

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Systematic Theology – this is the putting of what we believe about God into certain systems.

- Theology – the study of God, the Father
- Christology – the study of God, the Son
- Pneumatology – the study of God, the Holy Spirit
- Bibliology – the study of the Bible
- Soteriology – the study of salvation
- Ecclesiology – the study of the church
- Eschatology – the study of the end times
- Angelology – the study of angels
- Demonology – the study of demons
- Anthropology – the study of mankind
- Hamartiology – the study of sin

What is Christian dogma? Christian dogma is a set of beliefs that are essential to what it means to be a Christian. The deity of Christ, his substitutionary atonement, his death, burial, and resurrection are examples of Christian dogma. Dogma is that from which you will not stray or compromise. To be dogmatic is not bad when you stand for the truth – it is, in fact, essential.

Now we come to our subject, Theology, and we will be unapologetically dogmatic. To study theology, we dig into God’s Word to discover what He has revealed about Himself, and we observe what he has revealed to us in creation. God has given us a variety of means to know him – nature, his word, his Son, and his Holy Spirit.

When one goes to the lengths that God does to be known by mankind, the only rational conclusion is that he is serious in his quest to be known.

John 4:24 For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.

Luke 24:39 "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." (Jesus' incarnation is a "one off" occurrence)

To say that God is a spirit is at least to say that he is invisible to natural eyes – man was created in the image of the invisible God which tells us that we too, are spirits.

You are a spirit, you have a soul, and you live in a body.

The only way humans have ever seen God was to look upon Jesus when he was here on earth.

1st John 1:1 We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life.

Hebrews 1:1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. 2 And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son.

The Holiness of God – “This thought of the infinite and awe-inspiring holiness of God pervades the entire Bible. It underlies everything in the Bible. The entire Mosaic system is built on and about this fundamental and central truth. Its system of washings; the divisions of the tabernacle; the divisions of the people into ordinary Israelites, Levites, priests and high priests, who were permitted different degrees of approach to God under strictly defined conditions; insistence on sacrifices of blood as the necessary medium of approach to God; God's directions to

Moses in Exodus 3:5, to Joshua in Joshua 5:15; the punishment of Uzziah in 2nd Chronicles 26:16-26; the strict orders to Israel in regard to approaching Sinai when the LORD came down on it; the doom of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in Numbers 16:1- 33; and the destruction of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-3--all these were intended to teach, emphasize, and burn into the minds and hearts of the Israelites the fundamental truth that God is holy, unapproachably holy.”

R.A. Torrey

God is not one to be trifled with or ignored – his love demands that he teach mankind about his holiness and of the great chasm that he wanted to bridge between himself and men.

We usually have a small minded, simpleton like approach to the holiness of God because it is hard to grasp what total moral perfection looks like. Other than what Jesus manifested while on earth we have never seen absolute holiness lived out.

Today, we have come to use the word “holy” more as a slur or a pejorative as opposed to what it really means. Surely when we call some “holy rollers” we are not saying it in a complimentary way. If we grasped more of the gravity of how God uses the word we would repent of such talk.

We have an imputed holiness by virtue of our relationship to Jesus Christ – but we fail often to wear it well.

When Isaiah saw a first-hand view of the holiness of God, even though he was already an O.T. saint, he shrank back and was certain he would, and should, die.

Isaiah 6:5 Then I said, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of heaven’s Armies.”

Relative holiness wilts in the face of absolute holiness.

The crux of the R.A. Torrey quote we read was that God's holiness places him in a place that we can approach only as he dictates.

When you read through the rigors of the Levitical system you can come away with an "are you kidding me?" attitude, but we need to see that the restrictions were for the good of the Israelite.

Ours is not to question how God made a way for us to become holy and enjoy him – ours is to cooperate and obey. We should learn from the experience of King Uzziah.

2nd Chronicles 26:16 But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the Lord, valiant men. 18 They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the Lord God." 19 But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the altar of incense. 20 Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the Lord had smitten him. 21 King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the Lord. And Jotham his son was over the king's house judging the people of the land.

"A recent survey of people who used to be church members revealed that the main reason they stopped going to church was that they found it boring. It is difficult for many people to find worship a thrilling and moving experience. We note here, when

God appeared in the temple, the doors and the thresholds were moved. The inert matter of doorposts, the inanimate thresholds, the wood and metal that could neither hear nor speak had the good sense to be moved by the presence of God. The literal meaning of the text (Isaiah 6) is that they were shaken. They began to quake where they stood.”

R.C. Sproul

Isaiah 6:1 In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.” 4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 5 Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. 7 He touched my mouth with it and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.”

“As long as Isaiah could compare himself to other mortals, he was able to sustain a lofty opinion of his own character. The instant he measured himself by the ultimate standard, he was destroyed— morally and spiritually annihilated. He was undone. He came apart. His sense of integrity collapsed.”

R.C. Sproul

The Unity of God – To say that God is unified is to say that he is whole, he is complete all by himself and, by implication, he has no rivals, and no counterparts.

God exalts himself in the scriptures for our benefit - Isaiah 44:6
Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD
of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; **and beside me there is
no God.**

*Isaiah 46:9 Remember the things I have done in the past. For I
alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me.*

We get an absolute benefit from God's self-exaltation - since he
has no eyewitnesses to tell us of his greatness, it is only fitting
that he does.

We benefit by a growing confidence in a God who is able, in a God
who is near, and in a God who has no peers. Who wants a small
God when we have a **B I G** problem?

The Eternality of God – God is eternal and as such has no
beginning and no end. (that is the meaning of eternal)

He always was, is now, and always will be – because we are
creatures of time we struggle intellectually with the idea of no
beginning and no end, but it is not a struggle for God, and he is
dogmatic about it.

*Psalm 90:2 Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth
to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God.*

Time began with “the creation” – when God spoke the universe
into existence all matter was created, and time began. Said
another way, all things “not God” began to operate inside the
bounds of time.

Whatever existed before creation is eternal – this of course makes
God the only person, place or thing who is eternal.

The Omnipresence of God – God is everywhere.

*Jeremiah 23:23 Am I a God who is only close at hand?” says the
Lord. No, I am far away at the same time. 24 Can anyone hide*

from me in a secret place? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?” says the Lord.

When sin entered the race, Adam and Eve tried to hide from God as did Jonah in the hull of a ship. Both efforts failed because there is no such thing as hiding from someone who is everywhere.

God is not everywhere in the same sense – at Jesus’ baptism we see God, the Holy Spirit, descending upon Jesus and yet God the Father speaks from heaven claiming Jesus as his Son.

Jesus promised to come again for us – a clear indication that he is not here in the same way he was in his earthly ministry. Though he is always everywhere, his presence in hell does not have the same effect as it does in heaven.

2nd Thessalonians 1:8 In flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don’t know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power.

Forever separated from the Lord, yet in the following verse we see that those who are being judged are still in his presence in some sense. His presence is not comforting, yet the presence of the Lamb (Jesus) is nonetheless there.

Revelation 14:10 And they will be tormented with fire and burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb.

While these two verses may seem to contradict one another, I believe they merely underscore that God, while present everywhere, is not present everywhere in the same sense.

The Omnipotence of God - it is difficult to fathom One who is all powerful, and One who has no limits on his power to accomplish anything he wills.

Matthew 19:26 Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.”

This explains why the Red Sea parted, why the earth stopped in Joshua’s day, why water turned instantly to wine, and how God was able to transfer all our sins to his Son.

Isaiah 59:1 Listen! The Lord’s arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call. 2 It’s your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

While God is all powerful, the use of his power is limited to that for which he wills to use it. God is not our puppet nor is he our vending machine to be used at our discretion, God acts in his time, in his way, with his power.

God is Omniscient – God knows everything that has happened, everything that is happening, and everything that will happen.

On a personal level God knows everything we have ever done, everything we will do, our motives, and all the things that we hold in secrecy from others. There is nothing that he can learn, nothing that he can add to his mind, and nothing ever surprises him – and yet, with all that occupies his mind he still knows us by name.

Psalms 147:4 He counts the stars and calls them all by name. 5 How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!

Matthew 10:29 What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. 30 And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. 31 So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

His omniscience is of great benefit to us – nothing ever happens to us that he is not aware of and superintending.

His foreknowledge allows him to act for us before we know him. He can call things that are not as though they are because he sees that they will be.

The above is a long way of saying “because he knows in advance, he can act in advance”.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom he predestined, he also called; and these whom he called, he also justified; and these whom he justified, he also glorified.

The Love of God – *1st John 4:16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.*

We need to see God and love this way – **God does not just love, God is love!** He is the source of all love, and it defines his moral character. Love is a desire for, and a delight in, the welfare of others.

1st John 3:16 We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person? 18 Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. 19 Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.

God’s love, like the love we are to have, is a verb and not a feeling.

While God loves all – meaning that he is interested in the welfare of all, he is especially loving towards those who are his.

He loves all – *1st Timothy 2:3 This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.*

He has a special love for the believer – *John 17:23 May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.*

The believer can claim a special place in God's love because Jesus prayed for it, but even so **God has love for each individual in the human race.** (he loves everyone)

Ephesians 2:4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead.

Ezekiel 33:11 As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live.

God's love is manifested in his scrupulous efforts to keep his children from sin.

Hebrews 12:5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. 6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child." 7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8 If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. 9 Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

God's love is manifested in how closely he associates with our pain.

Isaiah 63:7 I will tell of the Lord's unfailing love. I will praise the Lord for all he has done. I will rejoice in his great goodness to Israel, which he has granted according to his mercy and love. 8 He said, "They are my very own people. Surely they will not betray me again." And he became their Savior. 9 In all their suffering he also suffered, and he personally rescued them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years.

God's love is manifested in his never forgetting those whom he loves.

Isaiah 49:14 Yet Jerusalem says, "The Lord has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us." 15 "Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! 16 See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands.

God's love is manifested in his calling us his children.

1st John 3:1 See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!

Romans 8:16 For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. 17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

God is righteous – his own word declares him to be righteous on more than one occasion. So, what does it mean to be righteous and how does this differ from being holy?

The holiness of God is a broader idea than righteousness – holiness is the absolute perfection of God in every imaginable way, whereas righteousness has to do with his actions.

