

Sermons on
THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST



“For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth . . .” – Romans 1:16

B r o o k y R S t o c k t o n

Sermons on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ

2.0



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Preface

When I was just getting started in the ministry, I was challenged to “major on the majors and minor on the minors.

Who would not agree? But, what were the majors of the Bible?

The gospel is the major message of the Holy Scripture and its theme-parts are everywhere in the Bible.

This work is a collection of unedited sermon notes that contributed to growing men and churches for Christ.

It is my prayer that ministers in search of truth will find this E-Book a precious gem that sheds light on their studies of the gospel.

Brooky Stockton, ret. pastor / professor of theology

Dedication

This E-Book is dedicated to Jean Gibson of San Leandro California, elder-preacher-church planter, one of the most powerful personal evangelists I have ever known. His knowledge of Scripture and varied use of Bible texts to lead people to Christ was nothing short of astounding.

He went into the Christian ministry in his late 40s and started dozens of churches over the next 20 years. When he informed his employer that he was going to quit his job, his employer offered him over a million dollars to stay with the company for another two years. Jean responded, "My Lord has called, and I must follow!"

His insights in the gospel and how to apply texts to individuals and audience motivated me to double my effort to know the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Gospel Sermons from the
Old Testament



“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” – 1 Timothy 3:16

1. The Protoevangelium

GENESIS 3:15



Figure 1:
Freepik

The *protoevangelium* is the mother promise of all prophecy which contains the coming of the Messiah and the crushing of the anti-god forces of history.

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

The "I" is God. The "thee" is a reference to the serpent and the spirit behind the serpent, Satan himself. The woman is Eve, Israel, and Mary the mother of Christ all rolled into one.

"*Thy seed*" refers to evil men, the anti-God, anti-Logos, anti-Christ forces and all its political forms that arise during history. The "seed" of the serpent is "Cain," "Nimrod," Babylon, Jezebel, Athaliah, Assyria, Rome and its scorpion children. "Her seed" is the Son of God, the son of Mary, the Christ-child, the Logos of the Greeks and the Messiah of Israel.

The term "*bruise*" refers to injury, wounds, and a crushing defeat. Before us is the imagery of man crushing the head of the serpent with his foot. God is telling us that a Champion will be born among men, the seed of a woman, who will smash Satan, reverse the effects of eating the fruit from the Poisonous Tree, and cleanse the planet of evil.

The phrase "*thou shalt bruise his feet*" is a reference to an injurious, serpent-smashing Champion will be wounded in the confrontation between good and evil. We know this Champion as Christ, and the wounds he received at the cross.

All of prophecy is about the conflict between good and evil, the kingdom of God v. the kingdom of darkness, Christ and Satan, God's children and the Devil's seed, true Israel and the anti-God forces.

All prophecy tells one truth: the wicked will be crushed and destroyed and God's children will be saved by the woman's Seed, the Prince of Peace, the Son of God, the Arm of the Lord, the Messiah of Israel, and the Christ of God. This is the protoevangelium, the first Gospel!

2. The Gospel of Abel -- the First Prophet

Luke 11:50-51; Genesis 4



Figure Freepik

We are living in an age where the West has accepted a form of syncretism - that all religions are equal. Theologically, it is called omnism – the belief that all religions are good and true even though they contradict one another.

While religions may share similar ethics like do not kill and do not steal, there is a huge difference between Christianity

and the pagan religions of the world.

We would do well to learn the message **Abel, the first prophet**, announced to mankind (Luke 11:50-51).

"That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation."

PROPHET ABEL HAS A MESSAGE FOR MANKIND

- Cain and able were both born sinners.
- Cain and able were brothers in the same fallen family.
- Both needed a right standing with the LORD God.

Cain brought beans, broccoli, and berries, the hard earned fruits of his labor to God, to atone for his sins, but the LORD was nonplussed by his offering.

Abel brought blood as payment for his debt and God accepted his offering.

Abel proclaimed a truth to all mankind: Men are sinners in debt to God . . . that Adam's race can only be redeemed by blood . . . that blood speaks to God . . . that God values blood sacrifice . . .that blood is the currency of the spirit world . . . that Messiah is coming Who will shed His precious blood for the sins of men (Matthew 1:21; John 1:29; Hebrews 9-10).

THERE ARE ONLY TWO RELIGIONS IN THE WORLD.

The religions of Cain offers the fruits of man's labors to God: beans, broccoli, and berries -- a faith in human works -- a religion of what man must DO to be accepted by God.

The religion of Abel offers blood as an atonement for sin . . . blood as payment for sin -- a faith in the blood sacrifice of Christ -- a religion of what God has DONE in Christ to redeem believing man!

The religion of Cain instructs men to define their own good; to be good; and do good in order to be accepted by God. Religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Judaism, and Islam are modern products of the religion of Cain.

The religion of Abel believes that God a holy and just . . . that He can only be propitiated by blood -- not your blood, but the blood of an innocent sacrifice; that blood is the payment God requires blood for man's sin. Christianity is the direct derivative of the religion of Abel. The religion of Abel (Christianity) and religion is a bloody religion that demanded animals sacrifice in the temple to propitiate this holy God. It is a faith that advances the proposition that full payment for sin's debt was made by the shed blood of "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

(Note: modern Judaism does not believe in blood sacrifice. A modern Jew will tell you to "Live a holy and righteous life dedicated to Yahweh, the God of Creation. Fast, worship, and celebrate during the appropriate holidays."¹)



THERE IS POWER IN THE BLOOD

Of what interest is vegetables or silver and gold to a Living Spirit? Every voodoo doctor in New Orleans knows that "*blood is the currency of the spirit world; that blood attracts the spirits.*"

And, so it is with the Christian religion: "*without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness*" (Hebrews 9:22).

Blood is the currency of the spiritual world and blood speaks to God. The blood of Abel's lamb shouted out for pardon. The blood of Abel cried out for vengeance. And, the blood of Christ thunders forgiveness for trusting sinners.

Hebrews 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Genesis 4:10 And he said, . . . the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

¹ How do I achieve salvation according to Judaism?" "*How do I achieve salvation according to Judaism?*". Archived from the original on 2013-07-04. Retrieved 2013-05-04. Accessed: 4 May 2013.

Not all blood matters . . . but the payment of innocent blood (Jesus the Lamb) for sin discharges debt to a holy God.

If you want to get God's attention, forget your petty, puny, peddling goodness upon which you may rely in approaching the Creator.

Rely upon the shed blood of Christ; that is, "understand" or "stand under" the blood of Christ as tender for your debt to God.

Consider the Exodus story where the Israelites swabbed blood on the door post of their homes notifying the death angel (a debt collector) their sin was discharged by the death of the lamb. (Exodus 10-12).

GOD LOVES CLEAN

God is holy; man is a sinner. What can a sinner do to cleanse his soul? What liquid detergent can remove the stain of sin? Will fasting or meditation or alms purify the heart? Oh, that it was that simple. But, it isn't.

There is no religious practice that can zero out man's debt! There is no detergent in the world that can sanitize the heart but the blood of Christ. His payment in blood satisfies the claims of a holy God against man's debt and cleanses the conscience of man.

Revelation 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Revelation 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

If your sins are screaming and condemning you while conveying a message that you are not worthy to pray, then claim the deafening, intense, emphatic, ringing, roaring cries of the blood of Christ shed on your behalf.

Hebrews 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . .

For "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

(Note: if the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin what does that leave good works, prayer, saying the Rosary, fasting, and alms giving to cleanse?

In summary, there are only two religions in the world, the religion of beans, broccoli, and berries, or the religion of blood. Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism et al. follow the way of Cain. Only Christianity follows the way of Abel, the religion of blood (1 John 1:5; Hebrews 12:24).

So, if your sins are troubling you, HEAR Abel the prophet! God accepts men when they trust in the shed blood of God's lamb.

But, if you trust in your vegetables (your works) and your religious worthiness, God will not hear you! All religions are not the same nor are they different paths to the same God. There is only one way to God and that path is stained with blood.

Blood is the currency of the spirit world . . . and it is the tender God accepts in exchange for souls . . . the locus standi for sinners who seek His acceptance and His blessing.

There is something about the blood of Christ and faith in His sacrifice that has power before the Judge of all men.

*Would you be free from your burden of sin?
There's power in the blood, power in the blood;
Would you o'er evil a victory win?
There's wonderful power in the blood.
There is power, power, wonder-working power,
In the blood of the Lamb;
There is power, power, wonder-working power,
In the precious blood of the Lamb.*

There is power in the blood. Blood speaks! It is the one voice God hears.

If you hear and heed the message of the first prophet in the Bible, God will hear you.

3. The Gospel of Abraham

Justification by Faith



Before us is a man who had “lifted up his hand to the LORD God Most High, Creator of Heaven and Earth” and his justification before Him (Genesis 14:22).

Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Meaning of the term "Justification"

The words *justified* and *righteous* are from the same Greek word (*dikaiosis*, a noun; *dikaios*, an adjective). When used as a noun, *dikaiosis* can be translated justification or righteous or righteousness. When used as a verb, *dikaio* can be translated “to make righteous,” “declare righteous,” or “to justify.”

Justification is a judicial, forensic term. That is, it is a legal word associated with courts of law. In the Biblical sense, it is a word associated with one’s standing in God’s court. In America’s courts a man is declared “guilty” or “not guilty;” but, in God’s court a man was declared “righteous” or “guilty” (*hupdikos*) which means “under judgment” (Romans 3:19).

The gospel can come to us in the horticultural model (vine and branches), or the pastoral model (shepherd and sheep), or the human-relations model (forgiveness and reconciliation), or the biological model (the new birth), or the sanctuary model (propitiation), or the medical model (healing), but Paul uses **the legal model** (justification v. guilty) to explain salvation in Romans.

Justification is an eschatological word. That is, it is associated with the judgment of God. Since it is appointed to man once to die and after this the judgment (Hebrews 10:27), and since God’s judgment is an event associated with the Eschaton (Revelation 20:10ff, justification is an eschatological concept.

Justification is a biblical term primarily discussed in the Book of Romans, Paul’s legal treatise on the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16).

Justification is opposite that of “condemnation” (*katakrima* = a sentence of damnation) (Romans 5:16). It has to do with one’s standing in a court of law. Once the verdict is passed, one will either be condemned or justified. The judicial verdict (justified) remains distinct from inner healing (regeneration).

Justification does not mean “just-as-if-I-had-never-sinned,” or “to be made into an innocent person.” This would place a man on the ground of Adam making it possible to fall from grace. A state of innocence is not desirable because it is only a matter of time before the innocent sins again.

Justification does not mean “to be forgiven” or “to be pardoned.” Forgiveness is the cancellation of debts. While a sinner does need to have his debts pardoned, he needs much more. He needs righteousness deposited into his account.

Justification does not mean “just-as-if-I-had-died.” This cute aphorism implies freedom from punishment via substitution. Justification is less about substitution and more about imputation. It is not so much about punishment of sin as it about the gift of positive righteousness.

Justification does not mean “to be put on probation.” Violation of probation can cause one to be placed back under the penal system. What is needed for the sinner is not probation but justification.

Justification does not mean “to be born again” or “to be regenerated.” Regeneration is a creative act, while justification is a legal act—a verdict, a decree, a judicial decision, a Court order. Regeneration and justification must be seen as two distinct effects of the gospel.

Justification does not mean “to be made holy.” Justification is not an ontological(1) quality or a personal attribute; it is a forensic declaration. We must make a distinction between the work of Christ for us, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us. To fail to preserve a distinction between justification by Christ’s substitutionary work for us and the sanctifying work of the Spirit in us confuses the gospel with law, and the righteous of the Creator with the righteousness of man.

Justification or “righteousness” does not mean “godliness.” Justification does not change the object to satisfy the Court, but it does change how the Court regards the object. What is changes is status, not being.

Justification is not pitted against law. While a person is not saved by "law keeping," justification places the believer in right standing to law to the God of the law. It is because Christ kept the law, God is able to justify the believer. And, once justified, the sinner is then given His Spirit so he has the power to keep the law (Romans 8:4).

Justification does not mean to make righteous. Andreas Osiander, the German pastor who opposed Luther, contended that God must make a man righteous so he can declare a man righteous. He proposed that Christ indwells the believer with His divine righteousness then proceeds to make him righteous. If such be the case, the question is, “how good do I have to become in order to be justified?” Such a system is slavery, and it binds a man to sycophant service to God. Justification means that a person has a righteous standing in a court of law, not that he is made righteous in order to be declared righteous (Cited by Verdict, Vol. 2, No. 6, p. 12).

Justification is not the same as sanctification. While sanctification follows justification, imputed righteousness is distinct from imparted righteousness. External justification must not be confounded with inner transformation.

Justification is a forensic term, i.e., a legal averment pertaining to the courts. It comes from the Latin word *forensia* and means “before the forum” or “before the bar.” It is a declaration by a court that an accused has a right standing in the sight of the law. Justify (*dikaiw,sei, dikaioo*) means “to show to be righteous,” “or to put into a right relationship with God.” It is an action of the court (Deuteronomy 25:1). The positive side of justification is to “be declared righteous.” The negative side of the judicial decision is *unimputed* sin or to be declared condemned (Deuteronomy 32:1, 2).

Definition

Theologically, justification means to be declared righteous by a court of law. Furthermore, the believer needs to understand that just as our sins were imputed to Christ, His righteousness is imputed to us who believe.

*Justification, therefore, is the judicial act of God whereby *He declares a man righteous and treats him as such.*

Biblically speaking, it is important to understand that the court’s declaration of “justification” does **not** change the object to satisfy the demands of law, **but** it does change how the object is regarded in the eyes of the law. While *regeneration* creates a change in character and is an act of a Father, *justification* changes one’s status by an act of a Judge. The renewal of regeneration, which follows justification, must **not** be confounded with justification.

Luther reasoned:

A capuchin says: wear a gray coat and a hood, a rope round thy body, and sandals on thy feet. A cordelier says: put on a black hood; an ordinary papist says: do this or that work, hear mass, pray, fast, give alms, etc. But a true Christian says: I am justified and saved only by faith in Christ, without any works or merits of my own; compare these together, and judge which is the true righteousness (306). (Luther)

The Formula of Concord (1577) put it this way:

Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach, and confess unanimously, in accordance with the comprehensive summary of our faith and confession presented above, that poor sinful man is justified before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins, and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and adopted into sonship and heirship of eternal life, without any merit or worth of our own, also without any preceding, present, or any subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness (Article III, no. 9).

The Justification of Abraham

In Genesis 15 Abraham was scared spitless that the five marauding kings he defeated in his rescue of Lot would return and retaliate against his household. Wanting assurance of God's favor, he prayed. Here Abraham received an answer from the High Court of Heaven. God gave him a verdict. Abraham believed God and the Judge declared him judicially righteous in his sight. What a blessing! What a comfort! What revelation!

Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

The declaration was a comfort to Abraham, but it immediately raises the question: What if I blow it? What if I sin in the future? How will God treat me?

Justification encompasses more than being declared righteous; *it also involves being treated as righteous by the Court.*

In Genesis 20, we see how God treated Abraham when he deceived an eastern prince. When Abimelech, King of Gerar, eyed Sarah and sought to procure her for his harem, Abraham instructed Sarah to say, "I am the sister of Abraham." Such a strategy was designed to keep powerful kings from assassinating Abraham in order to take Sarah as a wife. Governments often use intimidation and coercion to obtain what they want. Out of fear and weakness, Abraham lied to protect Sarah(1), and Abimelech, out of ignorance, took Sarah into his harem. A man does not owe the truth to an abuser of truth. From the story we learn that Abraham deliberately, consciously misled the king. Abimelech believed Sarah and innocently took her into his harem. But . . .

- It was Abimelech who was judged, not Abraham.
- It was Abimelech who was rebuked, not Abraham.
- It was Abimelech who was in danger of capital punishment, not Abraham.
- It was Abimelech whose life was in danger, not Abraham.
- It was Abimelech's household that needed healing, and not Abraham's.
- It was Abimelech who needed prayer, not Abraham.
- It was Abraham who prayed for Abimelech's healing.
- From this Biblical story we learn that when God declares a man righteous, he also treats him as such!! Selah!

The gospel of Abraham is that to be right with God, one must believe him; and, if one believes Him, he will have a right standing with God and be treated as a righteous man.

The New Testament put it this way:

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God

through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Want a right standing with God? Investigate Calvary; discern what happened there; and believe it.

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido

(1) Abraham lied to Abimelech, but God did not condemn him for it. No one owes the truth to a tyrant who will abuse the truth.

(1) Ontology (from onto-ὄντος or "being; that which is," present participle of the verb εἶμι "be"-logia: the philosophical study of the nature of being, of existence, of reality.

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theology)

4. Christ, Our Passover Lamb

*"Christ our Passover **is** sacrificed for us"*

Exodus 12



"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are

unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" - 1 Corinthians 5:7

How do you prepare the world to receive the wonders of Christ and the glories of His accomplishments at Calvary?

One way God did it was by instituting the feasts of Israel, namely the Passover, to commemorate not only Israel's stunning redemption from slavery in Egypt, but to shadow the achievements of God's true Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ (Exodus 12).

Before us is a family feast, not a temple sacrament. The head of the family led the service, not a priest.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron . . ." (12:1):

Moses and Aaron represent Israel's civil and ecclesiastic authority.

The Passover was not something created by man for man. The Lord instituted the feast because of His sovereignty and love. Obeying the instructions given for the Passover saved the nation. Because God instructed His people on the means of salvation, this chapter ought to be of tremendous interest to us as it is a mammoth illustration of the wonders of Christ and the glories of His accomplishments at the cross effecting our salvation.

Moreover, the Passover became a pivotal sacrament that not only saved the nation, but the memorialization of the Passover became a landmark festival in the life of the nation – a festival that found its perfection in the cross and remembrance of Christ during the Breaking of the Bread (1 Corinthians 11:17ff).

“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months . . . to you” (12:2):

The Passover was so revolutionary it became the “birthday” of the nation. What Independence Day (July 4th) is to Americans, the 14th of Nisan became to Israel. It marked the birth of a nation, their deliverance from tax slavery and serfdom, and their march to freedom in the Holy Land.

As the month of Nisan was the beginning of the religious calendar of the Hebrews (Exodus 12:3), the coming of Christ is the beginning of Christian history – all history is viewed as BC or AD; and, individual Christians view their own history as one before they knew Christ (BC), and the one they enjoy after coming to know Him (AD). He is the beginning of eternal life for believers.

As the Passover commemorated Israel’s redemption from slavery in Egypt, the Lord’s Supper commemorates the believer’s redemption through faith in God’s Lamb and His sacrifice at Calvary.

The Passover was the first feast out of seven during the Hebrew year. These national holidays were called the “feasts of the Lord” (Leviticus 23:4). These feasts find their ultimate fulfillment at the cross which are commemorated at the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23ff).

“On In the tenth day of this month . . . ” (12:3):

Just as each household selected a lamb on the 10th day of Nisan to protect them from the death plague in Egypt, Christ is the selected lamb of God to save believers from the judgment to come.

(Note: Christ rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (the 10th of Nisan), and was killed four days later on Wednesday, the 14th of Nisan.

Matthew 1:21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

*John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,
“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

“ . . . they shall take (choose) to them every man a lamb” (12:3):

God charged the man, the head of the home, with the duty of protecting his family.

Just as each family chose a lamb as a substitute for the firstborn to protect the people in the house, Christians have chosen the Lamb of God as their Savior and Redeemer (John 1:10-13; Matthew 11:29; John 5:24).

(Note: Though there were many lambs chosen during the Exodus event, there is only ONE Lamb in the mind of God. The word “lamb” is always in the singular, never in the plural. Likewise, there is only one Lamb in history that can save sinners . . . only one currency . . . only one way to God . . . but, there are many ways to hell.)



Figure 2: Freepik

The text says, ***“If the household be too small . . .”*** (12:4). It does **not** say, ***“If the lamb is too small.”*** This little detail informs us of the sufficiency of the Lamb of God and the power of the blood to save believers from all sin (1 John 1:7).

We are not saved by our works, but His works; not by our sweat and blood, but by His shed blood. Our obedience to God’s law beautifies us, but it does not add to salvation.

There is a lamb sufficient to save a man (Genesis 4); a lamb sufficient to save a family (Exodus 12); a lamb sufficient to save a nation (Leviticus 16); and “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

“Your lamb (seh) shall be without blemish . . . ” (12:5):

Just as the exodus lamb had to be healthy and whole, the Lamb of God was without blemish. He had no sin, did no sin, and knew no sin.

1 Peter 1:19 (NASB) but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB) He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

“ . . . a male of the first year . . . ” (12:5):

Just as the Passover lamb had to be a male, as the stronger of the two sexes, Jesus was a man’s man, powerful in virtue, and the strongest of the strong in moral courage.

Taking a lamb “in its youth” emphasizes strength and health. The focus on youthfulness and the male gender instructed Israel that salvation had to be won by a Champion among us, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“ . . . ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:” (12:5):

It mattered not whether the Passover sacrifice was a lamb or goat. Both are small little creatures known for their harmless and pet-like qualities.

Just as the sacrifice could be taken from among sheep or goats, Christ was chosen because He was harmless and pure. Though there are a great number of biological differences between sheep and goats, these animals were chosen because of their humble, gentle nature. These sensitive grass grazers represent Him Who is “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29).

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month . . .” (12:6):

Just as the chosen Passover lamb was tested for four days, our Lord was scrutinized by the eyes of an entire nation for any moral blemish that might surface under testing.

Jesus is the unblemished Lamb of God. “*This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased,*” declared the Father (Luke 3:22). Three courts arraigned Jesus: the Court of the Sanhedrin; the Court of Herod; and the Court of Rome: All three declared there was no probable cause to have Him arrested. Pilate announced three times, “I find no fault in this man” (John 18:38; 9:4; 9:6).

Just as the lamb was chosen on the 10th day and watched until the 14th day (12:6), our Lord was tested forty days in the wilderness by Satan. Further, our Lord was intensely questioned and tested by the leaders of the nation from the 10th of Nissan (Passover Sunday) until the 14th of Nissan (Wednesday Passover week) wherein no lawful accusation could be brought against Him.

“ . . . and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it . . . ” (12:6):

Each man was charged with choosing a lamb to satisfy the claims of Divine justice, but the whole assembly was charged with executing the lamb. Notice the singular “*it.*” Though there were many lambs slain that evening, there is only One Lamb in the eyes of God — a Lamb sufficient to save the whole nation (John 1:29).

Just as the whole congregation is seen as the agent of death, there is a sense in which all humanity is responsible for the death of our Lord. Further, like Israel chose the Passover lamb as their chosen substitute, the People of God have chosen Christ as their Representative (1 Timothy 2:5).

Just as the typical Passover lamb was slain at evening between 3:00-6:00 PM on the 14th of Nissan, our Lord, the true Lamb of God (the archetype), died on the cross at the ninth hour (3:00 PM) as Jews were preparing for the iconic Passover meal on Wednesday evening (Mark 15:34).

“And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses . . . ” (12:7):

In the east, many nations provide “food offerings” to the gods. The Hindus call these offerings “*prasadam*” which means “mercy.”

The Hindus say the only offerings acceptable to the gods are vegetarian offerings. But, what value are vegetables to a spirit being? Offering veges to God to atone for sins is like offering an American a skillet full of cockroaches for breakfast. You’d be better off accusing a cowboy of wearing panties than insulting God with potatoes, peas, and pears.

But, blood? Hindus follow the “*way of Cain*” (Jude 11), but Christians follow the religion of Abel, the first prophet in the Bible (Luke 11:50-51; Hebrews 9:22).

If witch doctors in New Orleans understand blood attracts the spirits. For this reason eat chicken hearts and add blood to their juju ceremonies. How much more should Christians “under stand” (stand under) the importance of blood in the Bible? True Christianity is a very bloody religion.

The Passover drilled into Israel the crimson truth that only the blood of an unblemished, male lamb had the power to protect the men and women from the judgment of Almighty God.

Note that blood splattering on the door posts formed the sign of the cross like the sign of the cross over the heart practiced by devout Catholics — a sacred custom devout Protestants would do well to restore.

The ***blood on the door*** posts meant that everyone in the house was purchased with blood currency, redeemed to God, and taken off death row (judgment). The lamb and its blood on the doorpost was sufficient to save everyone in the house (12:4), just as the Lamb of God is sufficient to save everyone who trusts in Him. Like the blood on the doorpost protected everyone within from the death angel, the blood-marked believer is protected from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonian 5:9).

Though hearts may have trembled and knees buckled as they heard the death screams during the night, those under the blood were safe. Oh, to believe this and to enjoy the benefits of our Lord’s salvation! Blood makes us safe. Faith makes us rest in peace.

“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it ” (12:8).

As Israel ate the Passover Lamb, Christians are strengthened by ruminating on the wonders of Christ and the glories of His accomplishments.

How much of the lamb could the individual Israelite eat? It all depended on the hunger of the person. Likewise, today! How much a person learns about Christ

depends on his spiritual appetite. The Lamb is never too small, but the people's hunger for Him may be too little. Beware of what you desire, for you will become the sum total of your hungers.

Generally speaking, there is nothing more painful than third-degree burns. As Israel roasted the lamb, let us never forget that our Savior felt the full outpouring of the blistering, sizzling, thermal wrath of God for our sins at the cross.

As the Passover meal was eaten with unleaven bread (the *matstzah*), only those who repent of their sins and reject the leaven of this world can enjoy fellowship with the Son. Leaven is an appropriate symbol for sin and its synergy among men. Those who seek fellowship with the Lord must throw out the leaven and focus their joys on the delights found in the kingdom of God.

In commemorating the Passover, the LORD instructed His people to do a "spring cleaning" and to purge all leaven out of their homes before they celebrated the Passover Festival (12:19-20) — a lesson on the necessity of Christians identifying sin and forsaking it on a weekly basis so they do not partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:28-29).

American Christians like to boast about what they gained in becoming a Christian, but few talk about what they lost when they believed in Christ. True Christianity involves loses of all leaven (the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the love of the world).

In contrast to other sacrifices which either a part or whole was burned or offered to God, the whole Passover lamb, excepting the blood, was to eaten by the people; that is, each family member could enjoy as much of the Passover lamb as he desired. Barnes adds this perspective:

"Our Lord was offered and His blood shed as an expiatory and propitiatory sacrifice, but His whole Humanity is transfused spiritually and effectually into His Church, an effect which is at once symbolized and assured in holy communion, the Christian Passover."

As Israel ate the Passover with bitter herbs (*maror*) to reflect on the bitterness of slavery and Egypt, believers celebrate the Lord's Supper reflecting on the bitterness that sin causes humanity.

"Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance (intestines) thereof (12:9):"

God designed the Passover feast to be a delightful family meal as a pedagogic tool to educate family members about the wonders of redemption.

God instructed the redeemed not to eat a half-roasted lamb or one boiled in a pot of water.

The lesson for Christians is that communion with Christ involves exploration of cross and the intense suffering our Lord had to go through in order to obtain salvation for his people. He did not die half-way, nor was He given an anesthetic to reduce His pain at the cross. Who can fully appreciate the bitter spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical agony the holy Savior endured as the sin-bearer at the old rugged cross?

I am reminded of the farmer who went to his farm animals seeking a donation for a ham and egg breakfasts for his friends. The farmer went to a hen and asked her to donate some eggs. She did. When he came to the pig, the pig said, "Mr. Farmer, it was nice of the chicken to donate her eggs for your breakfast, but for me the commitment means total sacrifice!"

Jesus did not donate anything to salvation, He made a total sacrifice to save you and me.

God instructed the people to eat the whole lamb for strength in the journey ahead. Likewise, we need to ruminate on all the wonders of Christ and the glories of His redemption in order to endure the Pilgrim journey across Jordan's River to the City of God.

"And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S Passover (peccah)" (12:10):

"loins girded" and "shoes on the feet" and "staff in hand" refers to Israel's readiness to walk out of Egypt with their bags packed. Redemption is God's "ticket out of Dodge" sort of speak; Redeemed, the pilgrim Christians makes his exit out of Sodom and Gomorrah, out of the world, away from the Poisonous Tree. He leaves the island of chains and shackles on a journey to the Promise Land by faith in His Redeemer (Colossians 1:13-14).

"eat it in haste:" The Christian journey is hard; the path narrow; and the crossing difficult. What will sustain the weary pilgrim? The strength for this departure from slave masters in Egypt toward freedom in Christ comes from "eating" the Passover lamb – imagery of ruminating on, and remembering the wonders of Christ and His accomplishments at Calvary.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD (12:12):

As the Passover meant salvation for Israel and judgment for the Egyptians, the cross of Christ announces redemption for the believer and condemnation for the Christ-rejecter (John 3:36).

When the LORD executed judgment on Egypt and saw the blood on the doorposts, He passed over those under the blood. But, he took the life of the

firstborn in every home that relied on their false gods to protect them. The Passover is not only a lesson on salvation by blood, but a lesson on the tragedy of false religions and their false hopes.

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt (12:13):

The emphasis on blood informs us that blood is the currency of the spirit world, the tender for redemption from sin and death.

There are only two religions: the religion of Cain who sought to purchase salvation with beans, beat, and broccoli, and Abel who redeemed his soul with blood.

Of what interest are corn and tomatoes, silver and gold, to a holy Spirit? Christianity treasures the blood of Christ as it insists that salvation is not by human works, but due to our Lord shedding His precious blood at Calvary (1 Peter 1:18-19).

“And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever (12:21):

The command of the LORD to the *“congregation of Israel”* (12:3) commemorating the Passover / exodus (12:21) typified the Lord’s command to His people regarding the Lord’s Supper: *“Do this in remembrance of me.”*

The rest of this chapter contains profitable instructions about how Israel was to institutionalize the Passover Feast to commemorate God’s protection of those under the blood, and their journey out of Egypt. Lessons to be transferred to the communion service of the church.

Thus, the Passover secured the nation’s protection from God’s judgment on Egypt. It prepared the nation to receive the wonders of the True Passover Lamb and the glories of His accomplishments at Calvary. Blood on the door meant the house was safe; trust in the blood of Christ saves the soul.

5. But, He Was a Leper

2 Kings 5:1

*The Truth **About** Human Nature*



2 Kings 5:1 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper.

Due to the prolific writings of the lawless French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), American institutions have adopted the idealistic view that man is good; that evil is not within man, but in the environment: poverty, parenting, negative experiences, etc. Theologians call this view “environmentalism.”

Parading psychologist after psychologist before the courts, the wards of the judiciary seems to be tenaciously committed to identifying the environmental factors that contribute to a specific crimes. Consequently, Americans lean toward excusing serious errors made by people because the “experts” in society blame the negative circumstances coeval with reprehensible acts. But, Christianity is not built on the sands of idealism. It advances a realistic view of man. Let’s illustrate by taking a look at Namaan the leper. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Kings 5:1 and notice the phrase, “but, he was a leper.”

Before continuing with our theme, notice the six statements about this historical figure—and the only man in the Old Testament that found a remedy for leprosy.

Naaman was a general in the Syrian Army; and, he was a great man in the nation’s hierarchy of power; and, he was highly esteemed and well-favored by the king of Syria; and, God gave him success in battle even against apostate Israel; and, he was a man of valor; i.e., he possessed all those attributes that make a great soldier: strength, courage, skill, decisiveness.

What else could a man want in this world? Namaan seemed to have it all—power, prestige, success, wealth, fame, and respect. He was the envy of all men. But, the Holy Scripture informs us he had a fly in his buttermilk that soured his life—he was the victim of a debilitating, incurable disease: “*he was a leper.*” Who can fully understand the conflicting emotions at work in his soul? Such a condition no doubt robbed him of joy and cast a dark shadow over his future. He had it all, but being a leper, he had nothing!

Namaan’s condition of leprosy is a Scriptural picture of what ALL MEN are by nature. Leprosy in the Bible is not only a horrible, incurable disease but a fitting symbol of man’s sinful, wretched, corrupt, defiled nature—that is, of man’s total depravity. Instead of being born a sweet, little angel, man is born a moral leper; that is, sin infects and corrupts all that man touches throughout his miserable life. Notice the following texts:

Psalm 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Psalm 39:5 Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

Luke 18:19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

Romans 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Romans 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

The Scripture flatters no one. It does not transgress the truth by idealizing mankind as some kind of chocolate factory bursting with sweetness. Yes, man is born in the “image of God” with capacities for great achievements, but the Bible tells us the truth that man in his best state is a sinner– cracked and flawed “*being alienated from the life of God*” (Ephesians 4:18). Contrast this thought with Mencius, a Confucian philosopher:

Mencius argues that human nature is good.(27)(24)(28) He understands human nature as the innate tendency to an ideal state that’s expected to be formed under the right conditions.(29) Therefore, humans have the capacity to be good, even though they are not all good.(29) (“Human Nature in Chinese Thought” - 1988 International Wittgenstein Symposium)

God’s law required a leper to rend his clothes, to cover his face, and to cry out in public “*Unclean, unclean.*” That is, he was not allowed to disguise and camouflage his condition. No masks allowed! He had to live and speak the awful truth. No physician had the cure. No remedy was provided for this horrible disease in the Mosaic Law. No instructions were given to the priests to assist healing. The leper was simply examined, pronounced unclean, excluded from the community, and left to the consignment of God. Whether the leper was healed or not, lived or died, was wholly decided by the LORD God.

Applications

1. The Scripture lays upon us the duty of speaking truth about ourselves and others. Instead of painting idealistic, dreamy pictures of human nature, God calls us to be real and truthful about men – man in his best state is wholly a sinner with a bias and bent to pursue evil. Like the leper, there is no remedy for sin apart from the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in history. God must

save. Man is wholly incapable of improving his condition. Man cannot legislate healing. Only by the grace of God can any man hope for a sinner's cure.

Even the best businessman or politician or stock broker is corrupt and flawed; that is, we are not to trust men until they prove they are trustworthy. We are not to be fooled by blue suits and sophistry; or advertisers who sell only the positive side of a product; or business men who are over optimistic; or politicians who say "read my lips. No new taxes," or teenagers who have an innate attraction to mischief. Victims are people who showed good faith to criminals.

There is good news in our story. God finds Naaman and gives him a solution to his wretched condition. A captured Hebrew maid tells Namaan that there is a man of God with the power of God in Israel that can cure his leprosy. Introduced to Elisha, Namaan is instructed to dip himself seven times in the River Jordan in order to be clean. He does, and Naaman is miraculously healed of his disease.

Now there is nothing medicinal or magical about the River Jordan. It can't wash away sin any more than it can wash away leprosy.

The lesson to idolatrous Namaan was that there is only one true God, the God of Israel.

Just as healing could not be found in any of the rivers of Syria, salvation cannot be found in the religions of the world. Only Jesus can save a man from his sin, and when he does, "*he saves to the uttermost that come to God by him*" (Hebrews 7:25).

2. Man is a moral leper. Sin has infected the body, the mind, the will, and the heart of mankind. He is totally incapable of healing himself. He needs the power of Another.

Isaiah 1:6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

While mankind progresses technologically, the nature of humanity does not change: "*for all have sinned and falls short of the glory of God.*" Because he is made in the image of God, he can make great technological advances. But, he remains a moral leper. Sin is always at work in man corrupting conduct and relationships. He cannot change himself. He can't even make the right choices because of his bent and bias towards sin. He needs a savior. And, the good news of the Bible is *that God sent His Son to save His people from their sins* (Matthew 1:21). Christ can save to the uttermost! The answer to sin is not in the religions of the world or on top of some mountain in Tibet. The answer to moral leprosy is in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first

miracle in Matthew is that Christ cleansed a leper; that is, Israel's true King cured the impossible. "If you will, you can make me clean," announced the leper. He did! And, what Christ did for the leper, he can do for you and me. He can save us from sin and do it "to the uttermost."

Enough of this nonsense that man is good; that evil is in the environment! Men are moral lepers, but there is a Savior who can cleans men. Speak truth, and the truth shall set you free.

Part II

The Rest of the Story

"My Times are in Your Hand"

Psalm 31:15; 2 Kings 5:1

2 Kings 5:2 And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.



Figure 3: Freepik

Do you ever feel like things are out of control; that your ship is adrift on the North Sea without a rudder?

With terrors on every side, David stated, "*My times are in Your Hand*" (Psalm 31:15).

Let's turn in our Bible to 2 Kings 5:1 and look at the hand of providence in the life of a little girl whose life was turned

upside down by what we would call "a great tragedy."