"To be just, or righteous, is to possess enough character to always do what is right. The Hebrew word for just, according to its

etymology, means "right" or "straight." The etymology of the English word "righteous" is the same. The etymology of the Greek word is "custom" or "usage" — that which conforms to custom. The righteousness or justice of God is that attribute that leads him always to do right. It is not to be limited, as it so often is in modern theological usage, to his punitive justice. This, as we will see, is only one manifestation of the justice, or righteousness, of God and not the one that is most prominent in biblical usage. Holiness seems to have more reference to God's character as he is in and of himself; while his righteousness is manifested in his dealings with others."

R.A. Torrey

Psalm 145:17 The Lord is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness.

Jeremiah 12:1 Righteous are You, O Lord, that I would plead my case with You.

John 17:25 "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me."

The righteousness of God is manifest in his hatred for sin and his love for justice.

Psalm 11:4 But the Lord is in his holy Temple; the Lord still rules from heaven. He watches everyone closely, examining every person on earth. 5 The Lord examines both the righteous and the wicked. He hates those who love violence. 6 He will rain down blazing coals and burning sulfur on the wicked, punishing them with scorching winds. 7 For the righteous Lord loves justice. The virtuous will see his face.

It ought to be easy for us to hate sin and love righteousness just by watching how both play out in this world. Where there is sin,

there is heartache and evil of every kind and where righteousness reigns we see peace and contentment.

One of the greatest benefits of Heaven will be the absence of sin and all the pain that accompanies it wherever it goes.

The righteousness of God is manifest in his assigning sinners to the punishment they deserve.

Revelation 20:12 I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books.

Only the unsaved are at this judgment and all will receive what they had earned in the flesh. Perfect justice.

The Kindness of God – closely associated with kindness in both the Hebrew and the Greek are the words “mercy” and “compassion”.

Psalm 86:15 But you, O Lord, are a God of compassion and mercy, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

The kindness of God is the sympathetic consciousness of the distress of others together with a desire to alleviate it.

God's mercy and kindness are directed at anyone he wishes – he is sovereign and gets to choose. 😊

Romans 9:13 In the words of the Scriptures, “I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau.” 14 Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not! 15 For God said to Moses, “I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose.” 16 So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it.”

His mercy and kindness are not limited to just the believer. On the other hand, his mercy, kindness, and compassion are all promised to every believer.

Proverbs 28:13 People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.

Psalm 32:10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him.

The kindness of God is manifest in how he comforts the afflicted.

Isaiah 49:13 Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

God seems to have a special place in his heart for the downtrodden, outcast, and the afflicted.

The Faithfulness of God - When we speak of one another as faithful, we mean that we adhere to our word, that we keep faith with men, and that we discharge the obligations of our office or position.

When we speak of God's faithfulness, we should think similarly in that he will keep his word. If God keeps his word to his children, we will have no need to fear death, the grave, or eternity.

"The Hebrew root from which the words translated 'faithful' and 'faithfulness' in the Old Testament are derived means to prop or stay or support. The intransitive use of the word signifies to stay oneself or be supported; hence, the word 'faithful', as applied to a person, means someone a person can safely lean upon."

R.A. Torrey

When we know that we can safely lean on a faithful God who always keeps his word and wants what is best for us, we will have a peace that passes all understanding.

The proposition that God is faithful means he is a being upon whom we can absolutely rely upon or steady ourselves. God's faithfulness is great – *Lamentations 3:22 The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease, for his compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness*. We are secure in Christ not based upon our faithfulness, but upon his – *2nd Timothy 2:13 If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.*

1st Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

God is pictured here as faithful for not allowing his children to be tempted beyond our ability to bear up under it. We can “lean” on him for help when we are tempted – in fact we would be fools not to.

1st John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Contrary to what is often said about this verse, which is usually some version of, “if you die with unconfessed sin, you will not go to heaven”, that is not its meaning.

1st John 1:9 has to do with maintaining fellowship – if I get angry with my spouse we are not divorced, but we may not be speaking to one another.

“Our confidence that God will forgive our sins when confessed rests upon two known facts about God: God is righteous and God is faithful. To doubt that your sin is forgiven when you have confessed it is to question his righteousness and his faithfulness as well as his veracity. It is not humility, but presumption.”

R.A. Torrey

The Glory of God

“I have been mildly obsessed with the glory of God for the last ten years or so. I desire to make him glorious, and the scriptures are filled with references to God and his glory, but alas there is not a single verse that tells me exactly what his glory is, or one that tells me how to accomplish making him glorious. So, I must conclude it is not like any other thing about God except for perhaps his holiness and I even suspect his glory and his holiness are somehow linked.”

Jim Hoffman

The glory of God is the beauty of His spirit. It is not an aesthetic beauty or a material beauty, but it is the beauty that emanates from His character, from all that He is. James 1:10 calls on a rich man to “glory in his humiliation,” indicating a glory that does not mean riches or power or material beauty. This glory can crown man or fill the earth. It is seen within man and in the earth, but it is not of them; it is of God. The glory of man is the beauty of man’s spirit, which is fallible and eventually passes away, and is therefore humiliating—as the verse tells us. But the glory of God, which is manifested in all His attributes together, never passes away. It is eternal.

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Isaiah 43:6 I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory.

As we examine scripture it becomes more than apparent that God created and called us to himself for a singular purpose – to glorify him. **The sanctification process is mostly about how we will be used to glorify hm.**

1st Chronicles 16:28 Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! 29 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name.

In our worship we can participate in glorifying God. When we make much of him, we are pointing people to see this one we deem worthy of worship.

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

Remember Herod Agrippa? *Acts 12:22 And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" 23 Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.*

Any who would try to steal God's glory will be judged.

When one aggressively seeks the glory that belongs to God, the fact that they do not fall down and succumb to worms on the spot, does not mean they will not be judged just as certainly as Herod Agrippa was.

Acts 7:55 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

After rehearsing most of God's redemptive work in the Old Testament, Stephen's reward from the Sanhedrin for telling the truth was stoning. But his reward from God was a rare one indeed, a glimpse of God's glory is his flesh.

It is almost as if God is saying that because you glorified me in your testimony in the face of death, I will give you a reward that I gave to no other. Stephen saw God in his glory and then testified to what he had seen to the High Priest and the Council.

He was validating Jesus' answer to, "are you the Christ?" in *Mark 14:62* to which Jesus replied, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power."

Isaiah 6:1 It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. 2 Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 They were calling out to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of heaven's Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!"

Isaiah tells us of his vision in the temple of God where angels declared, "**Holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is filled with his glory**" – so it is evident he has not hidden his glory from us.

His glory is right in front of us all the time. He is not hiding from us, but we are often trying to hide from him! Our sins make us ashamed to even imagine being anywhere near to this glorious One of Heaven.

"We live in a church culture that has a dangerous tendency to disconnect the grace of God from the glory of God. Our hearts resonate with the idea of enjoying God's grace. We bask in sermons, conferences, and books that exalt a grace centering on us. And while the wonder of grace is worthy of our attention, if that grace is disconnected from its purpose, the sad result is a self-centered Christianity that bypasses the heart of God."

David Platt

The Prayer for revival is ultimately a prayer for the manifestation of the glory of God.

Martyn Lloyd Jones

"He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention of his will, to the praise

of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

**Paul, the Apostle
Ephesians 1:5**

God is the only one whose self-promotion benefits the whole universe. You might say that it is God’s own self-exaltation that provides the very sense of security that we crave.

Like a little child who feels safer when her daddy is home, we feel safer when we know him better. And if he did not tell us of his greatness, how would we know?

Imagine for a moment a world where you could know there is a designer of the universe but have no idea what he or it was like.

You would have some clues from the natural world, but without revelation from the creator/designer you would merely have enough to get you lost, but not saved. Enter the blessing of a God who speaks – through nature, through his word, and even in person.

God even boasts of his uniqueness saying in multiple scriptures that he is God and has no rivals.

Deuteronomy 4:39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

Deuteronomy 32:39 See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.

Isaiah 44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

Isaiah 45:21 Consult together, argue your case. Get together and decide what to say. Who made these things known so long ago? What idol ever told you they would happen? Was it not I, the Lord? For there is no other God but me, a righteous God and Savior. There is none but me.

Isaiah 46:9 Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me.

Have you ever wondered why God was so adamant that he alone is God, and there is none beside him, and that he is rival free?

For the answer just look at Israel's history of repeated idolatry! They would be a great case study of a culture comprised of mostly unsaved people and what to expect spiritually.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few.

When we understand the distance in holiness between God and ourselves, we will be far more prone to kneel than stand. The one who tells us he has no rivals and the one who is described as, "holy, holy, holy" humbles us by his Holiness!

When our knowledge of God does not bring about a sense of awe, we simply do not know enough.

We should embrace the self-exaltation of God as something that is essential for our own well-being.

"His supreme purpose in making man was to have somebody capable to properly and sufficiently worship him and satisfy his own heart".

A.W. Tozer

"God is to be praised with the voice, and the heart should go therewith in holy exultation."

Charles H. Spurgeon

“Isn’t it a comfort to worship a God we cannot exaggerate?”

Francis Chan

“The biggest obstacle to making Christ magnificent is the refusal to make yourself small.”

James MacDonald

“The revelation of God is the fuel for the fire of our worship.”

Matt Redman

Matthew 15:29 Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there. 30 And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, 31 so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

Strong’s concordance for the word, “glorified” –

- to think, suppose, be of opinion
- to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate
- to honor, do honor to, hold in honor
- to make glorious, adorn with lustre, clothe with splendor
- to impart glory to something, render it excellent
- to make renowned, render illustrious
- to cause the dignity and worth of some person or thing to become manifest and acknowledged

1st Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

One of the goals of godly living is to convince others that living for Christ is noble to the point they will believe when he visits them.

1st Peter 4:16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

When we suffer for bearing his name we should glorify (make much of) God and in so doing demonstrate the treasure it is to be identified with him!

Psalms 84:10 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Revelation 15:7 And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, 8 and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

God is glorified even when he pours out his wrath!

We use 'glory to God' as an expression of praise and we sometimes speak of 'glorifying God'. Both are good terms but are perhaps the least understood phrases in the Christian vocabulary. We tend to use those terms wrongly thinking that God will be enhanced in some way by our actions.

John 13:31 When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once".

In the text above, Jesus is approaching his last few days prior to Calvary, and it seems like the glory of God is dominating his thinking. His mission was big and glorious, but we can bring glory to God even in our small missions.