We know this story as the Healing of Naaman, the leper.

Let us consider the political upheaval in her life and the hand of God over her circumstances in this story.

Consider the circumstances of our story.

This little girl was taken captive by Naaman, the great general of Syria, and abducted into service as a maidservant to his wife.

Apostate Israel under the judgment of God, He employed Syria as the rod of His chastisement.

We learn that though Namaan was well respected and a great man in Syria, he was stricken with leprosy, an incurable disease. God had this maid in his hands, and He graciously placed her in Naaman's service to witness to Namaan regarding His prophet Elisha and a potential cure under his instruction.

Consider the human tragedy of this event.

One day the girl was having breakfast with her family when she heard the screams of villagers and the pounding hoof beats of horses. Running hither and thither, women screamed, children cried, goats bleated! Syrian looters broke into her home, ripped her away from her parents while snatching all the valuables they could grab.

Carried out of her village, she was bound and forced marched back to Syria. Huddled together with a few others, she was among the spoils of war in a foreign land among aliens speaking a strange language. General Namaan chose the maid as a servant for his household.

Think of the human tragedy: A home desolated; parents broken and stricken with terror and grief; villagers dealing with their own grief; and the stunning shock and fear that invaded this little girl's heart. Just imagine the whole painful event.

And, God? Where was He?

Consider the spiritual confusion that must have erupted due to these events.

Oh, the terror and doubt that must have tested the girl and her family. The parents must have prayed and asked God a hundred times for the safe return of their daughter. No doubt the little girl squeaked out prayers of her own. Imagine how helpless they must have felt.

Where was God in this whole affair?

Consider the legal and political impotence of the Israelites.

The little girl's family were not millionaires that could buy back their kidnapped daughter. They were not a trained militia or navy seals possessing the capacity to organize a stealth operation to retrieve the captives. They were not politicians that had international leverage. She was just a little girl, and her own government could have cared less . . . and they were not going to go to war against the Syrians to retrieve a young child and a few captives over a border dispute.

Why the tragedy? Why the kidnapping? Why our village? Why now? Why the dagger of pain in the heart of the parents--a bitterness they would be with them the rest of their lives? Why the shock . . . the anguish . . . the feeling of utter hopelessness?

And, we don't even know the name of this little girl.

Consider the only consolation available for our lives:

"My times are in your hand" (Psalm 31:15).

He "hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26).

Consider the will of God.

God, not man, controls the stormy seas of politics. The war, the border dispute, the military raid, the kidnapping, the terror, the dividing of spoil was all under the direction and supervision of the LORD God of Israel.

Consider the state of this little maid.

Her life was turned upside down by the raid, kidnapping, and human trafficking. She was sold as a slave. Yet, you don't get the idea she was bitter or resentful because her change in circumstances.

Her response is so different than American free blacks who great, great, great, great grandfathers were kidnapped by African blacks and sold as slaves to slave masters.

In fact, not only was she not eaten up with bitterness, she was moved with compassion toward her new slave mastery, leprous Namaan. She actually hoped the best for him.

I don't think this girl would understand why black athlete millionaire football players take a knee during the national anthem because they feel like victims of "white privilege," whatever that is.

Fortunately, this Hebrew girl wasn't forced to endure a lifetime of victimization training, propaganda, and indoctrination that women and free black people in America experience today.

Consider Divine Providence.

- In His providence, Namaan raided this particular village.
- In His providence, the Syrians captured this little girl--a girl of faith; a girl who had heard about Elisha; a girl who believed that there was a God in Israel who could do anything.
- In His providence, the little maid ended up in Namaan's house.
- In His providence, the little maid told her mistress about the powers of Elisha and expressed them with such faith that she believed and told her husband.
- In His providence, Namaan believed the little girl and went in search of a cure for his leprosy in the land of Israel.
- In His providence, Namaan obeyed Elisha; found healing; and came to know the truth about the God of Israel.

- In His providence, Namaan the Syrian, became the only recorded healing of leprosy in the Old Testament; and,
- In His providence, this story and the faith of this little Hebrew maid became part of Holy Scripture.
- In His providence the faith of this little girl came before kings to challenge their faith and knowledge of the Most High.
- In His providence the faith of this little girl would rebuke the skepticism and expose the madness of the king of Israel who ripped his clothes out of unbelief and frustration.

Though there is nothing in the text about "the rest of the story," it is reasonable to presume that there was much joy in Namaan's household following his recovery . . . and don't you think Namaan went to this girl and thanked her? I can see him showering her with thankfulness and gifts of appreciation. Further, she spent the rest of her service in the home of a true believer in the God of Israel.

Consider the language of our text.

"My times are in Your Hand" (Psalm 31:15)

The word "*times*" (*ayth*) refers to stages and events in our lives. It is first translated "evening" in Genesis 8:11; that is, the mornings and evenings of our life and everything in between is in His hands.

The word "*times*" (*ayth*) is translated "season" in Psalm 1:3; that is, the seasons of our life are in His hands: the seasons of childhood, youth, marriage, parenthood, and old age. The good times, the bad times, the hard times, the prosperous times including the famines and feasting, war and peace, sickness and health are in His hands.

A wealthy man once said to a preacher, "You seem to live from hand to mouth." The preacher responded, "Yes, but it's His hand and my mouth."

Consider the context of Psalm 31:3.

The psalmist is surrounded by enemies. He hears their slander and is even aware of plots to dethrone him. The seasons of our life, both good and bad, are "in his hands."

We are not victims of climate change . . . or even political change. All of these things are permitted by Him . . . and good things can come out of the worst of circumstances.

In conclusion, there is nothing more frightening than life's sudden reversals. In this case, the magnitude of being kidnapped, ripped out of one's family, and transported to another country is about a 9.0 on a spiritual rector scale. Few things could be worse.

Yet, in all of this, God was in control -- making good come out of evil (Romans 8:28).

Our problem is compounded, not only because negative things happen to us, but because we do not take sufficient comfort in the Scriptures.

Oh, that we might be able to say with the saints of old, "My times are in thy hand."

6. The Gospel in Psalm 2

The Command of the Spirit

"Kiss the Son All Ye Nation"



We live in times of political chaos where madmen grip the helm of government. Against the backdrop of surf and foam of political strife is the source of peace and prosperity. Before us is the reason for all political conflict in the world today, and the solution to every political problem in seed form.

The Psalmists Speaks

Psalm 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The word "why" is an interrogatory that can be translated "how" or "what" or "how much." It is a question asked for our benefit. The word "heathen" should be translated "nations." The word "go'em" is translated "people" and "nations" in Genesis 10:5. In Jewry, the term goy is a derogatory term for non-Jews, but that is not the case here. Jews are part of the rebellion.

The verb "rage" ("raqash") is only used here, and it means to be in "tumult" or "commotion." The psalmist is asking, "Why are the nations always in a furor, a frenzy, a constant state of irritation, full of madness and hostility? The word "imagine" is the imperfect Hebrew verb "hagah." It is translated "roar" or "moan" or "growl" in Isaiah 31:4 of a lion roaring over its prey. It is translated "plot" in the ESV and "meditate" in Psalm 1:2. The word "vain" is the Hebrew verb "reek," used adverbially. It is translated "armed" in the KJV and "led forth" in the ESV in Genesis 14:14. It is translated "the seven empty ears" blasted with east wind which is a reference to the seven years of famine in Genesis 41:27; and, "emptied their sack" in Genesis 42:35. The idea here is of kings "emptying theirs nets" of destruction and mercilessly killing people. We need only look at

the madness of the Bolsheviks, Lenin, Stalin and others to grasp the harvest of this rage against God.

Before us is the question of the ages. Why can't nations live in peace? Why are they always at war, always in an uproar, always existing in the surf and foam of the sea of conflict. As we listen to the news, it seems that there is always a regional dispute, a political debate, an infringement, a group of rebels protesting some perceived inequity, a nation in political chaos ravaged by civil war. Some nation somewhere is "emptying his net" aggressively shelling another country for power and wealth and revenge, or defending itself against rocket fire with weapons of mass destruction.

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

The kings have set themselves against the LORD. The name "LORD" is the tetragrammaton and clearly refers to God's sovereignty and authority. The title "anointed" is the Hebrew name for Messiah, mashiyach, meaning "anointed"--a reference to Christ, the Son of God.

Several facts about the verb "set" needs to be noticed. First, the verb "set" (tithyetsebu) is a Hebrew hithpael, reflexive verb; that is, the kings of the earth are stirring themselves up. The hostility clearly resides in the kings who are constantly declaring war against the LORD God; that is, they want to be gods among men and the only sovereigns on earth. Secondly, the verb "set" is in the emphatic position in the sentence and clearly emphasizes the intense, independent, rebellious nature of kings. The preposition "against" is properly translated, but could also be worded "upon" or "over" the LORD; that is, the kings of the earth have stationed themselves as masters over men, and they claim sovereignty over matters pertaining to the LORD God. The rulers of the earth do not recognize the authority of God and His Law-word over them. They see themselves as the only sovereign.

When Chief Justice Roy Moore placed the Ten Commandments in the corridor of the Alabama courthouse and explained that it represented the need of all Judges to surrender to the authority of the LORD God and His Law-word, the federal judge would have nothing to do with it. The Federal Court declared that, "the state may not acknowledge the sovereignty of the Judeo-Christian God" (morallaw.org).

Before us is a continuation of the question: "Why have the kings of the earth set themselves up as lords and masters in opposition to the sovereignty of God and His anointed King, the Lord Jesus Christ?"

The Rebellion Rulers

The Rulers of the Earth Speak

3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

Now the kings speak to one another. The Hebrew Piel, plural verb "*let us break*" is cohortive in form and meaning . . . and it is in the emphatic position. The Piel verb communicates intense determination to break from Puritan Christianity. Being in the emphatic position this verb clearly communicates the excessive vigor and profound madness of political leaders united in a new world order that incites rebellion against the Triune God and His law-order.

The term "*their bands*" is a feminine plural, a reference to the Trinity. "*Their*" would be a reference to the "*us*" of Genesis 1:26-28. The words "*bands*" and "*cords*" refer to chains or ropes that tether animals. These terms designate the Claim the Creator-God has on all the people of the earth. They are used metaphorically of the sovereignty of the LORD God and the absolute binding authority of His law over mankind.

The new world order encourages rebellion against the authority of Christ and His Law-word, and is hell-bent on bringing in a new world order to build the utopia of kings--wealth, power, and control of man's destiny.

Today, there are no kings who have taken an oath to the LORD God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to uphold His law and to honor Christ save one--the Queen of England. But, she has so violated her oath, she has committed treason against God and the British people. At best, kings take oaths to uphold the laws of man--which by the way, are almost always hostile to God's law-order.

Heaven's Reaction to the Rebellion

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

To an informed Christian the hostility of congressmen and our nation's leaders is like a burr under our saddle. We are constantly irritated and agitated by the insanity of our political leaders. Rightly so. Thus, we pray, "Hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come;"

How does God respond to the psychotic, sociopathic madness of kings? Well, He certainly isn't threatened by any . . . or all of them! "He laughs!" The term "*laugh*" (*shachaq*) is translated "to make sport of" in Judges 16:25. It is a term of contempt. The word "*derision*" (*la-ag*) means "to mock" and is translated "laughed thee to scorn" in 2 Kings 19:21. The temporal power of weak, proud rulers is no threat to the omnipotent power of the eternal God.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

What is the future of the rebel kings? He has a message for them. The verbs "speak" (Piel) and "vex" (Piel) in Hebrew poetry are complementary terms. Both clearly state intense energetic action. The word "*vex*" is translated "troubled" (Genesis 45:3), "*dismayed*" (Exodus 15:15) and "*terrified*" (ESV 1 Samuel 28:21). God is not some sweet, indulgent passive Santa Claus type figure. Before us in the image of deliberate, controlled, intense action of an angry God.

The word "*wrath*" and "*sore displeasure*" are also complementary terms. The Hebrew word for "*wrath*" is "*nostril*" (aph); that is, when a man feels wronged, his nostrils flare. The Hebrew word for "*sore displeasure*" means "heat" or "burning anger." The imagery before us is that of an angry dragon with flared nostrils blasting balls of fire upon his adversaries. The sudden, stroke illness, stroke, and death of Lenin (1924) after his order (1922) to starve five million Russian peasants comes to mind.

To put it bluntly, God is not happy with the nations. Today, there is no government committed to His law-order. Consequently, He is opposed to the proud, humanistic states. It is not his will that any of them succeed. All will fail. He will vex them in His wrath.

The Father Speaks

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

The Father speaks. "*I have set*" is the Hebrew Qal perfect verb *nacak* which means "to pour out." The imagery before us is that of a metallurgist heating iron ore in a blast furnace at a smelting plant to pour hot iron into a mold to make steel. The Father emphatically states that He has His king, and He has installed him permanently on His holy hill.

The "*holy hill*" is a reference to the Heavenly Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the assembly of the saints, the heavenly Jerusalem of which carnal Jerusalem was a type.

This is a decree "*written in stone*" sort of speak! It is an iron-clad, perpetual, indisputable fact. In contrast to antlers that fall off every season among deer and elk, are permanent horns of power like that of a ram. In contrast to the changing winds and the sands of time are the eternal shores; in contrast to the fading grass on the prairie are the mighty rocks and boulders of the earth; in contrast to the fragile tents of man are the pyramids of Almighty God. In contrast to fragile, weak, temporal rulers is God's eternal, immutable, anointed King. In contrast to the weak, flawed egotists that arise to power out of the sea of politics to ride the wave of temporal power to the sand castles of nations is God's chosen King, the Lord Jesus Christ, established forever on God's holy, eternal mountain. God rules, not man!

Before us is the SOLUTION to all political disputes--recognition of and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ as Head of the Nations. Oh, that the kings of the earth were humbly submitted to the authority of Christ, under oath to obey His Law-word. How different the evening news!

The Son Speaks

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

The Son speaks. A public notice is given. The term "*decree*" refers to a resolve, order, or statute. The first usage of the word "*decree*" (choq) is in reference to land given to the priests by Pharaoh which Joseph, Vice-regent of Egypt, was not permitted to seize or sell (Genesis 47:22); that is, Pharaoh's decree was set in stone. His decree was absolute and permanent. It is like an executive order, but more firm. Thus, God's decree to the Son is absolute, permanent, forever, immutable, and unchangeable.

The decree is one of relationship. The Son is very God of God, eternal, from the beginning. But, at a point in time, if we dare use the term "*time*," the Father declared His relationship to the Second Person of the Triune God as that of a father to a son. He is now "*The Son*." The term "*begotten*" does not refer to an actual birth, but the genesis of a legal relationship. In the movie "Ben Hur," Ben Hur wins the affection of a Roman Senator, receives his freedom, and is declared a son. He existed before the declaration. The decree did not initiate his existence; only a new status. Likewise, between the Father and the Son. The Second Person of the Triune God was declared a Son.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Favored by the Father, the Son is granted special favors. All He has to do is ask, and the nations are His. This is the Spirit's way of informing us that Christ claims jurisdiction over all men and their institutions. Both the right and power to rule the nations belong to Christ: "*Who is the head of all rule and authority*" (Colossians 2:10). But, Christ has done more than ask. He has purchased the nations with His own blood, the currency of the spirit world. The iron sceptre is in nail pierced hands. The nations are as fragile as pottery. The One who made a whip and cleansed the temple will use His rod of iron to smash the nations. Rebels who will not bow the knee will be broken into hundreds of pieces.

The Spirit Speaks

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

The Spirit of God gives sweet counsel to the rulers of the earth. The object of instruction are kings, presidents, parliaments, public officials in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. They are exhorted to be wise and receive the following instruction. Unfortunately, however, the nations seems to be in the hands of fools and madmen.

11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

The word "*serve*" means "to work" or "to labor" or "to obey." The kings of the earth are exhorted to serve the LORD; that is, to obey His Law-word. The command "*rejoice*" refers to voluntary service. Holy fear must mix with joy and the privilege of serving the LORD God. Governments are in place to serve the interest of Heaven and the law of the LORD God; to protect human rights and freedom; and, to punish those who infringe on the rights of others.

The phrases "*with fear*" and "*with trembling*" is a call to careful and precise obedience to His commands and purpose (Deuteronomy 5:29; 6:2, 13, 24; 8:6; 10:12, 20; 13:4; 17:19; 19:20).

The Spirit is calling for allegiance to the Word of God, not allegiance to a political party or the new world order or to the U.S. Constitution. Oh, what a different place the world would be if we had Christian leaders committed to the will of God and served His purposes to the best of their knowledge and ability. Today, however, it seems we have madmen ruling nations who are hell bent on serving their own lust or Marxist program or the agenda of the new Zionist world order to mention a few.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.



Figure 4: Unsnlash

"*Kiss*" refers to the ancient tradition of subjects kissing the ring or scepter of a king; that is, of demonstrating devotion and loyalty to the crown. Kings take no pleasure in rebels. To arouse the wrath of a king is to perish like Haman before Xerxes. After the Earl of Essex "half" draw his sword against Queen Elizabeth, she determined to have him executed.

All the kings of the earth all called to "kiss the Son:"

Kiss Him as the Son of God, the historical Christ who appeared in Bethlehem.

Kiss Him as the Creator for "by Him all things are Created."

Kiss Him as the King of the rulers of the earth.

Kiss Him as the only Lawgiver, King, Priest, and Prophet.

Kiss Him as the Savior King Who gave His life to save His people from their sins.

Kiss Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Kiss Him as the Gateway to God.

Kiss Him as the Mediator between Heaven and Earth.

Kiss Him as the Lamb of God, the Sin-bearer.

Kiss Him as the Way of Salvation.

Kiss Him as the True Israel of God, the fulfillment of all OT promises.

Kiss Him as the Head of the Church.

Kiss Him as the risen, ascended Savior and Lord sitting at the Right hand of God.

Kiss the Son lest He be angry you perish in the way.

Kiss the Son that you may be truly blessed of God with eternal life and enter His kingdom.

Kiss the Son is equivalent to invitation terms like "*receive Christ as Lord and Savior,*" "*believe,*" "*repent,*" "*bow the knee to Christ,*" and "*Confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raise him from the dead*" (Romans 10:9). The psalmist is telling us to "look to Christ" and be saved. To reject Christ is to perish, for "whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:18).

The term "*blessing*" refers to salvation.