Romans 15:8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

Don't miss the subtlety here – salvation is not just for the Jew but for the gentile as well so that God can be glorified in all people and especially when it is known he is exercising his mercy.

1st Peter 4:11 Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (make him glorious!)

What is meant by the terms “glorify God”, “may God be glorified”, and “give glory to God”?

God is glorified when he is revealed.

It is quite simple – when God is seen, he is glorified because there is nothing about him that ever detracts from him! When we can enhance our own, or another person's view of God, he is glorified because he is seen.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

To read the scriptures and think that God will somehow be improved by what we do, or even by what he does, is a mistake.

When one is perfect, that one cannot be added to, or improved upon.

This is one of the truths that ought to help us worship God – **he is God, and there is none else!**

*Ephesians 1:9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, **a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure.***

We exist for his pleasure, not ours!

*Ephesians 1:11 Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan. 12 **God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God.***

*Ephesians 1:14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. **He did this so we would praise and glorify him.***

*Ephesians 1:18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called— **his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.***

His plan, his pleasure, and his glory – does this sound like it is all about God and him alone? Yes, and with good reason!

*Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created that are in Heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. **All things were created through him and for him.** 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, **that in all things he may have the preeminence.***

In fact, even if it were possible, if we were to exist without him, we would be hopelessly lost and hopelessly dissatisfied.

It is only God who gives meaning and purpose to our lives. If he is not who he has declared himself to be, then we are lost and worse than doomed.

God is unique in all of the universe – he is in a class all by himself, and no one and no thing compares favorably with him.

It is pure folly for us to ever think that life should be about anything but him! It shows a fundamental lack of understanding of his majesty to even think it odd that all of life rightfully centers around him.

Ephesians 1:4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.

Notice the timing here – before God made anything that was made, he already had us in mind to be his very own.

It was his purpose from the beginning that we would glorify him.

For us to appreciate the magnitude of what God did for us, we must set aside our concept of time. Before there was anything, God was making sure we would be participants in bringing glory to him.

We and our sin were not some afterthought or plan B – we were planned for, and he determined from the start we would glorify him.

And ... we were chosen to be holy. (without holiness, no man shall see the Lord) How can this be? We were chosen 'in Christ' and we have been made righteous by God based upon the work of Christ for us.

Ephesians 1:5 reads - God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.

It was predetermined by God that we would be part of his family through Christ. (predestination)

His method of bringing us into his family is adoption – human parents may decide to adopt someone who will fit into the family and enhance it. God, however, purposes to adopt those who are the very opposite of Himself.

We never adopt our own – God only adopts his own.

Ephesians 1:9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure.

The gospel, as we know it, was hidden prior to the death of Christ – no one would have ever imagined a redemption plan that involved death on a cross by the Creator of all things. (an innocent substitute)

Ephesians 1:13 And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

Romans 8:15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

"A man's most glorious actions will at last be found to be but glorious sins, if he hath made himself, and not the glory of God, the end of those actions."

Thomas Brooks

Ephesians 1:14 includes this phrase - "to the praise of his glory".

Mark 14:8 "She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. 9 Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

Just like Mary, we will never be asked to do something for God, he has not already equipped us to do. Our problems will never be around a false accountability to do things that were beyond us.

Our problems, if they occur, will be around our failure to “do what we could” with the abilities we were given.

We have but one role in life – to glorify (reveal) God!

Ephesians 1:14 The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

From the Westminster Shorter Catechism - What is the chief end of man? Answer = Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

The Doctrine of Jesus – Part One

“To even attempt to write down all there is to know about Jesus is akin to a fool’s errand because the Apostle John, who knew Him well, said that if all that Jesus did was written out, the world could not contain such a volume of truth.”

Unknown

We will start here – everything that was true of God in “The Doctrine of God” class is also, and equally true of the Son of God, Jesus the Christ.

So why, “Jesus the Christ” – it is the Bible’s way of separating his name from his mission. More Americans than you might think see Jesus Christ and think “Christ” is his last name.

Throughout the O.T. God was promising Messiah. Messiah comes from the Hebrew word for “anointed one” and the Greek equivalent is Christ, which also means “anointed one”.

The Holiness of Jesus – when we speak of the holiness of Jesus, we enter a realm that is not just real, but a realm that is super-real.

In other words, Jesus transcends our normal modes of communications with respect to describing him.

He is extremely “other than” we are, but not totally other than one we can relate to, or we would not be able to hear from him or speak to him.

He is different from any other being now or ever – he is supremely and radically different from us.

Mysterium Tremendum – It is reasonable and rationale to have feelings of joy and simultaneously feelings of dread to be in the presence of Jesus.

“Pondering who he is will cause us to be both drawn to him and driven from him.”

Rudolf Otto

Mysterium Tremendum

This Latin phrase translates as “terrible mystery” and so it is that the presence of Jesus, not the veiled version of him in the gospels, but the unveiled One brings together two powerful emotions – awe and terror. While the Jesus of the gospels calls for the little children to come to him, the Jesus on the Damascus road flattens a hardened murderer. The Jesus of the gospels scared no one, but the Jesus John saw in Revelation terrified him nearly to death.

Habakkuk felt his lips quiver, his knees shake, and rottenness entered his bones just upon hearing from God.

Isaiah called out, “I am undone!” when he saw a vision of God in his glory – you can be sure Isaiah was never the same again after that vision.

When **Job’s** trials ended, he confessed that he should cover his mouth, hold his peace, and never again contest the workings of God.

In Mark 4 the disciples rebuke and insult Jesus with, “***don’t you care that we are about to perish?***”. He ignores their insolence and instead of rebuking them, Jesus rebukes the wind and immediately the sea was calm.

When Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples did not react with glee – their reaction was much more like terror for we are told “***they were very much afraid***”.

Jesus is the supreme alien of the universe – the songwriter wrote, “there is none like you”, a phrase which comes right from the lips of God through Isaiah multiple times as he self-exalts.

God and Jesus never change –

- *Malachi 3:6 For I, the Lord, do not change*
- *Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

God is the only Savior –

- *Isaiah 43:11 I, even I, am the Lord, and there is no savior besides Me.*
- *Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.*

God and Jesus forgive sin –

- *Psalm 103:2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; 3 Who pardons all your iniquities.*
- *Mark 2:5 And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”*

God and Jesus redeem –

- *Isaiah 63:16 You, O Lord, are our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Your name.*
- *Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*

God and Jesus are everlasting -

- *Psalm 93:2 Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting.*
- *Micah 5:2 But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth*

for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.

God and Jesus raise the dead –

- *John 5:21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.*
- *John 11:43 When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” 44 The man who had died came forth.*

Hypostatic Union

Jesus is fully God and fully human.

The Council of Chalcedon – as the years after the formation of the church at Pentecost passed, and after the Apostles all passed, there was a need for clarity on exactly what the church believed.

Of particular interest to our subject at hand, The Doctrine of Jesus, the council of Chalcedon in AD 451 clarified something about Jesus that is essential to our understanding of Him. You see in some verses of the New Testament He is presented as God and all that God is, and in others He is presented as a man.

It was at the Council of Chalcedon that a doctrine was developed known as the Hypostatic Union, and a working understanding of the Hypostatic Union is key to understanding the person of Jesus Christ. In some texts, it is clear that Jesus knew eternal things that no mere man could know.

John 6:64 “But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

In other texts, it is equally clear that He was operating within the limits of a mere human.

Luke 2:52 And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

How can He be said to have the kind of knowledge that only God has, and at the same time be said to be increasing in wisdom?

The Council of Chalcedon framed this for us – “Jesus possesses two natures, the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons.”

So, what does that mean in plain speak? The hypostatic union is the term used to describe how God the Son, Jesus Christ, took on a human nature, yet remained fully God at the same time.

Think addition only – The Son of God added a sinless human nature to His divine nature.

Jesus never ceased to be God, and with one possible exception, (omnipresence) He never lost any of His divine attributes – as both God and man, He was the only one of His kind in all of history.

Philippians 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

So, what does it mean that He “emptied Himself” – the theological term for this action is “kenosis”. As a practical matter, He set aside His outward glory as God to display the humanity He added. This a great mystery and one we may not fully understand with our finite minds.

The most basic understanding of the hypostatic union is to say that Jesus added humanity to His deity without compromising

either. Jesus remained what He was, and became what He was not, to become like us, so we might become like Him.

2nd Corinthians 5:18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

Another way to define kenosis is to say, “He surrendered the use of some of His divine attributes.”

And as we read through the gospels, we see that at times He is most definitely the omniscient God of the universe and at other times He is clearly a human being. Now, either He is both, or He is the greatest imposter in all of history.

What does it mean that we have a “human” nature? Our nature allows us to think, question, reason, and then make decisions. Our nature is that which makes us distinctly human – it sets us apart from animals. When we are born again, we get a new godly nature that needs to be developed. Sanctification is the process by which God develops our new nature, enabling us to grow into more holiness through time.

John 4:6 and Jacob’s well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well.

Isaiah 40:28 Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary.

In John 4 Jesus is weary so this must point to His humanity since God is never weary.

What sort of being is this who can walk on water, but almost always chooses to take a boat? He was certain of what was going on in the mind of Judas but did not know when He would return as King of kings.

The only plausible explanation is that Jesus sometimes operated as a man, and sometimes He revealed that He was very God of very God.

Why do I refer to Jesus perhaps setting aside his omnipresence for all of eternity? On resurrection morning Jesus is in the garden and Mary wants to cling to him and he says, “don’t hold on to me for I have not yet ascended to my Father”.

Philippians 3:21 “who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” - *if our eternal body will be like his then it seems to me, he limited himself to a body to save us. Additional support for the proposition that Jesus gave up his omnipresence for eternity is found in the words, “like his glorious body” where the verb tense is present, and Philippians was written some 30 years after the resurrection.*

Did Jesus rely on being God Himself, or upon the Holy Spirit to perform miracles?

John 3:33 He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true. 34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. 35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.

Luke 4:14 Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit’s power.

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic -- on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg -- or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.

You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

C. S. Lewis

John 5:16 So the Jewish leaders began harassing Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules. 17 But Jesus replied, “My Father is always working, and so am I.” 18 So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God. 19 So Jesus explained, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished. 21 For just as the Father gives life to those he raises from the dead, so the Son gives life to anyone he wants. 22 In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge, 23 so that everyone will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son is certainly not honoring the Father who sent him. 24 “I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.”

In this passage from John’s gospel Jesus is standing before the religious leaders of His day without a crown, and without an army, and clearly claims to be the Lord of the universe. The Jews attack on Him was for violating the sabbath – His defense is their silly rules do not apply to Him because His Father works all the time, and He does too.

John 5:17 But Jesus replied, "My Father is always working, and so am I." (by calling God His father, He was laying claim to deity)

Next Jesus will claim to be one with God based upon the evidence that He and His Father do the same things.

John 5:19 I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.

Jesus never did a single thing that was not first approved by the Father – He did what the Father did and nothing more.

John 5:21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

Jesus continues His outlandish claims Now asserting that He has the same power to give life that God has. And He gets to choose who lives and who dies – He is now claiming sovereignty over life and death.

Jesus as Judge

John 5:22 For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son.

This is perhaps the ultimate power – to have the final say over the most important matters of the universe. In a courtroom, the judge is the one with final say on matters before the court. Jesus now asserts that He is the sovereign power of the universe.

2nd John 7 I say this because many deceivers have gone out into the world. They deny that Jesus Christ came in a real body. Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8 Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked so hard to achieve. Be diligent so that you receive your full reward. 9 Anyone who wanders away from this teaching has no relationship with God. But anyone who remains in the teaching of Christ has a relationship with both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to your meeting and does

not teach the truth about Christ, don't invite that person into your home or give any kind of encouragement. 11 Anyone who encourages such people becomes a partner in their evil work.

In the incarnation, Jesus did not come to make bad people good, He came to make dead people live. The purpose of the Incarnation was not to taste food or to feel sorrow. The Son of God came in the flesh to bear the sins of mankind.

It was necessary to be born "under the law" (Galatians 4:4). All of us have failed to fulfill God's Law. Christ came in the flesh, under the Law, to fulfill the Law for us (Matthew 5:17; Galatians 4:5).

It was also necessary for the Savior to shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

A blood sacrifice, of course, requires a body of flesh and blood. And this was God's plan for the Incarnation: "When Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering [under the Old Covenant] you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me'" (Hebrews 10:5).

Without the Incarnation, Christ could not really die, and the cross is meaningless.

The Deity of Jesus

Jesus is God – the deity of Jesus Christ is essential to the gospel. If Jesus was not God, then He was a liar, and the gospel is ruined.

"If Jesus was not whom he claimed, then he must be a lunatic, a liar, or worse."

C. S. Lewis

Jesus left no middle ground, no middle ground regarding who He was – **"I and my Father are one."** John 10:30

Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of

men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. 9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.

The obvious difference here that set Jesus apart is the fullness of God dwelling in a body.

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father.

Titus 2:13 While we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed.

Matthew 1:23 Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’

1st Corinthians 2:8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Jesus is the Creator of the Universe

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

If we look at this like critics of the Bible at least one legitimate question arises – **if the Word is God and the Word is also said to be “with” God, how is that possible?**

Well, that legitimate question turns out to be one that will lead us to one of the most profound and mysterious truths in the Bible.

We believe and teach that the Bible is true and has no errors so if we are to defend John 1, then we must start with the plain truth of the text.

And the plain truth of the text points us to a God, who has already asserted that He is “one” but is somehow more than one.

Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!

The heathen nations that surrounded Israel had many gods – Israel had just one God, Jehovah. But that does not mean that Jehovah God was not a trinity in terms of persons in the one Godhead.

So how is it possible that the Word in John 1 can be accurately said to be God and yet be “with” God? Well, if there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead, then it is entirely possible.

Some like to say that God made man for fellowship, but that would be false – God did not need fellowship. He already had fellowship within the Godhead.

God created the Universe through Jesus

Colossians 1:16 For by Him (Jesus) all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Paul, in the above passage, affirms what John wrote – that Jesus Christ is the creator of all things. So, is it wrong to say that God created the universe? Of course not, Jesus is the 2nd person of the Trinity.

The Doctrine of Jesus – Part Two

Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

John 21:25

The Subordination of Jesus Christ

In our day we think of subordination as being less than equal, but that is not what we mean by the subordination of Christ. In the subordination of Christ, we mean that the 2nd person of the Trinity voluntarily took on a subordinate role to the Father.

When the Father sends the Son into the world it was not that Christ was compelled so much as it was that he could not be stopped. Both he and his Father wanted (willed) the same thing.

The Subordination of Jesus Christ should not be applied to the ontological state of the Trinity – in their state of being they are three coequal persons.

In their roles in the Godhead however we do see the Son submit to the Father and the Holy Spirit submit to the Son. Any subordination we find in the Godhead always refers to “what” each one does and not to “who” they are.

The Father sent the Son into the world and the Son sent the Holy Spirit into the world.

1st John 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

John 15:26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”

Biblically, all three Persons of the Trinity have the same essence, nature, and glory, but each One has different roles or activities when it comes to how God relates to the world. For example, our salvation is based on the Father's power and love, the Son's death and resurrection, and the Spirit's regeneration and seal. The different tasks that we see the Father, Son, and Spirit perform are the result of the eternal relationship that exists among the Persons of the Trinity.

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Philippians 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The Son did not need to “grasp” for equality with God because it had always been a reality for him as God, the Son.

The Sinlessness of Jesus Christ

It was essential that Jesus be sinless because “without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin” and “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins”. The scriptures make it clear the wrath of God against sin must be satisfied and for that to happen a sinless human sacrifice was required. This explains much about why the devil was eager so tempt Jesus and why Jesus' resistance against sin was so important. In his virgin birth Jesus was devoid of a sinful human nature and in his avoidance of sin throughout his life he retained his innocence making himself the only way to forgiveness.

The Sinlessness of Jesus Christ

1st John 3:5 You know that he appeared in order to take away sins; and in him there is no sin.

Was Jesus peccable, or impeccable?

Peccable means, “liable to, or capable of sin”.

1st Peter 2:22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth;

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

We look at this and say, “**Jesus was tempted, but did not sin**” and we are right to do so.

James 1:14 says “but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” – thankfully Jesus was different from “every man”.

Some will say that if Jesus was sinless, where did his temptation come from? James says it comes from evil desire within. James was correct when talking about men and women with a fallen nature, but that would not be Jesus. Jesus had all the desires we have, but he did not have sinful desires.

2nd Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Hebrews 7:26 Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

The Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.

Galatians 4:4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

The Bible plainly, unapologetically, and unambiguously teaches that Jesus Christ was virgin born. No explanations like **“you will find this hard to believe, but Jesus was born of a virgin”**.

Believers in Jesus Christ have zero problems believing in a virgin birth because the Bible has a perfect track record of impeccability.

I will now speculate a bit as to how Mary conceived as a virgin.

Luke 1:34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” **35** The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

We are not told for sure, but what if God did what would be like a recreation of Adam who had no conception?

In perhaps the same fashion as Jesus later turned water to wine just by willing it to happen God could have willed Mary to be with child. What if God placed the same kind of sinless DNA material as Adam had in one of the eggs in her womb?

This would create a pregnancy without a sin nature – and also fulfill a “second Adam” role found in scripture.

1st Corinthians 15:45 So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. 47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. 48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

The Only Begotten Son

"Begotten" is an English translation of a Greek word. As such, we must look at the original meaning of the Greek word, not transfer English meanings into the text.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

The juxtaposition of these 2 verses has been the subject of error throughout the history of the church. It started in the 3rd century with Arius and continues today with the Mormons and the Jehovah Witnesses. They believe that “the firstborn of all

creation” refers to a creation of Jesus Christ and not his position over creation.

When you make Jesus less than very God of very God you necessarily destroy his deity, deny the Bible, and make him into, shall we say, just a great person..... Jesus is God!

The council of Nicaea addressed Arius’ error in 325 AD and condemned him as a heretic.

The protestant version of the Nicene creed includes this section, **“We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.”**

In case I was not clear to this point – “only begotten” son is an old phrase that is no longer used. The term “only begotten” is best understood as “unique” or “one and only” in today’s English.

The Baptism of Jesus Christ

Jesus was baptized into John’s baptism which was a preparatory baptism for the coming of Messiah. Indeed, prophetically the fact that John was baptizing was evidence Messiah was near.

Mark 1:9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him; 11 and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”

John's baptism was radical in that prior to John the only persons requiring baptism were gentile converts to Judaism (they needed cleansing). John was calling gentiles and Jews alike to his baptism of repentance and this was highly insulting to the Jew. Jesus submitted to John's baptism because he wanted to identify with humanity and all our needs.

Matthew 3:14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

"He does not need to repent, but by submitting to baptism Jesus begins his messianic work by identifying with the human need and providing the means by which it can be accomplished."

Grant Osborne

John's baptism, and believer's baptism today point to a conversion wherein the sinner is cleansed. Jesus did not need to be converted, but he did need to endorse the ministry of John the Baptist.

In addition, Jesus wanted John to see the validation of his own ministry as the "voice of one crying in the wilderness". There is reason to believe John himself did not know he was the "voice of one crying in the wilderness".

Luke 7:20 "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'"

John heard from his parents of his unusual birth, but now seeks assurance that he is "the voice". Jesus was in fact, anointed (ordained to ministry) at his baptism.

Matthew 3:16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on him, 17

and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

God's words from heaven show his endorsement of the work of Christ coming to earth to redeem mankind.

The Ascension of Jesus Christ

Acts 1:6 So when they had come together, they were asking him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by his own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." 9 And after he had said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while he was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. 11 They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched him go into heaven."

In his ascension we see Jesus entering his glory as he ascends from the Mount of Olives in a cloud – most likely a “shekinah” cloud like the one that led Israel in the wilderness.

His departure is said by Jesus Himself to be better for his church than his remaining on the earth. In fact, he was quite clear about the advantages for his church when he ascended into heaven.

John 14:12 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

John 16:5 "But now I am going to him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'" 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 But I tell you

the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

Jesus taught us that when he ascended, he would send the Holy Spirit who would indwell and empower every believer – thus making the church more effective for ministry than Jesus was alone.

If that sounds like some sort of heresy, please refer again to John 14 *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.”*

When Jesus was on earth, he was not omnipresent – he voluntarily limited Himself to a body that could be offered for sin. Then he told us that if he went away, he would send his Holy Spirit to be with us forever. His Holy Spirit would comfort, teach, and empower us for the work of the Kingdom.