To "*kiss the Son*" is to be reconciled to God and to possess eternal life and the blessings of the age to come.

A blessing is promised to rulers and all those who put their trust in him. Trust here is more than an occasional glance toward heaven, but a genuine commitment to trust and obey. "*In God we Trust,*" is our nation's motto. Oh, that it would be more than mere words. Oh, that we might acknowledge there is only one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

The schism between the United States and Russia or between Hamas and Israel are the result of the nations rejecting God's Law-order. The solution between the United States and Russia and between Gaza and Israel is for all parties to "kiss the Son." There is peace at the cross. If Jews and Gentiles can find peace at the cross, so can Arabs and Jews, Americans and Russians.

Before us is the reason for all political conflict in the world today, and the solution to every political problem known to man in seed form. The problems are not political, but spiritual; likewise, the solution is not political diplomacy or war, but confession of and surrender to the Son. Kiss the Son and be reconciled to God.

7. The Gospel in Psalm 22

The Afflictions and Consolations of Messiah



David is said to be the author of this psalm, and there is nothing in the poem that would contradict this conclusion.

Psalm 22 has been categorized as a Messianic Psalm because it mirrors our Lord's suffering on the cross; that is, the agony that David expressed metaphorically was literally fulfilled in our Lord's afflictions at Calvary. David felt the shadow of the cross in his pilgrimage on earth; but, for a brief moment in time and for what must seem like an eternity, the Son felt the burning heat of what it was really like to be cut off from fellowship with the Father, "My, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Psalm 22, 23, 24 present a trilogy of Messianic themes:

Psalm 22 is picture of the Good Shepherd suffering to save his flock (John 10:11, 14); and,

Psalm 23 is a picture of the Great Shepherd providing for his flock (Hebrews 13:20); and,

Psalm 24 is a picture of the Chief Shepherd coming to take his flock home (1 Peter 5:4).

The key, therefore, to interpreting this Hebrew chorus is to feel the suffering of David and to consider how the imagery was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. David had the privilege of sharing in the suffering of the Lord in his own journey: "*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*" (1 Peter 2:21). David's afflictions were a prophetic forecast of the afflictions of the Good Shepherd fighting to save His people at the cross.

However, this psalm is not just about doom and gloom; but about salvation and glorification of the Son.

The Psalms begins with a trial, but ends in triumph; it begins with pain, but ends with prosperity. This hymn shows our Lord's suffering at midnight, but ends with the sun rising on the great congregation, the people of God.

1 (To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.)

Superior songs calls for a composition constructed by the chief Musicians. The term "*Aijeleth Shahar*" literally means "*the hind of the morning dawn.*" A composition style known to the psalmists of David's time, but unknown to modern men. Possibly, it refers to the sunrise and the horns of light extending across the eastern sky.

Many psalms begin with a positive thought like "*Surely, God is good to Israel*" (Psalm 73:1). But, this psalm begins abruptly with the unthinkable and incogitable: God forsaking man . . . His creation -- the greatest affliction to ripple through the hearts and minds of men. How can this be?

Affliction Caused by God

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

The word "*roaring*" (sheagah) refers to the distress-call of a lion caught in a trap. It is used here to describe the agonizing feelings of King David as well as the distress call of our Lord upon the cross (Isaiah 5:29; Ezekiel 19:7; Zechariah 11:3).

"*God*" is in the vocative and it is used twice: *Eli, Eli (Hebrew); O Theos, O Theos* (LXX) -- a literary tool to communicate the level of anguish experienced by our Lord. The pronoun "my" implies a private, personal relationship with Theos -- a private pain, and despairing tone - or, as St. Mark has it, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.*

"*Me*:" We can understand God forsaking the wicked and the pathetic, disheveled, self-centered beggar . . . but "*Me*" your beloved?

The Hebrew word "*why*" (lama) turns the sentence into a question - NOT because our Lord was seeking an answer to His query. Jesus knew why He was suffering. The question is for our benefit, so we might contemplate the reason our precious Lord was upon the cross -- an innocent lamb made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him . . . because the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and God laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

We receive more insight into the suffering of Christ on the cross: "*I cry day and night without intermission, but thou hearest not.*" Is there a greater agony among men? Oh, the prayers of those in hell that will never be answered!!

Because Christ was a man, He could suffer for us; because He was God, He could suffer enough! Selah.

But, the story does not end without hope. Christ was heard in that he feared (Hebrews 5:7).

3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Now we are given a reason for the Lamb's affliction. God is holy. When our sins were imputed to Christ on the cross, the Holy Father turned his back on the Son. Selah.

There is another perspective. The conjunctive "*but*" in English adds hope. In spite of seeming desertion, the psalmist believed his state of suffering was not permanent. He could still trust the Holy One. All those in a storm know that suffering has an end. The rain, thunder, and lightning will stop. The Sun will come out. Night will turn into day. This is our heritage in Christ.

"Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel:" The "praise of Israel" is not the choruses of His people. Rather, the "praises of Israel" refers to the Ark of the Covenant, the throne of God, His position as King between the cherubim; that God is there (Jehovah-Shammah) was the privilege, honor, blessing, glory, and praise of Israel. In a secondary sense, "the ever-ascending praises of His people become a throne for the Divine King, and take the place of the outstretched wings of the cherubim" - Ellicott.

4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

That the Father did not deliver the Son from the horrors of Calvary have mystified men through the centuries. The LORD delivered Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, and Hezekiah. Why didn't He deliver Christ from death on the cross? The answer lies in the greater victory of His resurrection from the dead -- proof that death is not Lord -- proof that He has the keys of life and death -- proof that Christ discharged our debt.

This is an argument of David . . . of Christ . . . and all of God's people. Your people trusted you and were delivered; I trust you like you have taught me. Why shouldn't you answer my prayers? Your holiness (faithfulness, et al.) is the commonwealth of Israel. You delivered Gideon, Samson, and Samuel. Surely, you will deliver me. . . . but when? Oh, the "when" of deliverance!

My prayer: *You are my Praise . . . my Hope! I am your child. I trust You. And, now I claim my inheritance in the commonwealth of the true Israel of God. Deliver me, O God, from my affliction.*

Affliction Caused by Men

6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

David expresses his true feelings. Instead of feeling like he was a prince among his people, he feels like a worm ready to be crushed under the feet of men -- a reproach (taunt) of men -- something despised (contemptible) by the people. It is one thing to be despised by government officials or madmen in power . . . but, by the people of God? Who can understand why one is attacked by the sheep?

What holy, righteous, outspoken servant of God has not experienced inexplicable rejection by God's people?

Here is one answer: *When government is god in the minds of Christians, you cannot expect them not to betray you.*

7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

"*laugh me to scorn*" means "*shoot out the lip*" (*patar*) - see a description of our Lord's suffering at the cross (Luke 23:35; Matthew 27:39). Instead of meeting pity and compassion, our Lord was met with contempt and insult. Furthermore, the mockers seemed to have no restraint and no shortage of insults. O, the blindness of man . . . and the wisdom of God!

Let us remember that the world does not hate Christians. It hates Christ because He exposed their evil (John 7:7). In the early days of our Lord's ministry, the people did not hate the disciples . . . BUT, after three years of discipleship . . . when they matured and became like Christ, the world hated them (John 15:18). Likewise, the world does not hate Christians. It hates disciples carrying a cross.

8 He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

This is a taunt muttered towards Christ on the cross by his enemies.

The word "trusted" (*galal*) is a Hebrew imperative meaning "*to roll away*;" i.e., to roll one's burdens onto the LORD (Psalm 37:5; Proverbs 16:3); that is, Christ submitted to the will of the Father and trusted Him to deliver him from death.

The word "*deliver*" is a Piel verb meaning "*to escape*" fully and completely. The grounds of this trust are that the psalmist (Savior) delighted himself in the Father. Surely, God will deliver those who belong to Him and love Him! But, the Jews used this perception to taunt the Redeemer in a sarcastic and mocking way: if you are truly God's Son, come down from the cross (Matthew 27:43).

9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

To further heighten the tragedy of being forsaken by God, the psalmist infers his relationship to God and his trust in God began while he was still in his mother's womb . . . upon her breasts. That is, the psalmist is no "Johnny come lately," or "fair-weather friend."

Jesus was devoted to the Father *ab aeterno*, and His trust was true, genuine, real, and substantial. Why kind of God would forsake a faithful, devoted Son? Surely, God will rescue those who delight in Him. While the Father did not rescue the Son from the terrors of atonement and the agony of the cross, He

rescued Him from the grave -- a greater victory than saving Him from the cross. Moreover, God rescues all those in the faith -- the weak and strong.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

On holy ground, we are permitted to hear the heart-beat of the Son on the cross -- be not far from me . . . or no far, from me

Moreover, this is the heart cry of all God's people: Rescue me when trouble is near . . . when there is none to help.

12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

Here the psalmist compares his enemies to well-fed, Spanish fighting bulls (Toro Bravo), the bulls of Bashan, a land northeast of the Jordan; e.g., a metaphor describing the horned animosity of the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees.

13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

To help the reader understand our Savior's helplessness and the power of the enemy, he employs the metaphor "*roaring lion*." Few things in life are more frightening than facing a starving lion alone in a forest. Wrongfully arrested by a legion of temple / Roman police, the Lord faced the illegal, all-night trial and false accusations of paid witnesses organized by the Sanhedrin-priests -- the roaring lions of legalistic Judaism.

14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

"Poured out like water" refers to the suffering of the Redeemer. He compares himself to a jug of malleable water that is so easily disposed of by men; and, his vital organs to being like wax melted under the heat of the cross.

"*All my bones are out of joint*" refers to the dislocation of skeletal parts -- a metaphor for intense pain and the total helplessness of this Good Shepherd.

"*like wax*" is a simile exposing his mortality and the ease of destroying the manly Savior.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

"*My strength*" could be translated "*my palate*."

The term "*potsherd*" refers to a part of a dry, broken, clay pot -- a pot made out of wet clay.

"*cleaveth to my jaws*" describes intense thirst.

On the cross the Lord compresses all his suffering into the words, "I thirst." Likewise, this text reveals the acute suffering of the Savior, and the manner of

his death -- death by dehydration at the cross. Oh, the agony of crucifixion! Let us never forget!

16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

"Dogs" refers to the enemies of Christ. The psalmist compares the actions of the priests and Pharisees to scavenger dogs that hunt in packs; that is, the terrors of the Sanhedrin and Rome's police force punctured him to the bone.

The word "*pierced*" means "*to dig*" or "*to claw*" like a lion. Ellicott believes the best translation of this text should read, "*The band of villains (literally, breakers) surrounded me, binding my hands and feet so as to cut them.*" While David felt like his hands and feet were being cut to the bone, Christ literally, physically experienced the depth of this excruciating pain.

17 I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

This appears to be a reference to Christ's arms and limbs being extended upon the cross. A spectator could easily identify define his skeletal structure.

18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

One must stop and consider how these words were literally fulfilled at the cross where even the soldiers gambled for his one and only cloak (Matthew 27:35).

The Prayer of the Afflicted

19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

Here we see the cries of a desperate, deserted, dying man. All others having forsaken him, the Lord cried out to the Father to sustain and deliver Him.

20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

The metaphor of "*dog*" and "*sword*" appear again as agents of death. The verb "*deliver*" is an imperative -- the language of prayer.

The word "*darling*" refers to an only, beloved child. And, Jesus was God's one and only child abandoned at the cross to suffer for the sins of men.

Following the rule of parallelism, the "*darling*" is a synonym for "*my soul*."

Dogs shred and devour. The sword severs. The psalmist feared what we fear: having a soul divided by daggers of doubt, the cleaving knife of covetousness, and the paring knife of passion; having his soul devoured by the pilt bulls of pride, wolves of wrath, foxes of fornication, the scavengers of strife, hounds of hatred, the Rottweilers of revenge, and the like.

By way of personal application consider how the enemy uses its swords of disinformation to produce divided affections and double motives. Duplicity

abounds in hearts and minds. People often have a public life and a private life; a public persona and a private personality.

Brian White observed "*We never really grow up, we just learn how to act in public.*" Our life before men and before God is often different. Secret lusts act as a clever to steal our affections and slice away at pure devotion to LORD God. The Apostle James warns of being "double minded;" that is, having two masters, two souls, two personalities, two ambitions, two motives, two objects – one in heaven and the other of earth.

Lord, thank you for Christ's pure devotion to holiness. Keep my soul in tact, and may I serve you with undivided affections. May I be a whole man completely devoted to you.)

21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

Though abandoned by men, our Lord expresses hope -- that the Father would hear his prayers from "*the horns of the unicorns*" (buffalos) could refer to God's omnipresence: from sunrise to sunset, from the rising Sun to the going down of the same, from east to west, to the heavens above to the earth below; but, most commentators consider the horns of the unicorns as a metaphor for enemies with horns: water buffaloes, rams, bulls, antelope, and deer -- the imagery of angry, frightened wild beasts.

Consolations of the Afflicted

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Our precious Savior died on the cross, but was raised from the dead. Here we have the consolations of the risen, ascended, glorified Savior sitting at the right hand of the Father.

The "*I*" is our Savior and Champion who has passed from death into life. Our precious Lord is head and shoulders above every man. But here, the resurrected Redeemer calls redeemed men his "brethren;" of the same mother with similar DNA in a physical sense; and, in a spiritual sense because we are part of the great congregation -- the church -- the family of God.

Jesus was Rabbi, Teacher, and Master to the disciples. In John 15, He called them "*friends.*" After the God-man rose from the dead, he calls his disciples "brethren" -- a term of endearment and intimacy.

His promise is "*I will declare*" thy Name (the Father-God) to future generations. If you know the Lord today, it is because Jesus fulfilled His promise and declared "*His name*" to you; that is, all Christians become his

"brethren" because Christ declared to believing men "*thy name*" "*of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*" (Ephesians 3:15).

23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

That Christ revealed the Father to men merits a Godly response. Because the Good Shepherd reached out to us who "fear the LORD," He deserves "*praise*" (hal'al). The verb "*praise*" is an imperative. We get the word "*hallelujah*" from the Hebrew root. Those that "fear the LORD" are Christians.

The "*seed of Jacob*" and "*seed of Israel*" is a reference to Hebrews in David's time, and a reference to the New Israel composed of the spiritually responsive among Jews and Gentiles during the church age.

"*Fear him*" is a salvation term -- an imperative. "*Fear Him*" and be saved. "Glorify him" is a term of sanctification -- an imperative defining the privilege and duty of all the redeemed.

24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

The "*he*" is a reference to the Father; the "*afflicted*" is the Son.

Philippians 2:11-13 "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"

The word "*affliction*" (*enuth*) refers to the suffering of the Savior, and in part, to the troubles experienced by Christians. The Father heard the prayers of the Son; and, for this reason believers have grounds to trust Him.

This psalm begins with the Son's cry of abandonment; however, this text assures us the Father didn't abandon Christ to the grave. Likewise, no one who trusts Him will be despised or abandoned by God; i.e., He will not forsake those who "roll themselves on to the Lord."

If the LORD heard the prayers of the Redeemer, He will hear the prayers of the redeemed -- your prayers. In the course of life, you may "feel" abandoned, but "feelings" are not reality. He will "*never, never, no never, never forsake thee*" (Hebrews 13:5).

25 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

The text could be translated "*of thee cometh my praise.*" The joy of Jesus is His Father. "*My vows*" refer to our Lord's obedience to God's law. "*The great*

congregation" refers to the OT Hebrew nation in a lesser sense, and in an enlarger sense to the church planted among the nations.

The sense of this stanza is my purpose and praise shall be "*from you*" and "*about you*;" i.e., I will call to remembrance your mercy and grace; I will unite with others in celebrating your goodness and faithfulness.

26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

The word "*meek*" (*anaviym*) means "afflicted" and "troubled." This is a general promise to the church that her mission will prosper; that his power will be distributed to the poor and troubled; that the pious will have ample reasons to praise God. There is a power from God given to the weary that overcomes discouraging circumstances (Isaiah 40:21). He can and does make the poor rich and the weak strong.

"Jesus, the true Sacrifice, is the bread that came down from heaven; they who eat of this bread shall never die" (Clarke).

27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

The goal of history is the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. History is not going in circles. It is moving toward the Eschaton which includes the salvation of the righteous and judgment of the wicked. The nations easily "*forget*" God, but here we see a revived gospel -- a movement in history that causes men to remember the Lord and His law.

The word "*worship*" (*shachah*) means "*to bow the knee*." One day all the nations will bend to His will and acknowledge His authority to rule the world. Why wait? Do it now!

Isaiah 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations.

This gospel will go to the ends of the earth because the kingdom is the LORD's. By "*kingdom*" (*meluwkah*) the Spirit is not referring to a place . . . or an end-time event . . . but to the rule and authority of the LORD.

The issue before us is not whether the LORD has the right to rule mankind, or that He is the governor (*mashal* = dominion) of the nations, but whether men will recognize him as such.

When Christians pray, "*Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come*" they are NOT praying for a millennial kingdom, but that men might recognize his authority and surrender to it NOW!

29 All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

"*All they that be fat upon the earth*" refers to all classes of people: the rich and the poor; upper class, working class, and lower class; urban and rural people will come and worship the true God; not the poor and needy only; or the afflicted and the oppressed only, but the rich and affluent. Not many wise . . . mighty . . . noble are chosen, but a few are (1 Corinthians 1:26).

"*down to the dust*" refers to those who are broken and crushed by the troubles of life.

"*and none can keep alive his own soul*" seems to apply to those who are sick and dying, the aged and diseased, the feeble and helpless among us. Every dying man that puts his trust in Christ can expect to have eternal life: "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25-26).

30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord (Adonai) for a generation.

The term "*seed*" refers to a race, tribe, or family of people who serve God. The "*seed*" referred to shall be reckoned as a generation or family belonging to Him. There will always be a people of God serving Him on the earth; that is, the wicked will not triumph. Their plans will fail.

31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

The "*they*" is the believing generation, the church.

One characteristic of the family of God is that they are engaged in proclamation, reclamation, and education so that the next generation can know the Lord. No man is born a Christian!! Every child, even in Christian families, must be born again. Thus, every generation of believers has the privilege and duty of proclaiming Christ to the next generation.

8. Crisis at the Gates

Your heart and mind is too small for the King of Glory

Psalm 24:7-10



This psalm challenges the God-seeker to expand his thoughts about the King of Glory. This regal Person is not small but the man's perceptions of Him may be. Consequently, considering the grand theme of this song is like taking multi-vitamins to grow in one's theology.