John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him or know him, but you know him because he abides with you and will be in you.

Do you see it? He (Jesus) abides with you now and he (the Holy Spirit) will be in you – this is what some might call a distinction without a difference.

Ephesians 1:19 These are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might 20 which he brought about in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things in subjection

under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Hebrews 1:3 And he is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his nature and upholds all things by the word of his power. When he had made purification of sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Another reason to rest in his ascension is that when he ascended, he was coronated as King of Kings.

Did Jesus surrender his omnipresence for all eternity in his incarnation? If he didn't, then what did he do with the body of the man called Jesus of Nazareth?

Jesus Christ as Mediator

A mediator is a “go between” – one who brings two parties together for the purpose of reconciliation. Men and women in general are enemies of God.

Colossians 1:21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

Romans 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

2nd Corinthians 5:18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a total and objective removal of hostility. Paul says we have been given the “ministry of reconciliation”. God has called each of us to serve and influence those in our orbit.

There is no such thing as a Christian without a ministry – we are all called to serve and influence those around us using the time, talent, and treasure entrusted to us. Two parties are reconciled when the terms of the offended party have been met.

Our sin has offended God – and rightfully so. His terms are a matter of justice – he cannot overlook sin and his righteousness must be satisfied by punishing the sinner. (or the sinner’s substitute)

2nd Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

You do not need a priest to be your mediator or “go between” – Jesus did his work of mediation and then sat down at the right hand of God as our Great High Priest.

Job 9:32 “For he is not a man, as I am, that I may answer him, and that we should go to court together. 33 Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both. 34 Let him take his rod away from me, and do not let dread of him terrify me. 35 Then I would speak and not fear him, But it is not so with me.”

We see above how Job longed for the Mediator that we have.

The Threefold Office of Christ

In the Old Testament we have prophets, priests, and kings. Moses was a prophet, Aaron was a priest, David was a King, and Samuel was both prophet and priest. But no one other than Jesus was all three – prophet, priest, and king.

Jesus was a **prophet** in his own right and fulfilled O.T. **prophecy**.

Jesus was both priest and sacrifice. **As a priest he offered Himself** as the perfect sacrifice for sin.

Jesus is not just a king; **He is King of kings**.

“To even attempt to write down all there is to know about Jesus is akin to a fool’s errand because the Apostle John, who knew him well, said that if all that Jesus did was written out, the world could not contain such a volume of truth.”

Unknown

The Holy Spirit – Part One

We will start here – everything that was true of God in “The Doctrine of God” class is also, and equally true of the Holy Spirit.

The internal witness of the Holy Spirit –

Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

1st Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says, “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

You’ve probably heard some preach or teach that the witness of the Holy Spirit and attestation to our salvation is one of those “**you just know that you know that you know**” situations, but that is so ambiguous that it does no good.

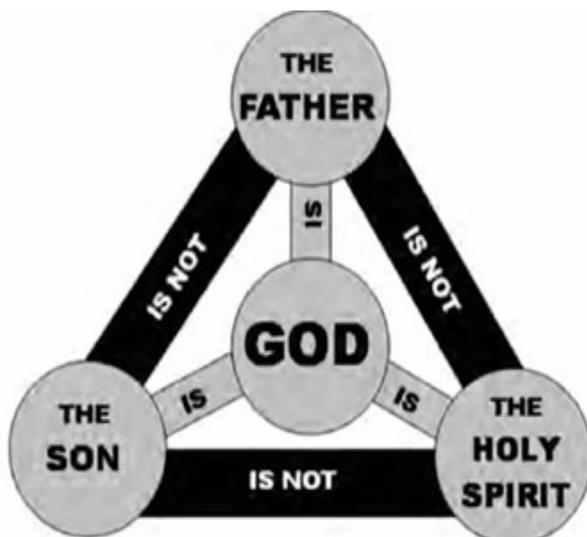
“God’s Holy Spirit confirms the validity of our adoption, not by some inner, mystical voice, but by the fruit He produces in us and the power He provides for spiritual service.”

Unknown

The Trinity

To defend our position on the Trinity we must prove the Holy Spirit is God and that he is also a separate person in the Godhead.

- The Father is God.
- The Father is a separate person.
- The Son is God.
- The Son is a separate person.
- The Spirit is God.
- The Spirit is a separate person.



The Holy Spirit is God

The Holy Spirit is called God - Acts 5:3 *But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? **You have not lied to man but to God.**"*

The Holy Spirit is held as equal to the Father and the Son – Matthew 28:19 *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

2nd Corinthians 13:14 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

The Holy Spirit has personal titles just as any other person would have – John 14:16 *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*

In the above text, the Holy Spirit is described as our Helper in the English, but the title is so much more! (Paraclete)

Paraclete – Strong’s Definitions

1) summoned, called to one's side, esp. called to one's aid

1a) one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant, an advocate

1b) one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor

1b1) of Christ in his exaltation at God's right hand, pleading with God the Father for the pardon of our sins

1c) in the widest sense, a helper, succorer, aider, assistant

1c1) of the Holy Spirit destined to take the place of Christ with the apostles (after his ascension to the Father), to lead them to a deeper knowledge of the gospel truth, and give them divine strength needed to enable them to undergo trials and persecutions on behalf of the divine kingdom

The Holy Spirit empowers – Acts 1:7 *He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

We have been empowered to be Jesus’ witnesses – this extends to our words, actions, and even attitudes. Few, if any Christians would question the words of Jesus in Acts 1:8 “**you will receive power**” and “**you will be my witnesses**”, but what do those words mean?

We have received power to tell the truth about Jesus – the stewardship of the heart and mind changing power of the gospel is now with us. We must decide to “**let our lights shine before**

others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father”.

The word for “witnesses” literally means martyrs – one of the more convincing evidences the Apostles provided for the world about Jesus was their willingness to die for their faith. Sane, rationale people do not hold on to a lie in the face of torture and death. To make my point, nearly all the Apostles were put to death because they would not turn from the gospel.

We have reason to believe the promises of Acts 1:8 belong to us like they did to those who heard Jesus speak to them.

The Holy Spirit speaks – *Acts 13:1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”*

Aside from Balaam’s donkey, only persons speak in the Bible.

The Holy Spirit intercedes – *Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

Just as the creation and ourselves groan under the weight of sin’s effects, so too the Holy Spirit groans in prayer for us.

The Holy Spirit testifies – *John 15:26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”*

The world will know their need for Jesus even if they never hear his name because the Holy Spirit will be active every day in the world convincing and convicting mankind.

The Holy Spirit teaches – *John 14:25 These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

These disciples will be asked to lead the effort in building the church. They will need supernatural power and recall of all that Jesus taught. (special application to the 12 Apostles, and a general application to us)

The Holy Spirit makes decisions and choices – *Acts 14:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*

The Apostles were hand selected and appointed to ministry by the Holy Spirit – think of the brilliance of these appointments as all, the 11 plus Paul, performed their duties with effectiveness. (he makes no mistakes!)

The Holy Spirit has Divine Attributes

He is ETERNAL - *Hebrews 9:14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God.*

He is OMNIPRESENT – *Psalms 139:7 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! 9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.*

He is OMNIPOTENT – *Luke 1:35 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.”*

The fact that God CAN do anything does not mean he will.

He is OMNISCIENT – *Psalm 139:1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me! 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. 3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. 5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.*

Mark it down, God knows everything there is to know and all variables of all there is to know.

The Holy Spirit is a Person

He has INTELLECT *Roman 8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*

He has PERSONAL TITLES – *John 15:26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me”.*

He has a WILL - *1st Corinthians 12:11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

He has PERSONAL PRONOUNS – *John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees **him** nor knows **him**. You know **him**, for **he** dwells with you and will be in you.*

The Holy Spirit's Titles

He is THE SPIRIT OF GOD – *Matthew 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." 25 Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. 26 And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. 28 But if it is **by the Spirit of God** that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

He is THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST – *Romans 8:9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the **Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him.*

He is THE HOLY SPIRIT – *Luke 11:13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the **Holy Spirit** to those who ask him!"*

He is THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH – *John 14:17 even the **Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*

- *John 14:6 I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*
- Truth is what is – reality.
- What is true in things pertaining to God and the duties of man, moral and religious truth.

He is THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION – *Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the **Spirit of adoption** as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*

He is THE SEAL OF GOD – *Ephesians 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

FIRE – *Matthew 3:11 “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you **with the Holy Spirit and fire.***

*Luke 3:16 John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you **with the Holy Spirit and fire.***

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

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

WATER – *John 4:13 Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water*

that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

John 7:38 “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” 39 Now this he said about the Spirit.

OIL – *1st John 2:20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.*

DOVE – *Matthew 3:16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him.*

Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove.

Treatment of the Holy Spirit

- Never refer to him as an “it”; he is a person.
- Because the Holy Spirit is God we ought to revere and obey Him.
- Because He indwells us, we ought to cherish and honor Him.
- Because He is our Teacher, we should depend on Him to give us insights into the Word of God.
- Because He is God, we should trust Him to supply our needs.

Do not think of the Holy Spirit as a separate thing or as someone other than God – he is “other” than us, but he is not “other” than God.

Do not grieve Holy Spirit. (How?) We grieve the Holy Spirit when we sin. *Ephesians 4:30* **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

Do not quench Holy Spirit. (How?) We quench the Holy Spirit when we suppress (stifle) him. *1st Thessalonians 5:19* **Do not quench the Spirit.**

The question is this, "How do I know if I am suppressing the Holy Spirit? The answer is this, "You will know".

The Holy Spirit has been, and is Active in Many Things

"Every important revelation from God is found in germ form in Genesis."

(G. Raymond Carlson)

The Holy Spirit was active in creation - *Genesis 1:1* *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

He was active in the creation of The Universe – *Genesis 1:2* *The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. **AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD** was hovering over the surface of the waters.*

He was active in the creation of Man - *Genesis 1:26* *Then God said, "LET US MAKE HUMAN BEINGS IN OUR IMAGE, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."*

The Holy Spirit strives with mankind - *Genesis 6:3* *And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.*

To “strive” is no light thing – the Hebrew means “to confront straight on”, “to use moral force”, and to “contend with, to oppose”.