7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Imagine this dramatic scene -- an enormous parade of priests robed in white bearing swords marching toward the entrance of ancient Jerusalem carrying the ark of the covenant, the holy symbol of Divine Sovereignty. As the armed priest approach the city gate, the gate-keepers proudly swing open the weathered doors to receive His Majesty.

But, the psalmist observes an unexpected crisis at the gates. The city gates are too old and too small to receive the King of Glory. The King will have to bow his head and humble Himself passing under the pillars. So, the psalmist orders the gates to "lift up your heads" because your arches are too low to receive this exalted King -- a literary device known as an "apostrophe" where by the writer

Figure 5: Unsplash

addresses an inanimate object as if it were a person.

These gates are "*everlasting doors*" grey with antiquity, hoary with age. Perhaps these weathered gates on this Jebusite city looked down upon Melchizedek, King of Salem and Priest of the Most High God, as he marched his army in the morning twilight to greet Abraham with bread and wine after his slaughter of the five kings. But in all the centuries that followed, these doddering doors had never seen such a grand and glorious King gracing the capital city with His presence (Maclaren).

"*Lift up your heads*" is Psalmist way of instructing men how to receive the King of Glory as their Lord and Savior.

The lesson is clear: The one who wants a relationship with the King must wake up, wash up, and stand up; that is, the man seeking this King of Glory must rise to the occasion. He must dress honorably, speak with dignity, and behave with integrity. Dress up, wash up, and clean up. "*Assume a virtue if you have it not*" (Shakespeare).



We are told that Buckingham Palace has 775 rooms. These include 19 State rooms, 52 Royal and guest bedrooms, 188 staff bedrooms, 92 offices and 78 bathrooms. In measurements, the building is 108 meters long across the front, 120 meters deep (including the central quadrangle) and 24 meters high. It has 491 employees. But, even this is too small for the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

Why would the psalmist shout the imperial order for the Gates to Lift of their Heads? Who is coming? Who is the King of Glory whose presence demands we clean up and wash up?

Now the psalmist introduces us to this King. He is the LORD, strong and mighty. As "the LORD" He is the everlasting One; the Beginning and the End, the One who was, is, and shall be what we need Him to be; the Aleph and Tet of all expressions wonderful. This is no ordinary person. He is strong in virtue, strong in justice, and strong in grace. He is mighty in knowledge, mighty in presence, and mighty in power. He is a regal King and those entering His presence must be their best and put on their best.

So that we might know how mighty He is, the psalmist says it gain, "mighty in battle." He is a bloody King that never lost a battle; a mighty King who defeated single-handedly man's greatest enemies: Satan, sin, and death; a bloody King who shed his own blood to save sinners like you and me.

9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

This is the psalmist's invitation call for salvation. He repeats the main lesson of the occasion a second time to awaken moronic minds and dopey hearts. The arches above the gates are not tall enough to honor the King of Glory. Clean out your heart and enlarge your soul to receive Him as your Master and King.

Make room for the king. Remove your idols. Confess Him as your Lord. Judge competitors. Clean out your heart and enlarge your soul to receive Him as your Master and King.

Churches would do well to ask themselves, "What must we improve so the King of Glory will be pleased to come in to meet with us?"

Psalm 29:9, . . . And in His temple everything says, 'Glory!'

Note: Churches would do well to review their protocols for church. Is attending a worship service in a t-shirt and wrinkled jeans with coffee up in hand the way to receive the King of Glory?

10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

In case the reader fails to grasp the grandeur of the moment he ask the question a second time, not because he does not know the answer, but because he understands human minds are like bowls of Jello.

Likewise, for the dull of heart, he repeats the answer: Who is this King of glory? He is the Lord of Hosts, the Master and Commander of the Universe; the Captain of the armies of Heaven; the One who spoke and brought the heavens and earth into existence by His word. He is the King of Glory, the King of Righteousness, the King of Holiness, the King of Purity, the King of Humility, the King of Goodness, the King of Justice, and the King of Mercy. He is, He is, He is the King of Glory.

The King of Glory is coming to establish His kingdom on earth. "*Prepare to meet thy God*" (Amos 4:12). Is He your King? Do you have clean hands and are your Gates lifted up high enough to receive Him?

9. The Gospel by Oath

The Coronation of God's Messianic King-Priest

Psalm 110



Before us is a royal hymn.

The most quoted psalm in the New Testament, its importance is staggering (Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; Hebrews 1:13; 7:11, 15, 17; 8:1).

It has been said the first duty of man is not to submit to authority, but to question authority.

The writ that challenges authority is called a *Quo Warranto* requiring an individual claiming authority to produce in writing his writ of authority to exercise certain powers.

This is Jesus' response to man's *quo warranto*. It is proof of claim that He was called to be the Ruler of all matters pertaining to God.

Before us is the glorious coronation of Messiah to the office of king and priest. A contract with offer and acceptance is announced. The acceptance of the appointment to office contains rights and privileges, and imposes duties and responsibilities on the Messiah.

Here the powers of government and the obligations of King-Priest are conferred upon this human agent, the Messiah. The Psalm serves as constructive notice of His appointment a thousand years before He walked the earth.

Messianic Appointment as King

Psalm 110:1-2 A Psalm of David. The LORD (YHWH) said unto my Lord (Adonai), Sit (yashab) thou at my right hand, until I make (shiyth) thine enemies thy footstool (hadom). The LORD shall send the rod (matteh) of thy strength out of Zion: rule (radah) thou in the midst of thine enemies (oyeb).

Five persons are introduced in the first three verses: David, LORD, Lord, the enemy, and thy people.

When the Pharisees quibbled with Christ and tried to trap him in a contradiction, He queried them about the identity of the "Lord" David mentioned in this psalm, "If David then called him 'Lord,' how is he his son?" (Matthew 22:41-46).

David

When David wrote this psalm He was God's duly anointed king.

The word "*anointed*" is the Hebrew word for "*messiah*."

A messiah is someone with olive oil poured over them during an inauguration ceremony. In Israel, kings and priests were anointed with oil as a symbol of their divine appointment to public office. David was God's de jure messiah king.

But, in this psalm the anointed One is not David, but "*the Lord*." The only reference to David is in the inscription and the word "my" when he referred to "*my Lord*."

In the New Testament, the Greek word "*christos*" means "anointed." Consequently, our Lord Jesus was called "the Christ" or the "Anointed One." This psalm, therefore, is not about David, but about the coronation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His commission as king and priest.

LORD / Lord

The name "**LORD**" (YHWH) is the Tetragrammaton meaning "*I Am*" -- a being verb expressing "the existent One." This is God's official name and the covenant name whereby God made His contract with Israel. Jesus taught us to address the LORD as "*our father*."

The title "*Lord*" (Adonai)(1) in lower case letters means "*master*" or "*owner*." The word *adon* comes from a Ugaritic word meaning "*lord*" or "*father*." The plural form, *Adonai*, is like the plural form Elohim which is regularly used with singular verbs and modifiers. It is proper to construe the Name as an "*emphatic*

plural" or "*plural of majesty*." The plural form occurs over 300 times in the Old Testament, and it always refers to God. Adonai is our Lord Jesus Christ.

That the LORD is the supreme authority over all creation was unquestioned in Israel by virtue of the fact the LORD is the Creator (Genesis 2:4), and that He is the Redeemer of the nation (Exodus 20:1; Isaiah 41:14; 43:14).

Because He is sovereign, He rules! Because He loves His people, He redeems! He rules His people with their needs on his heart; that is, Israel's God is an all-powerful, all-holy, all-benevolent Sovereign.

"*Sit*" is an imperative. It is YHWH that summons Adonai and bestows on Him the duties and privileges of the Messianic office at His right hand. He was commissioned because of His virtue and His competence.

"*Right hand*" is a Middle Eastern symbol of authority and power. It is a position or throne whereby Messiah exercises jurisdiction over His domain.

"*Footstool*" or "*under feet*" is an idiom for conquest over enemies.

"*Rod*" or "*staff*" is a scepter, a symbol of authority. Today we use stamps and embossers and seals to declare the authority of a written instrument. In Biblical times, a king's staff represented His authority.

"*Zion*" is Jerusalem, the residence of King David, and where God ruled over the nation from the tabernacle / temple. But, this coronation does not occur in carnal Jerusalem, but in the presence of Almighty God in Heavenly Jerusalem, the place of God's eternal rule before Christ came to this earth (Psalm 87).

Rule: The term "*rule*" (*radah*) is an imperative; i.e., we have here a grant of authority to execute the duties of the Messianic office. This answers the *quo warranto* question, "*by what authority does Christ make claims on men?*" The duties of Messiah include at least two obligations: (1) to save His people from their enemies and (2) to crush the enemies of God, His law, and His authority.

Enemies: The term "*enemies*" means that not everyone accepts this king or His grant of authority. Many rebel against God's law-order and resist His reign.

God's enemies (*oyeb*) are proud and foolish men who reject His rule over them. Anyone who refuses to surrender to this King . . . is an enemy! Terms like "*wicked*," "*unbeliever*," and "*antichrist*" come to mind.

Luke 19:27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

Destroying God's enemies means salvation for God's people; that is, the defeat of enemies means victory, safety, and prosperity for Zion. No force or political movement on earth can defeat the will of Heaven. The true church is invincible.

Messiah's Appointment and the Consent of the People

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

In this verse we have a lovely description of the King's people using rich and refreshing metaphors of morning dew and sparkling in the sunshine of the unveiled Christ.

"*Thy people*" refers to God's covenant people; those who confess Him as their King, Lord, and Master; those who surrender to His law-order and live out a life of love. We call them "*converts*," "*the elect*," "*believers*," or "*Christians*." Jesus called them "*friends*" (John 15:13-14; Romans 10:9-10; Matthew 11:28-29; Luke 18:7).

"*Thy people*" are not Jews, as there was no such thing as a "*Jew*" in David's day. Moreover, Jesus was from the Tribe of Judah, but He was not a "*Jew*" in the religious sense of the term. The Jews of Jesus's day murdered Him. They were His enemies. Those Hebrews who believed in Him were called Christians, God's chosen ones, believers, and God's people. Today's "*Jews*" who belong to the "other" Israel are not Hebrews but Khazarians from the Ukraine . . . and, they too are antichrists and enemies of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Modern so called "*Jews*" have no Hebrew blood them . . . and, even if they did, race / genetics does not commend one to God nor make them "God's chosen people" (Matthew 3:1-10; John 1:10-13).

"*Willing*" (*nedabah*) refers to consent. It is a word connected with free-will offerings, something voluntary and not mandatory. In order to experience the benefits of the contract (salvation), one must consent to be ruled by the Lord-King. Everyone in God's kingdom is there because they want to be there. These are people with "*no king*," but King Jesus (Acts 17:6-7).

"*Day of power*" is a reference to the day the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ will be unveiled to mankind. It is the day of the Lord and the day of resurrection. The New Testament calls it the "*apocalypse*" (2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 1:1).

"*in the beauties of holiness*:" God's people are seen dressed in holy garments. Justified and sanctified in Christ, the saints shine "*in the beauties of holiness*." In contrast to His enemies lurking in the darkness, the church sparkles with devotion to their King.

The "*womb of the morning*" is a glorious reference to the arrival of the Eschaton in its fullness and universal power. The long night of distress, disease, and death is over.

The "*dew of thy youth*" is a lovely description of the bodily resurrection of the holy dead. These holy ones are described as the morning dew that refreshes the meadow after a long summer drought.

This is an ideal picture of God's people robed in the holy garments of kings and priests. Raised from the dead (spiritually and bodily), they sparkle and shine like fresh crystals of dew on a mantis-green meadow.

Messiah's Appointment as Priest

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

We have a second pronouncement -- The public declaration that God has made His selection for the office of priest, and installed Adonai to be not only a king, but a priest! A priest is one who not only mediates God's interests to men, but mediates man's concerns to God. This messiah priest not has access to God's throne room, He intercedes to God on man's behalf.

This royal coronation is a grant of power and authority by our Father-God to Messiah to enter heaven's sanctuary in order to mediate the needs of mankind to our Father-God.

An oath binds a man to the duties of his office. An oath is made in exchange for public trust.

The oath verifies the acceptance of Christ as man's representative in Divine affairs. He is not only God's Representative to man, but man's Representative to God. What an advantage to have one man Who loves us and Who represents our concerns before the throne of Almighty God.

Glory! Hallelujah! We have a wise, virtuous, competent, duty-bound King-Priest that rules, and represents us before the Father (1 Timothy 2:5: Hebrews 5)!

Sworn: No man has a duty to perform public service unless he is commissioned to do so and voluntarily accepts the appointment. Consequently, assignments to office require a public oath. (Note: In America when a man is appointed or elected to public office, "We the People" require the officer-elect to take an oath and post bond in exchange for public trust before he begins to exercise the duties of office (Article VI of the U.S. Constitution).

This was true in David's time, and it is true in our time. Public officers are required to take the prescribed oaths and to post bond . . . OR, they are imposters acting under color of office, color of authority, and color of duty.

The wording in Hale v. Henkel declares a political truth: the citizen "*has no duty to the state or his neighbors to divulge his business . . . his rights are such as existed by the law of the land long antecedent to the organization of the State . . .*"

Because a man has no duty to the State, upon acceptance of a commission to serve the public, the man must take an oath to faithfully perform the duties of public office. Likewise, every contract requires an oath or promise to faithfully

perform the duties of a contract. In most states, the duly sworn officer must also post a bond they will faithfully perform their duties according to the contract (the constitution).

Thus, we have in this verse the LORD's oath and appointment of Messiah to the office of the Melchizedek priesthood. A mysterious figure, Melchizedek was the greatest man in the Old Testament -- greater than Abraham -- greater than Levi and Aaron. With no record of his birth or death, he is a type of the Son of God. Unlike the Aaronic priests, he did not inherit the priesthood from his parents, but was appointed such by God. Unlike Levitical priests whose ministry was interrupted by death, Jesus serves by the power of an endless life. Because He lives, believers live (Hebrews 7:7, 16).

Will not repent: This appointment of Messiah as King-Priest is irrevocable, unalterable, and unalienable -- not capable of being taken away or denied for all eternity.

"Thou art a priest" means that He is not a priest stemming from His own ambitions, but by the appointment of the Father; that the Messiah is not only a king that kings, but a priest that priests. Before us is an ideal king--a King that mediates the affairs of God to man; and, a Priest that mediates the concerns of man to God. He is God's representative to men as King; and man's representative to God as Priest. He serves God and dispenses justice as a king, but he serves mankind and shows mercy as a priest.

We have here for the first time in history a King that not only serves the law of God, but also a King-Priest that serves the needs of the people. What a concept -- a King committed to God's law-order -- a benevolent King - a King-Priest that cares - a King that executes justice toward the wicked, but a King-Priest that exercises mercy towards kingdom citizens!

As King He purges society of evil men; and, as Priest He saves sinners to the uttermost! Hallelujah!

"Melchizedec:" The title "*Melchizedec*" means "*king of Salem*" (King of peace or at peace). He is the King of Shalom and without him there is no peace.

One of the unique features of Melchizedek is that He appears suddenly in the Genesis record. His origin is shrouded with mystery as the Spirit reveals nothing about his human ancestry. The writer of Hebrews used this strange feature to signify the eternal nature of the Melchizedek priesthood with which our Lord is identified. He was the first king-priest mentioned in the Bible and was either a Theophany of Christ or an ideal king-priest to the people living near Jerusalem at the time of Abraham.

Melchizedec refreshed Abraham after Abraham's return from pursuing the five plunder-kings that captured Lot by supplying him with bread and wine.

Rejecting a contract with the King of Sodom, Abraham accepted a contract with the King of Jerusalem. So great was Melchizedek, that Abraham tithed a tenth of his equity to this king-priest. Melchizedek was not a Jewish priest ministering in the carnal temple with sacrifices that can never take away sins. Rather, He was a true catholic king-priest that used his resources to meet the needs his people, and specifically, Abraham.

Our Lord's kingly priesthood is the archetype of the competent, charitable, cosmopolitan Melchizedek priesthood.

He is the King of Peace, and there is no peace without Christ as King.

Messiah's Conquest, Triumph, and Rest

5-6 The Lord (Adonai) at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

O, how the kings, princes, rulers, presidents, legislators, judges, and parliamentarians anger us! But, oh how they must fear the mere mention of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Psalm 21:8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. 9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

Adonai, when His glory is revealed, shall judge among the heathen; He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; and, he shall wound the heads (rulers) over many countries.

The Lord at thy right hand: Before us is an apocalyptic pronouncement of the bone-crushing victory by Adonai, God's appointed King-Priest, over stubborn and rebellious kings that have resisted God's rule and His law-order. This is not "sweet Jesus" caressing lambs in his arms, but the Lord Christ, the righteous-conservative, "tough on crime" Judge who will "drain the swamp" and deny relief for corrupt government officials.

Strike (*machats*): The word "strike" means "to smite, shatter, or wound severely." Here it represents the Messiah faithfully executing the duties of His office to punish evil doers and to purge society of evil men . . . and those self-promoting, greedy, hedonistic politicians.

This is the "*day of the Lord*" that unbelievers and politicians fear!

Kings: The "*kings*" refer to proud and defiant rulers on earth that shake their fists at God to maliciously and recklessly violate the rights of man.

These are rulers who defy the law of the LORD God and rule arbitrarily as tyrant-taker-taxers over men. All presidents, sultans, prime ministers, Caesars,

queens, emperors, dukes, generals, governors, and government officials are included in this word "kings."

Wrath: The word "*wrath*" (*aph*) means "*nostril*" in Hebrew. An angry man has his nostrils flared and is an appropriate expression for wrath.

This is "*eternal wrath*," the wrath of the Eschaton, the wrath associated with the Last Judgment. It also includes the wrath leaking from heaven now against evildoers now (Romans 1:17ff). This is "*sinner in the hands of an angry God*." This is the irresistible, dynamic, cataclysmic, universal "*day of vengeance*" and the "*baptism of fire*" mentioned by Malachi and John the Baptist (Malachi 4:1-2 Matthew 3:1-12).

Jeremiah described a limited, local day of wrath on rebel Jews prior to 586 BC. Jesus described the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD as the sign of His wrath on the Jewish Nation and proof He reigns in the clouds of heaven in Matthew 24. Furthermore, one day this judgment will break forth into a final, ultimate display of wrath for which there is no escape.