Striving in Conviction – *Genesis 6:3 Then the Lord said, “MY SPIRIT WILL NOT PUT UP WITH HUMANS FOR SUCH A LONG TIME, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years.”*

New Testament Support – *John 16:8 And when He comes, He will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment. 9 The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me. 10 Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. 11 Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.*

Indwelling for work – in the Old Testament

BEZALEL – *Exodus 31:2 See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: 3 **And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,** 4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, 5 And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.*

MOSES – *Numbers 11:16 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Gather before me seventy men who are recognized as elders and leaders of Israel. Bring them to the Tabernacle to stand there with you. 17 I will come down and talk to you there. **I will take some of the Spirit that is upon you, and I will put the Spirit upon them also.** They will bear the burden of the people along with you, so you will not have to carry it alone.*

Indwelling for power – in the Old Testament

Judges 6:34 **THEN THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CLOTHED GIDEON WITH POWER.** He blew a ram's horn as a call to arms, and the men of the clan of Abiezer came to him.

Judges 15:14 As Samson arrived at Lehi, the Philistines came shouting in triumph. But **THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME POWERFULLY UPON SAMSON**, and he snapped the ropes on his arms as if they were burnt strands of flax, and they fell from his wrists.

Indwelling for ministry – in the Old Testament

Isaiah 61:1 **THE SPIRIT OF THE SOVEREIGN LORD IS UPON ME**, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released, and prisoners will be freed. (quoted by Jesus in Luke 4)

Micah 3:8 But as for me, **I AM FILLED WITH POWER— WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD.** I am filled with justice and strength to boldly declare Israel's sin and rebellion.

Indwelling, other examples – in the Old Testament

David, 2nd Sam 23:2 These are the last words of David: "David, the son of Jesse, speaks— David, the man who was raised up so high, David, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, David, the sweet psalmist of Israel. 2 **"The Spirit of the Lord speaks through me; His words are upon my tongue"**.

Indwelling, other examples – in the Old Testament

2nd Chronicles 24:20 Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God, 'Why do you break the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you.'"

“In the Old Testament times the Spirit was not given universally but limited generally to Israel and imparted according to God’s sovereign will to certain individuals, such as prophets, kings, and other workers in His kingdom. But in this age, the Spirit is available for all regardless of age, sex, or race.”

Myer Pearlman

The Holy Spirit – Part Two

The Role and Work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament and in the life of the Believer.

Birth of Christ – Luke 1:35 *And the angel answered her, “**The Holy Spirit will come upon you**, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God”.*

John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The Holy Spirit was active in Jesus’ preparation for ministry – Mark 1:12 **The Spirit** immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 *And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.*

The word, “drove” carries with it a weight of force much like we might say someone was expelled from polite society - Jesus is going right from baptism to battle.

The Holy Spirit equipped Jesus with power for ministry – Luke 4:14 *And Jesus returned **in the power of the Spirit** to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.*

If I wanted to state the obvious, I would point out that if Jesus thought it necessary to operate in the Holy Spirit’s power how much more appropriate for us?

The Holy Spirit directed the ministry of Jesus – Luke 4:18 *“**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me**, because **he has anointed me** to proclaim good news to the poor. **He has sent me** to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at*

liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Jesus reads Isaiah's prophecy about himself.

The Holy Spirit's power brought about the resurrection –

Romans 8:11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

The text is clear, we have access to the same power that raised Jesus to life, and he will give life to our lives as well.

*Romans 8:10 **But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 **If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*****

*Remember in John 14 Jesus said, "**he is with you now and will be in you**"? So close, yet separate and distinct!*

While on earth, Jesus' ministry was limited to time and space. The promised Holy Spirit is not limited.

*John 14:12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, **whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.**" (not more powerful, but greater in extent and number)*

The phrase "in my name," however, is not a magical charm like an Aladdin's lamp. It was both a guarantee, like the endorsement on a check, and a limitation on the petition; for he would grant only such petitions as could be presented in a manner consistent with his character and purpose. In prayer we call on him to work out his purpose, not simply to gratify our

whims. The answer is promised so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. The disciples' obedience to him will be the test of their love.

The Expositor's Commentary

*John 16:7 But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, **he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment.** 9 The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. 10 Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. 11 Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged. 12 **"There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now.** 13 **When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.** He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. **He will tell you about the future.** 14 **He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.** 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'"*

In the life of the believer – Conviction

The convicting work of the Holy Spirit is not only directed toward the unsaved, but also operates in believers and the Church to teach, correct, and guide us into truth.

Revelation 3:19 I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. (Laodicea)

In the life of the believer – Salvation

*Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins, **giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.** (eternal life by the Holy Spirit)*

1st Corinthians 6:19 Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? (the Holy Spirit indwells us)

*John 3:6 Humans can reproduce only human life, but **the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.***

Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (assurance of salvation)

In the life of the believer – Sanctification

Sanctify – to set apart for a sacred purpose, to make holy.

*1st Peter 1:1 To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.***

Hebrews 10:14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

In the life of the believer – Helper

John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

In the life of the believer – Teacher

1st Corinthians 2:10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the

*spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.***

In the life of the believer – Prayer

*Romans 8:26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but **the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;** 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

As a practical matter the Holy Spirit brings people and situations to our minds as we pray that we either forgot about or perhaps never knew about.

The Spirit helps us in our weakness “for we do not know how to pray as we should” – a common occurrence for us as we pray is that we don’t always know what to ask for, but he does.

When we don’t know how to pray about a situation, the wisest prayer just may be, “help me”.

In the life of the believer – Guidance/Leading

*Acts 16:6 They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; 7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; 8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9 **A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”** 10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into*

Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

The Spirit Filled Life

“The Spirit simply makes victory possible—and that only to the degree that the believer ‘lives by the Spirit’ or ‘walks’ in him.”

Unknown

The scriptures call for the believer to “walk in the Spirit” and “be filled with the Spirit”. As to how to separate these two commands there is a distinction, but not much of a difference. One sure evidence of “walking in” or “being filled with” the Holy Spirit is an eager obedience to him.

*Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, **but be filled with the Spirit**, 19 **speaking** to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always **giving thanks** for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 21 and **be subject to one another** in the fear of Christ.*

The city of Ephesus was polluted with idols and all sorts of sordid pagan worship that involved drunkenness – drunkenness was so common that the reader of Paul’s day would “get it”.

Be careful not to miss the imperative in the text – “be filled” is not a request and it is far more than an invitation. It is a command.

Paul uses language that would compare the control alcohol has over those whom it is “in”, to those who were indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

There is no mystery in the Greek as to the meaning of “be filled” other than to say, “be filled” should be understood as “keep on being filled”.

There are two issues – 1) that of control and 2) that of being commanded to sustain, or at least repeat the action.

The issue of control - the juxtaposition of being filled with the Spirit and being filled with wine makes for a vivid comparison between the two.

In the pagan culture of Ephesus, drunkenness was widely observed and few of those Paul was speaking to would not have understood the analogy.

The issue of control is not just an issue relative to being filled with the Spirit, it is **THE** issue. When one has consumed enough alcohol the consumer loses control over to the alcohol – in a sense he has volunteered to be controlled by another power.

Drinkers behave differently when they are drunk – their whole personality may change, they often say and do things their inhibitions kept them from when sober.

The same is true for the believer who yields control to the Holy Spirit – he/she may say and do things they were previously insufficiently courageous to do.

According to Paul, a person who is “filled with the Spirit” will exhibit behaviors like praising God, thanking God, and being submissive to others. The first two, praising and thanking God in all things are what would seem like natural responses to the One who saves us.

The third one, being submissive to the needs of others, may not seem all that supernatural to the natural man – “inasmuch as you’ve done it to the least of these you’ve done it unto me”.

The 2nd issue is that of sustaining and repeating being filled with the Spirit – “keep on being filled”.

Any honest assessment of ourselves will conclude that being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time, once and done experience.

The normal experience is nearly the exact opposite to where we are filled multiple times each day as we yield to the Holy Spirit's control.

As we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should be filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit far, far more than we are not.

Fruit of the Spirit - *Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

The verses that precede the above tell us what the flesh produces when it is dominant in a life whereas the verses above tell what the Spirit produces when he dominates.

“against such there is no law” – what the Spirit produces in us is usually welcomed and accepted in every stratum of society.

“It is of no use for any of you to try to be soul-winners if you are not bearing fruit in your own lives. How can you serve the Lord with your lips if you do not serve Him with your lives? How can you preach His gospel with your tongues, when with hands, feet, and heart you are preaching the devil's gospel, and setting up an antichrist by your practical unholiness?”

Charles Spurgeon

If there is no evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in your life you will not only struggle with assurance of your salvation, but you should!

As was stated earlier, one sure evidence is an eager desire to obey the Lord – the question is not “do I always obey”, the question is do I earnestly DESIRE to obey.

1st John 2:3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1st Peter 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the multifaceted grace of God. 11 WHOEVER SPEAKS is to do so as one who is speaking actual words of God; WHOEVER SERVES is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit – according to Peter there are two categories of spiritual gifts. Speaking gifts and serving gifts are the two dominant categories needed to cover spiritual gifts – there are lists of gifts in 1st Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. Then in Ephesians 4 we have a list of the office gifts given to the church.

Ministry Gifts from 1st Corinthians 12

*1st Corinthians 28 And God has appointed in the church, first **apostles**, second **prophets**, third **teachers**, then **miracles**, then **gifts of healings**, **helps**, **administrations**, **various kinds of tongues**. 29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? 30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?*

Ministry Gifts from Romans 12

*Romans 12:6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if **prophecy**, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his **servicing**; or he who teaches, in his **teaching**; 8 or he who exhorts, in his **exhortation**; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who **leads**, with diligence; he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness.*

Office Gifts from Ephesians 4

*Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men."..... 11 And He gave some as **apostles**, and some as **prophets**, and some as **evangelists**, and some as **pastors** and **teachers**, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.*

Other gifts from God – God equips his people with spiritual enablements when we are saved. We call those enablements “spiritual gifts” because that is how the Bible refers to them. However, do not discount for a moment the natural abilities you were given when God formed you in the womb.

Spiritual gifts are not greater than natural gifts because God gives them all – a natural talent, under the control of the Spirit filled believer is effective for ministry.

One with a preaching gift is not necessarily godlier than one with a mechanical or a musical natural ability. Remember the standard by which we will all be one day evaluated – “**what did you do with what you were given?**”

The Doctrine of Man – Part One

Psalm 8:3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; 4 What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

In Psalm 8 David is marveling about the interest in and care of man extended to us by God. He says in effect, “compared to the vastness of the heavens, man seems relatively small and insignificant, but you, God, show by your works that mankind is of great value to you”.

The pinnacle of his creation turned from him and chose sin, but God did not give up on them – he moved to redeem them.

What David felt when he considered who man is in the natural, compared to how God views man in the spiritual, is what we ought to feel as well. David is in wonder as to God’s care of and provision for the very creatures who treat him lightly at best, and sometimes even hatefully.

We too should be in utter shock that God would do all for us that he has – specifically that he spared not his own Son for us!

Mankind is capable of, and called to, glorify God.

Ephesians 1:13 And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

Paul gives us some important information in the phrase, “**he did this so we would praise and glorify him.**”

The not-so-subtle point is that while we are the beneficiaries of the work of Christ, it was not first and foremost about us – it was about him! Everyone who has ever lived benefits from God being seen and he can be seen in us.

We looked at the self-exaltation of God in the past but let me remind you how we benefit from his self-exaltation.

Isaiah 46:9 Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me.

Like a little child who feels safer when her daddy is home, we feel safer when we know him better. And if he did not tell us of his greatness, how would we know?

When Paul wrote, “He did this so we would praise and glorify him” he was providing a job description of sorts for the child of God.

We have been purchased (redeemed) by God, he has given us an inheritance, and he has also come to live in us with his Holy Spirit – surely, we have responsibility for something, somewhere, at some time. Indeed, this duty, this responsibility, is something the believer craves.

We ought not to think of our duty as some sort of recompense to God for our salvation – for that may lead us to think that we have evened the ledger with God.

The way to think about our duty to glorify God is twofold – first it is a thank you, and secondly it is a gift from God to be enjoyed. So much that is good happens when God is glorified that for us to participate in his glorification should be seen as a high privilege.

God is glorified when he is revealed.

Since it is not possible to improve upon One who is already perfect – and since he cannot be added to, it seems reasonable that we would show the world how good he is, thus glorifying him.

God need only be seen to be glorified.

When we live in such a way that God is seen through our lives he is glorified.

How so? He is not added to, but he is seen and because in him there is no darkness, no sin, and no imperfections, when he is seen he always looks good. There is nothing about God that can be exposed that does not serve to elevate him.

*1st Peter 4:11 Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. **Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.***

In other words, not only are our natural and spiritual gifts given to serve people, but also to glorify God.

*Matthew 5:16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and **glorify your Father who is in heaven.***

While we are not saved by our good works, our good works can preach a sermon to those around us. Jesus tells us here that when we serve others because we love him, our works can actually reveal God.

*1st Corinthians 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.***

*Colossians 3:17 **Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,** giving thanks through him to God the Father.*

When we belong to Christ, we no longer have spiritual and secular lives – we just have life in Christ.

To read these scriptures and think that God will somehow be improved by what we do, or even by what he does, is a mistake.

When one is perfect, one cannot be added to, or improved upon. Everything we learn about God only serves to enhance and magnify him – he has no flaws.

Man is created in the image of God:

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
27 God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

The Imago Dei (the image of God)

Mentally, humanity was created as rational, volitional agents. In other words, human beings can reason and choose.

Morally, humanity was created in righteousness and perfect innocence, as a reflection of God's holiness. God saw all he had made (humanity included) and called it "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

Socially, humanity was created for fellowship. This reflects God's triune nature and his love.

Perhaps the most important part of the Imago Dei is that it points to a personal being who can relate to God and to others. We were made to be in relationships – we can feel, we can converse, we can laugh, we can cry, we can think, and we can create.

All those qualities and others come directly from being created in the image of God.

Think about the ability to speak and have languages that allow us to communicate with each other as an Imago Dei characteristic. There are roughly 5,000 different languages in the world, and have you ever heard a dog, cat, or monkey speaking English or French?

Animals are incapable of learning languages – on the other hand, humans are quite capable and when the stakes are high (say communicating the gospel), God even gives the gift of tongues to bridge language barriers.

What does it mean that we are created in the image of God?

It means at least that we were created as intellectual and moral beings who can reason, think, feel, act, and create.

We can communicate with God and, to a certain extent, for God.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

"In our image" certainly has nothing to do with physical appearance as God is a spirit – bear in mind that mankind, including Adam and Eve, were made in God's image.

So perhaps it is true that the marriage of men and women is intended to point to unity in plurality – God is plural yet completely united just as husband and wife are to be.

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 2:19 Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

Adam had sufficient intellectual and moral capacity to name all the animals and then to rule over them.

Adam and Eve fell through disobedience and all of creation has been, and is, affected by their fall.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.

You and I might say, “**wait a minute, God will declare me guilty because Adam sinned?**” Yes, because Adam was elected by God as our federal representative.

So now we look at a new concept – “the federal headship of Adam”.

Original sin has lasting consequences in that it is passed down to us from the “federal head” of the human race, Adam. The idea is that we (in Adam’s genetic code) were literally “IN” Adam and when he fell, we all fell.

So why is Adam called the “Federal head” of the human race – after all, this term is not used anywhere in the Bible.

Federalism is but one theory of how sin is passed down generation to generation and it is loosely based on the concept of Adam as our “federal” representative.

Rom 5:18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

Big picture – it is irrelevant whether one embraces “federalism” as the means through which sin is imputed. The Bible is clear that sin is handed down generation to generation for “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”. In theology, we trace this idea of inherited sin back to the fall because that is what Romans 5 tells us.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

What is implied above is that because Adam sinned, we are all sinners. In fact, what is implied by Romans 5:12 has been proven time and time again by Adam's descendants as we demonstrate our sinfulness by our deeds.

Romans 5:17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

Now comes impeccable logic – if one man could bring condemnation to all, then one can bring salvation to all.

1st Corinthians 15:45 Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of

the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"

"Why should man be so continually spoken of as evil, carnal, perverse, deceitful, and desperately wicked, if all men are by nature as perfectly innocent, and free from any propensity to evil, as Adam was the first moment of his creation?"

Jonathon Edwards

If mankind is not born with a sinful nature, then surely in 6,000 years and billions of people, shouldn't at least one have made it through life without sinning?

And yet, with the lone exception of a virgin born man named Jesus, there is zero evidence that it has ever happened.

You could argue there may have been one and we just didn't know it – you could, but the weight of the evidence for the Bible being correct is overwhelming.

And what is that weight? It is found in the lives of everyone we know.

I know some good people – and by good I mean that by placing all people I know on a continuum of best to worst, there are some that are far more righteous than the others. But none on the continuum of righteousness are without sin – not even close!

Original sin is a big deal – it explains why we have such an affinity for sin and why we are plagued by it.

Knowing that we, and all other human beings have a nature that is bent towards sin allows us to understand why we are as we are, and why we need a Savior. A worldview that excludes mankind's

inclination to, and capacity for evil, is one that is found wanting for explanations of why the world is so messed up.

“We are not sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners.”

R. C. Sproul

All who do not believe that Jesus is the Christ will die in their sins.

John 8:24 “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.”

The positive version of John 8:24 - 1st John 5:1 *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*

All mankind will be raised from the dead, those who received Christ AND those who didn't.

John 5:28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Daniel 12:1 “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”

All are raised, but all are not raised at the same time. The dead will be raised at different times with different destinations in eternity. We will have the bodies of the righteous raised and rewarded at the Rapture of the church.

Then 1007 years will pass before the unsaved will be raised and judged. (the 7 years of the great tribulation, plus the millennial kingdom) All who do not know Christ as Lord, will suffer punishment and eternal destruction.

There is reason to believe that even the unsaved will receive a body of sorts suitable to withstand judgment for all eternity,

2nd Thessalonians 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

The righteous will be raised and rewarded.

A key and comforting fact for the believer is that we have already begun to live forever.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

2nd Corinthians 5:6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

When the believer dies, his spirit goes immediately to be with the Lord. Their body will go into the ground to await its resurrection, but the person (soul and spirit) is with Jesus.

The spirits and souls of the believers who pass away are with Jesus awaiting the event we call the Rapture. At the Rapture, the bodies of the believing dead of all time will be raised to life.

*Philippians 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, **will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.***

Immediately following the Rapture, the saints will appear and be evaluated before the “bema seat”, also called the “The Judgment Seat of Christ”.

1st Corinthians 3:12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

The purpose of the “Bema Seat” is to justly reward the saints – there are no punishments at this evaluation, only rewards. This judgment is not to see if one gets into heaven, the judgment takes place in heaven. I believe this judgment (evaluation) is all centered around one question that is of existential importance.

What did you do with what you were given?

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

While the believer’s works will be evaluated for reward, the unbeliever’s works will be judged and punished at the Great White Throne.

Distasteful though it may be to our fleshly understanding, the rejection and punishment of the unbelieving will be seen as righteous and holy when we see God.

When we get to heaven and the Great White Throne judgment is part of history, there will be billions of souls in the Lake of Fire, and we will say “God is good all the time”.

Unknown

Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Unlike the Bema Seat, where there was no punishment handed down, there is only judgment at the Great White Throne.

At the Bema Seat, the saint received mercy, at the Great White Throne the unbeliever will receive justice. There will be a trial of sorts for every person based upon the perfectly recorded evidence of their works as recorded in what the scriptures call “the books”.

At this judgment everyone will receive exactly what they have earned. The judgment will not be equal, there will be degrees of punishment. Not all will receive the same punishment - each will all receive the punishment they have earned.

Is the “lake of fire” really an eternal thing? According to Jesus and the Apostle Paul the answer is **YES**.

Matthew 25:41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

2nd Thessalonians 1:9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord.

Why is that some have no problem accepting that heaven is forever, but then refuse to believe that hell could also be forever?

What does it say about God that those who reject him are sentenced to an eternity of misery?

The Doctrine of Man – Part Two

Mankind in general does not want to be saved. They want to go to heaven when they die, but they want nothing of God until they die. We are born headed for hell and no one gets turned toward heaven unless they come to Christ now!

Mark 10:17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments, 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" 20 And he said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." 21 Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

The Rich Young Ruler of Mark 10 wants to know what he must do to get to heaven. In a not-so-subtle way Jesus tells him there is nothing he can do to earn his way to heaven.