Jeremiah 46:10 For that day belongs to the Lord God of hosts, A day of vengeance, so as to avenge Himself on His foes; And the sword will devour and be satiated And drink its fill of their blood; For there will be a slaughter for the Lord God of hosts, In the land of the north by the river Euphrates.

Dead bodies and wounded heads: Before us is imagery of the Bonecrusher splintering the enemies of God littering an ancient battlefield with bleeding, broken bodies. The psalmist assures us that the enemies of God will suffer ultimate, irreversible, eternal defeat.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

On this canvas of Holy Writ, the Holy Spirit sketches a scene of the Champion King-Priest returning home as a Victor from a fierce battle.

With blood on his garments and sweat on His brow, He stops by a stream to refresh himself with a drink of water and to reflect on the marvels of this victory. With His enemies crushed, and His people safe, He holds His head high with dignity, honor, and joy.

The battlefield was Calvary wherein our Lord faced the trinity of evil: Satan, sin, and death. Having given His all to save His people, He returns to the Father as Heaven's Champion -- a reference to His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:32-37).

This is the King-Priest of the psalm; the Lion-Lamb of Revelation chapter five; the One with a "sword in His mouth:

"He that treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God;" the "**KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS**;" and, He that orders the fowls of the air to "eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great" (Revelation 19:15ff).

The Lord Jesus Christ has been crowned, and he is sitting at the right hand of God in authority over heaven and earth.

Does this King-Priest know you as one of His own? Your eternal destiny will be determined by your relationship to this King. Acknowledge Him now, bow the knee now, own Him as your Lord and Master in this life, and He will be your Savior on the day you are called to cross Jordan's River into the presence of Almighty God (Romans 10:9, 10).

(1) "The plural form *Adonai*, like the plural form *Elohim*, is regularly used with singular verbs and modifiers, so it is best to construe the Name as an "emphatic plural" or "plural of majesty." When the plural is formed using a singular possessive ending ("*my Lords*"), it always refers to God, and occurs over 300 times in the Tanakh in this form" (Source: http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Names_of_G-d/Adonai/adonai.html).

10. The Gospel of Isaiah

God's Champion ~ The Coming King

Isaiah 9:1-6



The Champion that Ushers in the Golden Age

How do you describe the kingdom of God without being dreamy and idealistic? In this passage, Isaiah describes the Golden Age in the context of war and the impending invasion of Assyria, one of Israel's most fierce and cruel enemies.

Isaiah receives his revelation at the threshold of the Syro-Ephraimite War while Israel and Syria were pressing Judah to form an alliance to resist Assyrian expansion (Isaiah 7:1ff). These were dark, depressing days where the black scarecrow of fear plucked hope out of hearts. Two groups of people emerged: (A) the people driven by fear, the neglect of God, and defiance (Isaiah 8:4, 9-16; 21-22); and, (B) Isaiah and the faithful who feared God and waited on Him

during the midnight hours when God hid his face from Jerusalem (Isaiah 8:12, 17, 20).

The chapter divisions in the Bible are not "inspired!" The message in chapter nine should not be separated from the context of chapter eight. Chapter nine is a continuation of God's revelation of "what the LORD said to me (Isaiah)" beginning in chapter eight verse one. Chapter eight is the stormy midnight of the nation; chapter nine is the light of dawn.

Isaiah's Gospel: the End of Horror

Isaiah 9:1 Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. (Ellicott's translation: Surely there is no gloom to her that was afflicted. In the former time he brought shame on the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter he bringeth honour on the way by the sea, beyond Jordan, the circuit of the Gentiles).

Isaiah contains the most sophisticated Hebrew in the Old Testament and is at times tough to translate even by the most competent Hebrew scholars. This is the case here. Therefore, Ellicott's translation is provided.

Chapter eight closes with a description of spiritual darkness wherein afflicted people, cursed their earthly king and the God they neglected (8:21). In fact, the last verse in chapter 8 describes the nation's political crisis in terms of doom and gloom: "trouble," "darkness," "dimness," "anguish," and "darkness." "Darkness" is used twice to emphasize how the sounds of death whistled through the forests of the nation (7:2).

Northern Israel was the region from where rapacious armies invaded Samaria and Judah. Consequently, the northern tribes like Zebulun and Naphtali were the first to feel the sting of war. In New Testament terminology, Zebulun and Naphtali represent the upper and lower region of Galilee.

The first expression in chapter nine begins with "*no more*" gloom and anguish for the afflicted nation. This is Isaiah's gospel! No more darkness for the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. No more death and destruction and despair. The Sun has risen. What a comfort!!

But, questions remain like "how" "when" "where" and by "who?"

The Dawn Appears

2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

"The people that walked in the darkness" of terrifying invading armies are Zebulun and Naphtali. A great light appears. It is contrasted with the dark

clouds of war. The Sun peaks over the mountains, and its rays of light spread hope on the land of graveyards and broken dreams. That "*great light*" is the life and ministry of Christ in Galilee. The perfect tense is used. "*The light shined,*" as if it were already a fact! And, it was a fact -- in the mind of God.

Joy of Victory

3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

A silver age occurred in Israel under the reign of Solomon, but for some reason, joy was lacking -- maybe, because of Solomon's public works and heavy taxation of the people. At his death, the northern tribes had had enough and petitioned Rehoboam to slash taxes. When Solomon's son refused, the ten tribes seceded from the union of tribes. Kind of like the South seceding from the Union prior to the Civil War over the Morrell tax levied on Southern trade by the North. The miserable result was national autonomy, idolatry, lawlessness, war and devastation. And, Zebulun and Naphtali were the first to feel the sting of God's chastisement on the northern tribes for their idolatry.

A Golden Age is announced. Joy enters the nation once more. The picture is one of happiness and celebration at the end of the harvest. Isaiah provides a second illustration of jubilation -- the joy of a victorious army dividing the spoils of war. This is true joy, spiritual felicity in contrast with the temporal and outward prosperity under Solomon and King Uzziah.

4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

Reasons for the ecstasy are announced. "*Thou*" refers to the LORD." A "*yoke*" refers to bondage. God launched a freedom movement, and it is described as breaking the yoke of tyranny and oppression of a tyrant; as breaking the rod of police enforcement by a cruel and greedy dictatorship. He compares the joy and festivity to the day when Gideon freed the nation from the rapacious despotism of the Midianites. The sudden change of circumstances from oppression to prosperity and from slavery to freedom gave birth to the joy of independence.

5 For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. (Elliot: "Every boot of the warrior that tramps noisily, and the cloak rolled in blood, are (i.e., shall be) for burning, (as) fuel for fire).

War is a nasty affair! Before us are images of panic, confusion, broken bodies, and blood-soaked robes! The imagery of victors gathering the spoils of war off corpses continues. With the victory won and peace assured, the weapons of war

and bloody garments are collected and burned. Here, God's people are seen as victors not victims (1 John 5:4).

Why such optimism? What kind of leadership could provide anemic Judah with such a victory? How could such a small nation not only survive, but thrive against such a cruel, superior force represented by the Assyrians? The answer is in the next verse.

Introduction of the Champion

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

There can be no flock without a shepherd; no Kingdom without a King; no victory without a victor; no triumph against powerful enemies without a wise, powerful champion. No ordinary military officer could pull off such a victory and usher in the Golden Age as described in 9:1-5. Something else is going on.

How could such a dynamic victory be achieved against such a monstrous foe? Isaiah asserts it was because of a gift -- a very special gift -- the gift of a child! A little boy was born to lead the campaign against Israel's arch enemy. This was no ordinary boy. He was a Son -- a gift of God. The Pual verb "*given*" (dL;yU) emphasizes the intense, extraordinary character of this gift. "For a child was born . . . but a Son was GIVEN!!"

To whom was this great gift delivered? Isaiah says it was given "to us," the survivors of judgment, the faithful remnant, the elect of God.

What did this Gift achieve? The noun "*government*" is used only here and could be translated "dominion" or "rule" or "campaign." The text says, "the government was upon his shoulder." The verb "*shall be*" (yhiîT.w:) should be translated "*was upon.*" Why did survivors enjoy such a stupendous victory? Because the entire campaign against Israel's terrifying enemy was upon the shoulders of this Commander Son!

The Hebrew word "*shoulder*" is singular which depicts the strength of this Champion. In not saying "*shoulders*" (plural), Isaiah hints at the ease this Commander has in ruling the nations.

Isaiah introduces us to this Champion. He has a name bearing lofty titles. Ellicott informs us that, "The kings of Egypt and Assyria with whom his nation had been brought into contact delighted in long lists of epithetic names (e.g., 'the great king, the king unrivaled, the protector of the just, the noble warrior.' Inscription of, Sennacherib in Records of the Past, i. p. 25)." Thus, the series of titles composing the name are designed to show us the excellencies of this Champion. Four titles are given, but they compose one Name. Each title takes us deeper into the majesty and mystery of this Hero.

Wonderful-Counselor:

This title could be translated "*wonderful in counsel*" or "*the secrets of a competent counselor*." The emphasis is upon the wisdom and strategy that broke the back of the enemy and ushered in the Golden Age. Isaiah doesn't simply want us to merely respect this Champion, but to admire and adore the wonder of His wisdom.

The Mighty God (El Gibbor):

This is a title that describes the power and strength of this Champion. It is one thing to know what to do, and another thing to have the resources to do it. All our struggles are the result of not knowing what to do, or knowing what to do and not having the ability to do it. Here, this Leader seems to possess the power of the gods. He knew what to do and had the power to do it. The title, however, is not "*Elohim*" but "*El*," that is, the Champion not only has the power of a god, He is God (El)!

The everlasting Father" or "Father of Eternity" (d(;pybia)):

This appellation is problematic in that Christian theology does not permit us to blend personalities in the Godhead; that is, Christianity teaches there is only one God in substance, but three personalities in the Divine Being. Isaiah steps on the toes of Christian theologians a little bit here as he does not seem shy about calling the Son "*Father*." But, we can resolve this difficulty by the context. This Champion is not all muscle and no heart. He is not a head of state out of touch with the concerns of the people. This Commander and Chief led His flock like a loving, caring father would provide and protect His children. As Father of the survivors (the remnant), He led with compassion. The expression "*everlasting*" emphasizes His perpetuity; that is, this Champion is the ultimate, final Leader-Father-figure that saves the people of God.

Prince of Peace (~Al)v'-rf;):

This banner can be translated "*Captain of Peace*." When He entered the war, enemies represented by the Assyrians were devastated and the survivors saved. Peace was obtained because this Prince of Peace was first of all a savage, bone-crushing, sword-swinging Warrior that filled coffins with broken bodies of rebels against God. With the war ended, peace was in the air.

"*Peace*," what a wonderful word! Everyone wants peace, but there is no peace without the Prince of Peace. Peace and goodwill to men come through Jesus Christ, not the work of the United Nations or acts of state. He is the Prince of Peace because He treads down proud men in rebellion against God's law-order, and gives grace to repentant sinners. Shalom is not just the absence of conflict, but restoration to God and His law-word. The *shalom* is a result of political unity organized around this Captain and His command. There will never be

world peace as long as there are rebels against God's law-order and His Son. But, peace is available to those who surrender to His authority now (cf. Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21-22; John 16:7, 13; Romans 10:9, 10).

7 Of the increase of his government (rule) and peace (shalom) there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this

Isaiah's presentation of Judah's Champion is delivered to us in imagery of ancient warfare. This Champion is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who single handedly defeated man's triple enemy: Satan, sin, and death. The vision is delivered to us in the perfect tense as if in Isaiah's time the final battle had already been fought and the Golden Age achieved. Because Isaiah was able to enter the mind of God to read the last chapter of history, Isaiah presents the Davidic King and His reign of peace as a fact. Because we can look back from this side of the cross, we understand that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. With our Lord resurrected from the dead and sitting in session at the right hand of God, this passage makes tremendous sense.

The "*increase of his government*" and "*peace*" is a reference to eternal blessings of our Lord's reign procured by His victory at the cross.

"*Upon the throne of David*" communicates to us that this Champion is the "*son of David,*" the "*Messiah,*" "*the King of Israel,*" the rightful Heir to the throne. This is Christ the King reigning on the throne of true Israel. But, this is a prophecy wherein the fulfillment is greater than the promise! Christ, by virtue of His resurrection life received the ultimate commission to rule at the "*right hand of God.*" Israel's Prince is not only Israel's King, but "*King of the Nations*" and Supreme "*Ruler of kings on earth*" (Acts 2:34; Psalms 110; Jeremiah 10:7; Revelation 1:5).

The expression "*to order it*" is a reference to moral qualities of the Ruler and His ability to govern with sensibility rather than out of sheer force and might; that is, this is a Captain that exercises true justice. He is the incorruptible Judge, Lawgiver, and King (Isaiah 33:22). With Christ enthroned at the right hand of God, justice is achieved. "*from henceforth even forever*" is a reference to the eternal character of His reign. This Golden Age is nothing less than the kingdom of God. Though Isaiah speaks in the past tense as if this has already happened, he completes his prophecy in the imperfect tense, "The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall accomplish this."

"*The zeal of the LORD*" is holy jealousy at work to preserve that which is precious to Him. His people are His treasure, and He will usher in this Golden Age so their joy may be full. The title "LORD of hosts" is a reference to all the armies of God and the resources of Heaven. Let us not forget that when God

sent His beloved Son to the cross to wage war against Satan, sin, and death, it cost Him His Precious All.

In conclusion, Isaiah paints the Davidic King on the canvas of an ancient battlefield as a Champion crushing Israel's enemies and saving the survivors of judgment. The cruel Assyrians that spread death, destruction, and misery on earth are appropriate symbols of the real enemies of man: Satan, sin, and death. The Champion that arises out of this nation to crush the adversaries of man is none other than the Son of God. This mysterious personality is the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the Gift, the Son given to save sinners from their sins. Thus, Isaiah's masterpiece was fulfilled on the landscape of Israel beginning around 29 AD. John explains it this way:

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

11. The Gospel of Comfort

Isaiah 40

The Voice Crying in the Wilderness



1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

The verb "**comfort**" (*nacham*, plural) is a present active Piel imperative calling for intensive action. It is used twice for a double-double emphasis. God's comforts are always in the plural: "*His mercies (plural) are new every morning.*"

The text could be translated, "**COMFORT! COMFORT! COMFORT! COMFORT!**
ye my people!!!!

"**saith your God:**" Elohim is the source of authority -- the One spreading His cloak over His people and calling for relief.

"The phrase "**my people**" is a distinct echo of Hos. ii. 1. *Lo Ammi* (i.e. "*not my people,*") has been brought back to his true position as *Ammi* (i.e. "*my people*")." (Ellicott)

"**Saith your God**" is a reference to the Source of the double imperative, the LORD, Creator of Heaven and Earth. The "**ye**" refers to Isaiah; that is, God called Isaiah to deliver the everlasting gospel to "*Ammi*" (i.e., "my people.")

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

"Speak" is another Piel verb commanding the evangelist to announce "pardon" and "forgiveness." "Her warfare" appears to be a reference to the 70 year captivity in Babylon. "Her iniquity" is the nation's plunge into idolatry that brought on the nation's exile to Babylon.

"*Comfortably*" is formed from the noun "*heart*" (*leb*) or "*soul*;" that is, Isaiah was to reflect in his tones the tenderness and care of the Lord, and he was to appeal to the "heart" of Jerusalem.

3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

A faint voice is heard in the desert . . . the LORD is coming. Prepare. Clear the road. Fill up the potholes. Remove the stones. Repent. Change your habits. Make way for the King. Arrange yourself under His authority.

Ultimately, John the Baptist embodied the hope of this prophecy.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

"*Valley*" is a metaphor for humility and humble circumstances. "**Mountain**" is a metaphor for pride and exaltation. "*Crooked*" and "*rough*" places are metaphors of degradation, depravity, and a state of moral compromise. When the King arrives surrender to him.

5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

His glory was revealed in bringing His exiles out of Babylon, and most importantly, his glory was revealed in sending His Son to be the Savior of the World.

THE BAD NEWS

6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field:

7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Withering grass is a symbol of death. Man is mortal; God is immortal; man's words are temporal; God's words are eternal.

This is Isaiah's way of saying, "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*;" and, "*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 3:23; 6:23).

THE GOOD NEWS

9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

A new section begins.

Zion is in the objective case. Many of the words / verbs are feminine. Some unknown female evangelizer is called to a high mountain to announce "good tiding." She calls Jerusalem to join her and to announce to the cities of Judah the visitation of God upon the nation.

"Get thee up" to a high mountain is an imperative. Let everyone see and hear the good news.

This is the first time the term "gospel," "good tiding" (Hebrew: *basar*; Greek: *euangelion*) is used in Scripture. It means "to make smooth," "to gladden," and to sweeten.

"Behold your God" is an interjection by the holy-huckster / street-vender (Hey there!). It is an ideal seen in the exiles' return from Babylon, and the actual and marvelous fulfillment in the appearance of Christ in history (John 1:1-3, 14, 18).

John the Baptist declared "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).

10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

Sweet, humble Jesus, the tender shoot out of dry ground, is the "arm of God," the might and power of God (Isaiah 53). He rewards those who trust Him with eternal life.

"His arm shall rule for him:" "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" - Matthew 12:28 .

"His reward:" 'That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life' - John 3:35.

"and his work before him:" The LORD God is ready, willing, and able to execute his work effectually. Consequently, men must prepare to adjust their plans when standing before a man which is in his power.

11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

"He shall feed his flock" and "gather the lambs in his arm" is Isaiah's gospel. "Feed," "gather," "carry," and "lead" are images of salvation.

The LORD God is portrayed as a tender, caring shepherd. Ellicott notes: "The tender care of the shepherd for the ewes and lambs finds a parallel in Jacob's pleas (Genesis 33:13)" and ultimately in the nail-pierced hands of the Good Shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep (John 10:11, 14). Moreover, Christ is the Good Shepherd that now sits at the right hand of God Like Jacob, He tenderly leads the flock -- into the kingdom of God across Jordan's River.

If Jacob was so lovingly and tender towards his flock, why do we think God does not care for us? Is the God of Jacob less tender than Jacob who wrestled with the angel of God?