However, he could have assurance of getting to heaven if he were to undergo a change of heart – a change that would reorder everything he values.

Many today have a similar question – “what is the minimum I have to do to be saved?”. In a sense, they are saying, “I don’t actually want Jesus, and I don’t want to make any more changes than I have to, but I do want to go to heaven when I die”.

That person will not be saved because if they were really ready for salvation, they would be embracing Jesus and making as many changes in their life as they could as fast as they could!

“Long for those you know to exhibit a salvation that speaks of God, worships God, serves God, and is still seeking a closer walk with God – may there be no question marks hanging over them now, or at their graveside.”

Unknown

Apart from Christ, there is no difference from person to person in their standing before God, for all are lost.

While there are degrees of human goodness, meaning that there are many unsaved people who would make good neighbors, there are none who can stand before God apart from Christ.

On a continuum, there is a great separation between Hitler and the unbelieving little old lady down the street, but both are lost without Christ.

*Psalm 14:2 The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. 3 **They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.***

*Romans 3:9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; 10 as it is written, **“There is none righteous, not even one; 11 There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God.”***

Apart from Christ, all people are not the children of God, but children of the devil.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name.

John 8:42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but he sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot

hear My word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.”

Apart from Christ, mankind cannot receive the things of the Spirit.

1st Corinthians 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

This is one reason why witnessing to the unsaved can be extremely frustrating – we are speaking “Greek” to them.

Apart from Christ, the intellect and nature of all mankind is corrupted by sin.

Genesis 6:5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

It is not just that men are unwilling to follow Christ, the unsaved person is incapable of following Christ.

Apart from Christ, although few know it, all are under the influence of Satan, and under the wrath of God.

*Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked **according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air**, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, **and were by nature children of wrath**, even as the rest.*

Apart from Christ, mankind has a mind that is set against God, and are in a position where they cannot please God.

*Romans 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because **the mind set on the***

flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and **those who are in the flesh cannot please God**.

Mankind is born again when we believe on Christ, and are in fact new creations.

2nd Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Someone once asked George Whitefield why he kept insisting that we must be born again, and he said, “because we must be born again”.

Mankind experiences new life when we believe.

1st John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.

The new birth brings about a transformation by the renewal of the mind.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Transformation and a renewed mind are essential to living a new life in Christ.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the

flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.

While the word “transformation” does not appear here, the idea of transformation could not be clearer. Simply stated, the transformed life is the surrendered life.

So, what else can we say about “transformation”? The Greek word is “metamorfow” – just pronouncing the word helps to get a sense of its English meaning.

It literally means “to change into another form” – we know what that means for butterflies, but it is not quite as clear for Christians, or is it?

There are all kinds of examples of biblical truth that are illustrated in nature – the butterfly helps here.

Caterpillars come in all sorts of “looks” from the beautiful wooly bears to the not so stunning ones.

Caterpillars go into such a dormant state that they may just as well have died, then they appear to be buried in a cocoon before being “resurrected” as it were into something so different that if we did not know the cycle, we would not connect the two.

That is Christian transformation – a change, a death, and a resurrection. A resurrection so dramatic that if we did not know what happened we would not connect the two people.

This is the “old man” juxtaposed against the “new man”.

However, our transformation is not like the caterpillars outward one – ours is a renewed mind that allows us to see everything in a new light.

There is not a sin we commit that does not first pass through our minds.

*Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, **indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind**, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

The new mind gives us a completely new way of looking at life – a **Christian world view**.

*1st Corinthians 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and **he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised**. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct him? **But we have the mind of Christ**.*

When we possess the “mind of Christ” we are then capable of looking at life as Christ does.

Paul said of the unsaved person, “he (the unsaved person) cannot understand truth, because it is spiritually appraised”.

We are **incapable** of evaluating spiritual things until we have a renewed mind.

Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Since this is of utmost importance to us in this world, just how does one go about “renewing” his mind? We are given some insight into how to execute Romans 12:2 by reading Romans 12:1.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

At the beginning of Romans 12, Paul makes a shift from teaching what is almost exclusively theology to teachings on practical living because of what you now know.

When he says, **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God”**, he is saying – now, because of all that God has done for you through Christ, go live for him with the same zeal that he lived and died for you!

Having a desire to live for Christ comes with the new birth – if you are saved, you will want to obey Christ and live for him. The problem is that having a desire to live for him does not automatically produce a life that is lived for him. There are some practical things we can do to help us accomplish the spiritual things we desire to do.

John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

Christianity is not a mindless religion – it calls for a renewed mind. The Word of God challenges us to think, to reason, and to evaluate what it claims. According to John, if you want a renewed (sanctified) mind, then spend time in the truth, the Bible.

Luke 18:10 “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ 13 But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who

exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The regenerated person becomes a temple of God.

1st Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1st Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

*Acts 17:24 The God who made the world and all things in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, **does not dwell in temples made with hands.***

I think we all understand what people mean when they speak of the church building as “the house of God” – it is a place dedicated to him and his work.

But never forget that God himself declares to us that he dwells in the believer and not in the church building – furthermore, he dwells in us for a reason!

Let it not just be an academic exercise that God dwells in the body of every believer in Jesus Christ.

Let us make it the big deal that it is – he is closer than a brother, he is our Comforter, he is our helper, and his presence in us is his assurance (his down payment on our salvation) and his proof that we are his.

*Romans 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. **But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.***

The regenerated person is free from the law of sin and death.

*Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 **For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ***

Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. *3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

There is a spiritual law that dictates "the soul that sins will surely die" for death was passed down to us through Adam's sin. In Christ, we are set free from that law – it simply does not apply to us.

The regenerated person does not practice sin.

1st John 3:9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because his seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

It is not that believers never sin, clearly we do, and so did Paul (see Romans 7) – however, the true believer will not "practice" sin.

This is an important issue – look at the phrase, "*and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*" So how do we square this with Romans 7 where the Apostle Paul says, hyperbolically I believe, that he sins all the time?

If a Christian cannot sin, and Paul claims to have sinned all the time, either Paul was not a Christian, or there is something else at work here.

Here is how I believe this works – John is not talking about a "one off" kind of sin, and he is not saying that Christians do not sin.

He is saying that if you are born again that the Holy Spirit of God will never let you get comfortable in your sin, and he will not allow you to continue in sin.

How? Discipline that will not let up or lighten up until the child of God turns around, or he is taken home.

The regenerated person does practice righteousness.

*1st John 2:28 Now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from him in shame at his coming. 29 **If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of him.***

The regenerated person loves other Christians.

*1st John 3:13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. 14 **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.** He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

Here is an important question – how would I know if I love other Christians?

It cannot be as simple as treating them well and treating them with respect because that is how we should treat all people, even our enemies. It must be that not only do we treat Christians well, but that in some way we prefer them.

Perhaps the answer to this is found in Romans 12:10.

*“Love one another with **brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.**”*

The regenerated person is a completely new creature.

2nd Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

So again, we need to ask an important question – how do I know that all things are new?

*Romans 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **so we too might walk in newness of life.***

If you died today, and were resurrected tomorrow, how would you be different? You would look the same, your name would be the same, but would you be the same?

Think about Jesus' friend, Lazarus – he died, spent 4 days in Paradise, then was raised to life and called out of his tomb.

*John 12:9 The large crowd of the Jews then learned that he was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead. 10 **But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; 11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.***

Let's focus on John 12:11 **"because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus."**

Lazarus was so radically changed that people were believing on Jesus – he added credibility to the works of Christ.

That is what a new creation of God does – **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."**

Christ gives new meaning to everything – what was once a job is now an opportunity to represent God in the workplace. Other

than sin, there is nothing we do that cannot be changed into a ministry.

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

The regenerated person demonstrates that it is only through the new birth that one becomes spiritually alive.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

In the Bible, the "flesh" almost always represents the worst of fallen mankind.

Galatians 5:19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

By way of contrast, Paul then provides the gift that is ours to have via the new birth.

Galatians 2:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

The regenerated person is sanctified.

The first and primary meaning of to be “sanctified” is to be set apart for God’s purposes.

Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

At salvation, we are set apart for the purposes of God and should expect that he will use us as he intends.

The second meaning that is relevant to us is that sanctification also refers to being clean from sin – we are to live lives that are as holy as our position in Christ.

1st Thessalonians 4:7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

We should think of our sanctification in two ways – **our position** in Christ, and **our progress** towards becoming like him. When we were saved, we were sanctified – a past and completed action.

1st Corinthians 6:11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

And yet the Apostle Paul, the author of the 1st Corinthians passage also speaks of his pursuit of righteousness.

Philippians 3:11 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

So, is Paul sanctified or not? Which is it? Can he be both? Yes, he is both – he was completely sanctified positionally when he was saved AND he, in his practice, is being sanctified day by day as he obeys.

We all have a perfect standing in Christ, but our practices are a work in progress. Sanctification is both – perfect in position, but a work in progress as it relates to our practice.

For by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Hebrews 10:14

I suspect that most who will read my Bible School Curriculum are already believers in Jesus Christ, but on the off chance you have never considered the claims of Christ, I will present some evidence here.

- 1) Jesus told us himself he was the Son of God.
- 2) There is lots of evidence for the resurrection.
- 3) It is intuitive to all that we are accountable to someone.
- 4) While some claim to be Atheists, they are not.
- 5) We all know we sin and that God hates sin.
- 6) God is holy and cannot abide the presence of sin.
- 7) God sent his Son to bear our punishment on the cross.
- 8) He bought our redemption with his blood.
- 9) Redemption is available to all by faith in Jesus.
- 10) Whoever believes Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

The jailer in Acts 16 asked Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” and Paul’s answer was not pray this prayer or do this kind of penance. His answer was, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.**”

If you want to be saved from the consequences of your sin and live a life that glorifies God and helps others then I urge you to turn from your sin, believe on Jesus, and tell him as much. The Holy Spirit will take up residence in you and teach you what to do next, but here are some of the basics.

- 1) Start reading your Bible every day.
- 2) Find a good church where you can worship God.
- 3) Pray about everything.
- 4) Do good deeds.

No one is saved by good deeds, and we don’t do good deeds to be saved, **we do good deeds because we are saved**, and they prove that we are. **Finally, you might ask, “saved from what?” – the answer is saved from the wrath of God.**