QUERIES FOR THE AGES

12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

Another section begins expanding the thought of the eternal majesty of the LORD - a contrast with the powerlessness of the idols.

Our thoughts of God are too small, puny, and weak. Isaiah calls us to open our eyes and to see Him holding the oceans in the palm of his hand; as One measuring the distance of the stars; as One having calculate the amount of dust-pebbles on the seashore.; as One Who weighs the Himalayas, the Rocky Mountains, and Andes on His scales. If we don't feel small, we are not thinking.

If God holds the oceans in his hand, and weighs the mountain in his hand, why do we worry about where we are going to find bread and water?

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? 14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

Isaiah continues to chop down tall timber and to human man by considering the infinite knowledge of the LORD. We need guides and counselors, but the LORD has all knowledge and needs no counsel.

Who has taught the LORD one fact, one truth, one principle? Think of it! The LORD God has never learned anything for eternity because He is the Source of all knowledge!! If we don't feel "small", we are not thinking.

15 Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

The entire media industry wants us to focus all our attention on what local, national, and international politicians are doing as if our whole destiny depends on what these weak, ignorant, flawed cable-pullers say and do.

The nations who have invented a whole universe of futile occupations that are professionally unsatisfying and spiritually empty are as a drop in the bucket.

The power-hungry fame-seekers that strut around seeking interviews from news anchor to news anchor are so insignificant they are like a drop in the bucket of a CATERPILLAR 6060 and dust on the scales of TRACTOMAS SEMI-TR 18 wheeler.

16 And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

To the Hebrew nation, offering a burnt offering at the temple was a way to prove a man's devotion to God and the most significant act of worship a man could perform.

In the minds of Hebrews, the largest forests were those in Lebanon, and offering a burnt offering was the highest, most-honoring form of worship . . . but the Isaiah offers this corrective. The Lord warrants more than butter on bread and a lamb on an altar.

The LORD God deserves the biggest and the best. These Lebanese forests and the animals therein, if used to burn burnt offering to the LORD, are but toothpicks on the brazen altar; pennies in the offering plate; dams on the streets of Calcutta; baby locks in a wig store; a two card deck in a poker game; a baby stroller in a Las Vegas G0-Cart race; notes on a one string guitar; you get the point.

The LORD God worth more than all burnt offerings that the cedars of Lebanon could supply.

17 All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

The word "*vanity*" (*tohu*) means chaos. See Genesis 1:2—one of Isaiah's favorite phrases (Isaiah 24:10,29:21;34:11).

All created beings shrink to nothing in comparison with the Creator (Henry). The *Koh-i-Noor* diamond is worth over 2 billion dollars in the minds of men is but a pebble on the beach to the LORD.

18 To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? 19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. 20 He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.

With a sarcastic and defamatory tone, Isaiah taunts the idol makers: You idol markers are about as sharp as a marble; a few cards short of a full deck; a few eggs short of a dozen; a few French fries short of a happy meal; etc.

21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22 It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

"*Have ye not known*" is a Divine query designed to humble the minds of men -- a summons to expand their estimations about the LORD.

"*Have ye not heard*" is a summons to reflect on the teachings of the mothers and faith; on Levitical instructors; on the rabbinic traditions taught to the nation.

"*from the beginning*:" Has not the Creator's power and Divine perfection been revealed from the beginning of time; from Genesis one and the formation of the foundations of the earth. "Circle of the earth" appears to reference a circular flat earth or the rotation of the Sun around this sphere; that is God is seated in authority over the whole earth.

"*stretches out the heavens*" is a reference to the stars. In the minds of Biblical men, the stars were as great in number as the sands of the seashore (Genesis 22:17) and simply could not be numbered! The vast reaches of the heavenly spaces were, and are, utterly incomprehensible to the minds of finite man.

"as grasshoppers" is a literary device called "personification" -- a reference to God on high looking down at people who appear to be tiny grasshoppers.

23 That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

All the great men of power, wealth, and influence are brought to nothing; that is, not only does God not need them, he frustrates their plans and expresses contempt for their pompous buffoonery. "He can strip off their honors and glory, and obliterate even their names" (Barnes).

24 Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

We need to add the adverb "*hardly*" or "*barely*" to make sense of this passage: "*They shall hardly be planted.*" Actually, the statements are a question, "*They will NOT be planted . . . sown . . . take root,*" will they?

Three "*nots*" or negations are used before the three verbs "*planted,*" "*sown,*" and "*take root.*" Before the eternities of God, the empires of this world are withered before they can be planted: Chicken Itza (Mexico), the Acropolis of Athens (Greece), Petra (Jordan), and Macchu Picchu (Perus) come to mind.

25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

The "ye" refers back to the idol makers in verse 18. The question is posed to shed light on the absurdity of idolatry as a comfort to God's people. What finite image can reflect truth about this infinite Creator? What figurine can idolaters make that do not disgrace the character and nature of this boundless God?

26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

Idolaters are fascinated with the Zodiac signs and the stars. The Lord points to the heavens and queries them again: Who created these lights in the sky? Who can count them, much less know their names. But, God knows their number and the name of each star. God is great and God is strong. Every idol limits God and shames Him.

Lift up your eyes to heavens and contemplate the wonders of the midnight sky that provide evidence of God's power, knowledge, and presence. Since He is larger than His creation, what finite, created thing can represent the absolute God? The answer is: NOTHING!

"that bringeth out their host by number:" The word "*host*" means armies. The phrase alludes to the fact that the heavenly bodies seem to be marshalled, or regularly arrayed as infantry standing at attention; that they keep their place in line, preserve their order, and are apparently led on from the east to the west, like a vast army under a mighty leader. He is *Lord of Sabaoth*, the heavenly hosts (Job 38:32) (J-F-B). Consider that night after night, year after year, and decades after decades, the military formation of the stars do not break rank. What kind of God do we have that produces such precision? Everything man makes falls apart and breaks.

"he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might" reminds us of how Adam named the animals. What kind of IQ "might" does God have to call millions / billions / trillions of stars by name?

The giant telescopes of the present day have only begun to reveal the immense numbers and fantastic variety of the stars. With literally billions of galaxies, and billions of stars in every galaxy, the number of the stars seems to increase almost without limit. The variety is equally amazing—red giants, white dwarfs, Cepheid variables, neutron stars, pulsars, and on and on! (Morris)

That the heavens with a perfect rotation through space came into existence by accident (a big bang) is sheer nonsense. With trillions of stars and billions of working parts, what could possibly go wrong?

The space shuttle can fall apart . . . but this vast, complex universe that is in constant motion at the speed of light does not break down, come apart, or break apart. Why?

"for that he is strong in power; not one faileth" refers to the stability of the universe -- a fragile universe held together by the power of Christ (Colossians 1:17).

27 *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?*

In this query, God rebukes the folly of idolaters . . . and at the same time reproves those in Israel doubting His love. Since doubt is the mother of all evil, and "the elephant in the room," God reproves the conclusions of skeptics and head shakers with a probing question: If God knows trillions of stars by name and counts the grains of sand on the seashore, why would any of us say, "My way is hid from the LORD?"

The vocative, "*O Jacob*" and "*Israel*," refers to the remnant in Babylon who felt like God was blind and indifferent to their troubles.

The word "*way*" is a metaphor for burdensome circumstances.

The word "*hid*" (*saw'tar*) means "to conceal." It refers to something buried and out of sight. The remnant could not have been more wrong in thinking that God had forgotten them.

What a rebuke to us! Who doesn't struggle with God's timing and the feeling that God is blind to our needs? Why do we doubt the LORD when are hopes are delayed? Why do we come up with such foolish conclusions that my way is hid from the Him? Most likely, our vision of God is too small and our perspective on problems is too big.

"His providence comprehends all things, and nothing is exempted from it: and the counsels by which he governs all the world, and, in an especial manner, the affairs of his people, are far above the reach of any human understanding; and therefore we act ignorantly and foolishly if we pass a rash judgment upon the ways of the infinitely wise God"
(Benson)

28 *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.*

The pronoun "*thou*" could refer to idol makers or even to Israelites. It is a question designed to comfort His people. Some in among the remnant struggled with doubt wondering why God was taking so long to hear their pleas. That He "*fainteth not*" supplies grounds for comfort.(40:1).

The question "*hast thou not known*" is a rebuke of ignorance and forgetfulness.

"*hast thou not heard*" is a reference to the teaching of parents, Levites, and sages in Israel.

"everlasting God:" He comforts His people by calling them to reflect on theology: God is everlasting and does not change. Circumstances change. Men change. But, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). If He does not change, why is our theology transformed by changing circumstances? No wonder the Scripture says, "This is the victory (nike) that overcomes the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). It is not the product of faith that is the victory, but the presence of faith that is the victory.

"Creator of the ends of the earth" reference God's sovereignty, ownership, and authority over the whole world. Note the "earth" has boundaries. The earth is not infinite.

"fainteth" and *"weary"* are characteristics of man. Because God is never exhausted or exasperated, he is able to guard, guide, and give to His people what they need.

"no searching of his understanding" begins with a negation. What man can even begin to discover the height, depth, and width of His infinite knowledge?

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

God not only has strength for Himself, but an endless supply of power for the weakest of creatures. He is never tired of bearing our burdens, hearing our honest prayers, or defending us against our foes.

But, the condition of being a recipient of this kind of power depends, in part, upon us recognizing our own fragility and feebleness. Strength is not earned. It is a gift of grace. Strength is not given to the fit but to the frail.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

This text sets up the hope and promise of verse 31. Though the energy of youth, and the power of athletes fail, there is a strength from God that does not fail, fizzle, fold, or flounder.

Yes, the strength of young men fail, but those that wait upon the Lord have an inexhaustible supply of life-giving power available to them.

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

We wait, not upon man or government or international policies, but upon the LORD. The term "wait" (*qu'vah*) is translated "together" in Genesis 1:9; marking off boundaries in 1 Kings 7:23; collecting horses in 1 Kings 10:28; "look for light" in Job 3:9; "looketh for the reward" in Job 7:2; "looked" in Isaiah 5:4; 5:7;

and, "O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble" Isaiah 33:2).

The meaning behind the term "wait" includes faith and obedience, to hold yourself together, and to look to God to supply the strength you need.

Who is the LORD upon Whom we are called to wait?

He is the One who commands comforts (plural) for His people (40:1).

He is the One Who pardons iniquities (40:2).

He is the One Who ways are straight (40:3-4)

He is the One Who keeps His word . . . Whose Word stands forever (40:5) 8)

He is the omnipotent One with a mighty arm who rewards those that trust Him (40:10).

He is the One Who gently, tenderly cares for His flock (40:11).

He is the omnipresent One who holds the waters in His hands and weighs the mountain on His scales (40:12).

He is the omniscient One Who is the Source of all knowledge, wisdom, and understanding (40:13-14).

He is the One who knows the nations and counts the islands in this world (13:15).

He is the One Who created man and the constellations (40:22).

He is the One Who removes kings, nullifies, the work of judges, and frustrates the plans of government officials (40:23-24).

He is the omniscient One who created the heavens and knows all the stars by name (40:25).

He is the everlasting God who is never weary, never tired, and never distressed (4:28).

He is the One Who strengthens the weak and heals the sick (40:29).

Three promises are given. Those they wait shall . . .

-"*mount up with wings as eagles*" refers to the effortlessness of faith -- swift and strong; this is the life of rest -- as a bird who is lifted up by the winds of adversity. We have here an image of manly, stately, dignified, holy piety . . . separation from the world while having a Divine perspective on life and a fierce devotion to the will of God.

-"*run and not be weary*" refers to the fast stride of the commercial world. Those who trust God are manly under trial serving without complaining -- busy, but never bothered.

-"*walk and not faint*" refers to the slow, step-by-step pace of daily duties; that in every way and in every detail, they are able to please God and not quit.

Some see in these illustrations three activities of the Christian life: worship, service, and walking with God.

The Chaldee renders it, 'They who trust in the Lord shall be gathered from the captivity, and shall increase their strength, and renew their youth as a germ which grows up; upon wings of eagles shall they run and not be fatigued.' (Barnes)

"*Wait*" is Isaiah's gospel invitation term: look away from the false hopes of idols, trust, gather around him, unite yourself to Him, believe, collect all that you have and invest it in the LORD, surrender your precious all to Him, develop a new gestalt . . . and a new government in your life centered around Him. Then and only then will the promises of this verse be yours.

12. The Gospel of Power

Isaiah 53

The Arm of the Lord

Isaiah 53



700 years before Jesus' crucifixion *the suffering and triumph* of the Savior-Servant was foretold by the prophet, Isaiah.

This prophesy begins the last three verses of Isaiah 52 and continues to the end of Isaiah 53.

Its foretelling is found in fifteen verses, broken into five, 3-verse sections as follows:

Prudence & Preeminence of the Servant - Isaiah 52:13-15

Person of the Servant - Isaiah 53:1-3

Passion of the Servant - Isaiah 53:4-6

Passivity of the Servant - Isaiah 53:7-9

Introduction to Isaiah 53:1-5

This text reveals the barbell strength of the "*Arm of the Lord*" exerted at Calvary to save sinners.

Every word ripples with power. Entire New Testament themes regarding the person and work of our Lord are compressed into the beef and brawn of these phrases.

The text begins with a question, "*to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*"

All the wisdom, knowledge, eternal power, force, and vigor of the durable, incorruptible, strength, and bone-crushing muscle of God is a reference to the Babe in Bethlehem wrapped in swaddling clothes, and are summed up in Isaiah's Messianic metaphor, "*the arm of the Lord.*" He is none other than "*El-Shaddai,*" - a brawny title derived from the male deltoids, biceps, and pectoral muscle groups.

The answer to the question "*to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed*" is the disciples.

The Messiah's humanity, purity, vulnerability, innocence, sensitivities, and gentleness are contained in the description, "He grew up before him as a tender shoot."

The "*dry ground*" references the abusive, unfriendly, ungodly, chilly, censorious and hostile depravity of Jesus' opponents where He chose to live. He was God's King carving out a kingdom built on moral power.

When the disciples met the Christ, there was nothing unusual about his appearance. He was not physically bigger or more handsome than other men. There was no outstanding manly beauty that lured men to Him. He was not the kind of man people would have voted for the title of Mr. Universe, but there was no criticism of him being effeminate. He was in all respects, a man's man.

In his external form and body, he was just a normal, commonplace, garden-variety Hebrew. All the depictions of a chiseled, well-groomed Christ by painters are creations of men and not divinely inspired.

But, in spirit, masculine, strength, power, wisdom, and ax-grinding confrontation bulldozed its way through the citadels of Jewish corruption conquering hardened hearts.

The title "man of sorrows acquainted with grief" embraces all of our Lord's suffering and the spiritual hypertrophy He experienced due to the distresses, agitations, cares, pressures, burdens, afflictions, grievances, heartbreaks, disappointments, hurts, strains and pains that He endured among the Jews of that day.

The nation's stunning ridicule, disdain, neglect, scorn, snobbery, hate, and contempt for Christ by the Jews is compressed into the phrases "He was despised" and we "esteemed him not."

The phrase "*He has born our grief and carried our sorrows*" refers to His broad-shouldered power to dead lift the burdens, sickness, infirmities, maladies, ailments, disorders, emotional and mental distress that weighs down humanity.

On top of this, the disciples observed that not only did Christ suffer because of the "*contradiction of sinners against himself*," but a unique suffering labeled "*smitten of God*" became the optimum strength test during His agony on the cross.

To suffer at the hands of men is one matter, but suffering caused by Heaven itself is quite another.

To endure abuse by irascible men takes manly strength, but to endure the punishment of an offended deity takes the muscular grit of *El-Shaddai*.

Some men are called to endure the anger of men, but the "arm of the Lord" endured the wrath of God.

Our Lord's feverish agony and "*chastisement*" at the cross caused by the weight of our carnal sins, godlessness, rebellion, delinquency, neglects, immorality, malfeasance, prurience, pride, fleshly attractions, promiscuity, concupiscence, perversity, obscenity, profanity, vulgarity, sensuality, anger, wrath, dissensions, slander, contumelies, sedition and the like are compressed into terms like "*our transgressions*" and "*our iniquities*" (Galatians 5:19ff).

The phrases "*wounded*" and "*bruised for our iniquities*" reference our Lord's entire endurance test at the cross including his whippings, beatings, impalement, discomfort, pains, throes, agony, misery, passion, torment, bleeding, thirst, mental and emotional and physical anguish.

The phrase by "*his stripes are we healed*" refers to life-saving benefits procured by our Lord's perseverance at the cross, and includes the gleaming benedictions of salvation, reconciliation, forgiveness, justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, and resurrection from the dead.

All these salvic cures are needed because of the infirmities and disorders caused by man eating fruit from the Poisonous Tree.

The entire history of Adam's autonomous race with its shameful sin and rebellion against God are simply summed up as "*All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way*" (53:6).

We can do a lot worse, but we can hardly do better than to consider the barbell power of the "*Arm of the Lord*" exerted at Calvary to save sinners.

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing, my great Redeemer's praise."

A Summary of 53:6.

Notice that in this single verse

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- 1) Isaiah uses a shepherd's pastoral term to frame mankind's universal condition- "*As sheep have gone astray.*"
- 2) Begins and ends with "*all*", and includes "*every one*" – the universality of sin; and,
- 3) Relates both the universal condition of mankind ("*turned away*") and the cure for that condition ("*laid on His Servant the iniquity of us all*")

Mankind's universal condition: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;" that is, all men have turned away from God's law to follow their own rules.

The condition's cure (remedy): "And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all;" that is, He paid the \penalty of the law for our sins.

Notice that verse 6 is immediately preceded by, " . . . *and with his stripes we are healed.*"

Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

"*Healed*" is a restoring. In the Hebrew, *raphah*, means "*to mend; repair; make whole*".

The context of Isaiah 53 is clearly about restoring the spiritual health of the soul, not about physical healing. Notice the terms "*rejected*" and "*sorrows*" and "*grief*" and "*despised*" in verse 3 refer to vexations of the soul not diseases within a body. However, Christ's redemption ultimately includes reclamation of the body (Romans 8:10ff).

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Jesus's heart was broken so that our souls could be restored. Since the physical flesh is temporal while the soul is eternal, the condition of our soul should be valued more than our physical condition.

Healing of the body has its hope in the second coming of Christ and the resurrection from the dead (1 Corinthians 15).

Notice the imagery of bearing and carrying – “borne” and “carrying” and “smitten” and “afflicted” in verse 4; “was upon Him” in verse 4; and, “wounded for” and “bruised for” and “bare” in verse 5 – imagery for sacrifice . . . for substitution . . . for being punished for the crimes of another.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 53:12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Jesus bore the cross so that we might be free of the penalty of sin and its burdens. Note that parallel passage, 1 Peter 2:24-25, teaches that we are returned unto the Shepherd “of our souls”.

“Who his own self bare 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. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” — 1 Peter 2:24-25

“He restoreth my soul” — Psalm 23:3a

Jesus came to accomplish three works:

- To reveal the Father – “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9)
- To establish His church – “Upon this rock, I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18)
- To save the lost – “the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10)

The souls of the lost are described:

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs (incurable diseases -moral), and carried our sorrows (mental, emotional, spiritual pain) yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

This Lamb had his throat slashed, slit, and split for our sins: stricken, smitten, and afflicted . . .

Isaiah 53:4 — smitten of God.

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Malachi 4:2 provides this imagery of the Savior's accomplishments: "the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings".

The idea here is deliverance and restoration. The souls of men are rescued (Exodus 3:8) and restored by His atonement.

The Substitutionary Atonement can be Summarized:

God said through His prophet, Ezekiel, "*The soul that sins shall die*" (Ezekiel 18:20)

God said through His apostle: "*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23)

Therefore, all souls are doomed to die eternal death.

But, there is good news:

"But God commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." ("substitutionary atonement", Romans 5:8)

This is that transaction: "*He who knew no sin became sin for us, so we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

"He (God) shall see the travail of His (Jesus's) soul, and shall be satisfied". The Lamb of God was sacrificed and God was satisfied (i.e., "propitiation", Isaiah 53:11a)

All mankind is offered God's gift (Ephesians 2:8, Romans 6:23, 1 John 5:11) of eternal life, but like any gift, it needs to be accepted before it can be received.

13. The Gospel's Wonderful Effects

Isaiah 61



Isaiah was a man in tune with the Spirit — a man who saw beyond his time — even to the new heavens and new earth.

Understanding Isaiah can be a challenge.

His gospel comes to us through God's work in Israel with rich metaphors and Hebrew phrases that must be interpreted in light of Hebrew mind. The modern mind must understand *that the New Testament has authority over the Old Testament.*

1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

This passage is in the form of a *sililoquy* –that is, speaking one’s thoughts out loud to one’s self as if no one is there to listen.

Who is the “*me*” in this chorus? This passage was quoted by our Lord In Luke 4:16-22; and, therefore, must be interpreted in light of the New Testament gospel.

However, one must also take into account this “*good news*” applied to the exiles in Babylon who were ordered by Cyrus the Great, the Persian Messiah (45:1), to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple – a work which set the stage for the ultimate Messiah to fulfill His kingdom mission in Israel at Calvary.

Having the “*Spirit of Adonai YHWH*” upon (over) one’s being is due to the fact YHWH anointed him. The “*anointing*” (*mashach*) by YHWH is the means of declaring the authority of a king, prophet, or priest. Jesus holds all three offices. We get the title “*Messiah*” from the word “*anointed*” (*mashach*).

The term “*good news*” is the word *euangelion* in Greek – the “*evangel.*”

The term “*meek*” (*anav*) describes those for whom the good news is proclaimed: that is, to the brokenhearted (smashed hearts), to the captives, and to prisoners; to those prepared by the Spirit to receive the gospel – to the poor and humble in spirit – to those who know they are spiritually bankrupt before God – a blessing according to Jesus (Matthew 5:3).

That this is voice of Isaiah as rabbis suggest, is the result of blindness among those who call themselves “*Jews.*” The “*I*” or “*me*” is the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the great evangelist. He binds up the broken hearted; that is, He is Great Physician and the Great Liberator -- the Savior of the World.

Like Cyrus, the Persian Messiah, who set the captive Jews free in 539 AD (45:1), our Lord is the greater Messiah who proclaims “*freedom from sin*” and sets the captives free. In his ministry he released men from the prison of disease, blindness, deafness, lameness, and death.

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

Three purposes of the Messiah are mentioned.

The purpose of the Messiah is “to proclaim” the “acceptable year of the LORD.” The word “*acceptable*” (*ratsown*) means “*a year of goodwill*” which refers to the year of jubilee. Note the Lord stopped his quotation here; that is, his ministry

was one of the good news of salvation and not judgment — a jubilee for prisoners sitting in the dungeon of darkness.

To proclaim the day of “*vengeance of our God*” refers to the Day of Judgment. The concepts of salvation for the righteous and judgment for the wicked were indistinguishable in the Old Testament; that is, the kingdom of God contained both. Jesus came in the middle of history to offer salvation to men in advance of the Day of Judgment at the end of history.

“to comfort all who mourn:” Jesus said, “*blessed are those who mourn.*” By mourning Jesus referred to those who grieve over their sin and the ruin it causes. Terms like “*ashes*” and “*heaviness*” are metonyms for mourning in verse 3.

3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

The infinitive-verb “*appoint*” means “*to establish.*”

Zion refers to city of God — the hill on which Jerusalem was built — an icon of Heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 14:1).

The purpose of the ministry of Messiah was “to give,” not to take. The great exchange took place at Calvary: He took our ashes, mourning, and heaviness, and believers received his beauty, joy, and praise. What a transaction! Blessed by the name of the Lord!

The gospel is not for the rich and comfortable, but for those who grieve over their sinful affliction. Word

like mourners rolling in ashes with heavy hearts at a funeral express what it means to grieve over one’s sin. Metaphors like “*beauty for ashes,*” the “*oil of joy,*” and “*garment of praise*” express the blessings of repentance and faith — the healing that comes from forgiveness —and, the joy that is given to believers when they make a covenant with Messiah by faith.

“*Trees of righteousness*” (*ayil* – plural) is a metaphor for those who believe the gospel; and even those freed by Cyrus. The word can refer to rams that lead the flock or in this case to the terebinth or oaks of Lebanon.

4 And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

The “*they*” could refer to the remnant who returned to Jerusalem in 536 BC — a type of saved Jews in the New Testament that went into the Roman world to rebuild the broken down religion of Israel by preaching the gospel of Christ.

“old wastes,” “waste cities,” and “desolation” refers to places stunned by war. This could refer to the remnant’s return to Jerusalem to repair cities that were abandoned during the exile. This has its parallel in the New Testament of dispersed Jerusalem Christians after Pentecost in 33 AD repairing a decayed religion through gospel proclamation in the Roman Empire — a work delegated to Jewish disciples in early Christianity.

5 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.

Ellicott and others believe the *“strangers,” “plowmen”* and *“vinedressers”* are metaphors for Gentile converts in the first-century. These were called to be evangelists and pastors in the church, a new Israel planted around the Mediterranean. God used these Gentiles to rebuild the fallen tent of David (Acts 15:16; Ephesians 2:12ff)

6 But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

The *“ye”* is the remnant (The Babylonian remnant; and the NT remnant of believers); that is, the purpose of Israel to be a priesthood to God (Exodus 19) was fulfilled in the new Israel of God through the proclamation of the gospel and the conversion of Jews and Gentiles in the New Testament (1 Peter 2:9).

“Ministers of our God:” Paul, Jude, Peter, James and others were called servants of God (Romans 1:1; Jude 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; James 1:1).

“Eating the riches of the Gentiles” could refer to (1) the protection of Gentile states like Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome that the nation enjoyed through the centuries or (2) to gifts given to Jewish preachers in the NT to support their gospel ministry, or (3) to the blessing the whole world has experienced due to the conversion of gentiles to the gospel of Christ. All those who believe can rejoice over the salvation of the Gentiles and how they have glorified the Lord for two millenniums.

7 For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

Again, this portion of Scripture must be interpreted in light of the NT gospel.

The word *“confusion”* (KJV) means *“shame”* and *“reproach.”*

“your shame” to the exiles meant captivity, poverty, and failed promises; *“your shame”* in the New Testament is humility and reproach caused by sin, transgression, and debauchery.

To the exiles "*everlasting joy*" included in part, the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem which was completed in 516 BC. The "*everlasting joy*" to NT believers is salvation in Christ and an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of God.

"*double*" to the exiles meant the resurrection of Israel from the graveyard of the nations (Ezra; Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah); that is, their comforts were double their years of suffering.

"*double*" to believers refers to the comforts of the gospel as compared to the sorrows of sinners. In Ephesians, believers find comfort in statement like "we who were dead in sins are made alive in Christ" (2:5).

8 For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

"*love judgment*" means that God takes pleasure in justice, fairness, balance, and equity.

"*hate robbery*" refers to the Jewish people who offered flawed, marred, maimed sacrifices to God in their worship at the temple; that is, offering the LORD their cast offs and leftovers shames the LORD and exposes the lack of respect people had for their Great King (See Malachi 1:14).

When God saves people and goes to work on repairing the broken pillars of religion he "directs their work in truth (in faithfulness)" Religion goes into disrepair when falsehood and sloppiness captures the mind of worshipers. Faithfulness to God's law repairs the broken pillars of religion.

"*everlasting covenant*" – Israel had a covenant with God, but they broke it. There was nothing wrong with the covenant. What was wrong is the people lacked inner power to keep it. Isaiah anticipated a day when God would save his people; create in them a new spirit and give them the power to obey God's law. In the covenant of grace, the Spirit empowers Christian men and women to keep covenant – a power infused into them by the gift of the Spirit.

In the Christ event, God created a new covenant with those who believe – a covenant that gifted the believing party with changed hearts and minds fit to serve the Lord (Hebrews 8:6ff).

Note: a covenant is a contract; and, a contract with God is called *a covenant*.

9 And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.

"*their seed shall be known:*" The terms "*seed*" and "*offspring*" draws from the desires of parents to see their children succeed. These analogies refer to the

descendants of the righteous who returned from Exile as well as to those spiritual sons and daughters born out of gospel proclamation.

“Promises are here made to the Jews returned out of captivity, which extend to all those who, through grace, are delivered out of spiritual thralldom. An unholy soul is like a city that is broken down, and has no walls, like a house in ruins; but by the power of Christ’s gospel and grace, it is fitted to be a habitation of God, through the Spirit.” (Mathew Henry)

“they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed” refers to the returning exiles who took on the difficult work of rebuilding a nation; and, a type of how God blessed the work of NT gospel preachers throughout the centuries to build the New Temple, the church of Jesus Christ.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

This verse is wrought with interpretive disparities. Though not doctrinally serious, they are a literary challenge to figure out the speaker in verse 10.

Who is the *“I”*? The *“I”* is either Christ the Redeemer, or the church. The speaker is NOT the Targum or Tanakh or Isaiah as rabbis suggest.

Ellicott says, “The speaker is again, as in Isaiah 61:1, the ideal Servant of Jehovah, who identifies himself with the people and slaves.” His view seeks to be consistent with verse one postulating the pronoun *“I”* is our Lord as the bridegroom arrayed in the garment of salvation. Figuratively speaking, the imagery of white turban is that of the High Priest. The precious jewelry of the golden breastplate and holy vestments is that of the High Priest — an illusion to our Lord’s heavenly ministry at the right hand of the Father (Revelation 1).

Benson interprets the *“I”* as the responsive chorus of the redeemed church — the bride arrayed in the glories of salvation. Matthew Poole and Gill agree with Benson. In this view, the celebratory bride is the glorious church rescued from mourning in ashes, anointed with joy, and fitted in a white bodice that flares out to her train which displays her wealth. The bright, sparkling jewels are the riches of redemption: justification, eternal life, the Holy Spirit, reconciliation, forgiveness, and sanctification.

Barnes sees the *“I”* as the prophet speaking for the church: “This is the language of the prophet in the name of the church; or, as Vitranga supposes, the language of a chorus introduced here by the prophet.” Gill disagrees saying, “These are not the words of the prophet spoken in his own person, rejoicing in

the goodness of the Lord to his people and countrymen; nor of Christ; but of the church.”

Gill adds the following: “The sense is, as a bridegroom puts on the best clothes he has on his wedding day, and makes the appearance of a prince in his richest robes, or as the high priest when he had on all his sacerdotal garments . . . and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels; or “implements” . . . he is the bridegroom, they the bride; and they are clothed alike with the garment down to the foot; and are righteous as he is righteous; and are herewith as a bride adorned and made ready for her husband; and the joy at such a solemnity fitly expresses the mutual joy of Christ and his church”

The text mentions the bridegroom (masculine gender) and a bride (feminine gender). That the redeemed bride speaks as a chorus in verse 10 is compelling, but so is Ellicott’s consistency believing the “I” of verse 10 is the same “I” in verse one.

K & D agree with Ellicott: *“This is the joyful calling of the Servant of Jehovah to be the messenger of such promises of God to His people. Joyfully I rejoice in Jehovah; my soul shall be joyful in my God, that He hath given me garments of salvation to put on, hath wrapped me in the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom.”*

I am inclined to agree with Ellicott knowing that those “*in Christ*” inherit all the riches obtained by the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord (Romans 6:1-6; Ephesians 2:1-10).

11 *For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

The metaphors of a spring flower like a translucent, budding rose dancing in the wind, and the reds, greens, and yellows of a fragrant garden humming with the melodies of life soaking up the spring rain is a picture of the fruit of the gospel among the nations: righteousness and praise.

The ministry of Christ and the glorious effects of those in covenant with Him demand a response from the hearer. Will *you cry out to him for mercy and ask Him to be your Lord and Savior?*

14. The Gospel of the Coming Kingdom

Isaiah 66



We have before us the LORD's announcement of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God, the rule and authority of the LORD, is proclaimed in history.

The Kingdom contains two great themes, the salvation of the righteous, and the judgment of the wicked (See Matthew 3:10-11; 25:32-33).

There are two great aspects of the Kingdom: (1) It's arrival in the person and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to defeat man's enemies (Satan, sin, and death) in order to bring salvation to believers, and (2) its consummation at the end of history in what we call the Second Coming of our Lord.

The LORD's Command: His authority and the One He Honors

ESV Isaiah 66:1 Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?"

2 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word (marks of true believers).

The LORD's Condemnation of False Religion and the Autocratic Man.

3 "He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations;

4 I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight."

The LORD's Comfort to the Persecuted Righteous

5 Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: "Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame.

The LORD's Compensation and Terrifying Warning to Lawbreakers

6 "The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense to his enemies!

7 "Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son.

8 *Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children.*

9 *Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?" says the LORD; "shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?" says your God.*

The LORD's Comfort and Exhortation to the Righteous to Serve (heavenly) Jerusalem, their Blessed Salvation in the Kingdom of God, and His Judgment upon His enemies.

10 *"Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her;*

11 *that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious abundance."*

12 *For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees.*

13 *As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem (See Hebrews 12:22).*

14 *You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and the hand of the LORD shall be known to his servants, and he shall show his indignation against his enemies.*

The LORD's Catastrophe and Fire of Wrath Upon the Wicked

15 *"For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.*

16 *For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many.*

17 *"Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating pig's flesh and the abomination and mice, shall come to an end together, declares the LORD.*

The LORD's Commonwealth and His Glorious Ingathering of the People to Share in the Blessings of the Kingdom of God.

18 *For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory,*

19 *and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations.*

20 And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.

21 And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.

The LORD's consummation: His announcement of the Goal of History (the Kingdom of God)- the salvation of the righteous, and the punishment of the wicked.

22 "For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.

23 From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD.

24 "And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

54.1 The New Heavens and the New Earth

Revelation 21

New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to the new earth represents the culmination of eschatological hope for the people of God from ages past to present times. Revelation twenty portrays the ultimate destiny of the present universe when it is renovated by the redemptive powers of Jesus Christ. This renovation involves continuity between the old Adamic order and the order of the New Adam.

Revelation 21:1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

And (*kai*) connects chapter twenty-one with chapter twenty. The following events follow the events of the great judgment.

Does the word "*new*" represent a renovation of a thing or a creation of a new thing out of nothing (*ex nihilo*)? My understanding is that God renovates the present heavens and earth. He does not obliterate it.

The "*making new*" is equivalent to the "*regeneration*" (*paliggenesia*) of Matthew 19:28 or the restoration (*apokatastasis*) of Acts 3:21. The cosmos is not the source of sin. Rather than total annihilation and a creation *ex nihilo*, it appears that God will radically renew the present world. The new heaven and new earth is not ontological, but ethical and spiritual.

The term “*no more sea*” indicates a totally different environment. This is not renewal of the old order, but replacement by a new order. The sea with all its terrors and mysteries, with its unpredictability and hindrances will vanish like a vapor in the wind.

In Greek thought, the philosophers conceived reality in terms of the physical world and the spiritual world. This kind of dualism is contradicted by this section of Scripture. Heaven and earth are merged into a new world order. Spirit and body exist in harmony.

Revelation 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Old Testament (OT) saints, because of Israel’s temple and God’s presence in that structure, saw OT Jerusalem as the hope of all mankind. But, in the New Testament, Heavenly Jerusalem is conceived of as the homeland of the saints — the antitype of OT Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22; Galatians 4:26; Philippians 3:20). The Biblical hope, even though expressed in very earthly terms, is not the renewed land of carnal Jerusalem but the reality to which it pointed. OT Jerusalem is really a shadow or type of true Jerusalem, the residence of God’s people. The detail of the city is described later on in the chapter.

Jerusalem, the home of the redeemed, is portrayed as a beautiful bride with braided hair, ornamented with jewelry, decked out in a white wedding gown. This image captures our attention and our imagination. Just as there is nothing more beautiful or curious than a young bride with glowing skin and a lovely smile, there is nothing more attractive to the believer than the purity and hope of the New Jerusalem, the capital city of Christ.

Strangely, however, we are not allowed to see the bride till later.

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Booming from heaven was a piercing voice with a marvelous announcement. The glory of Israel was God *tabernacling* among them. Though short lived in history, God dwelling with Israel was the pride and joy of God’s ancient people. What was shadowed in the OT during the Period of the Judges and Kings, and what was lost during the Captivity, and what was proclaimed as a hope by the exilic prophets, is now announced as a reality by a thundering voice.

What a thought: God among men! What expectation: the unseen, holy and loving Creator walking in the midst of a cleansed and holy people!

The tabernacle, the temporary dwelling of God, made after the heavenly pattern, is now brought to fruition in this vision: God dwelled in the

tabernacle, then in the temple of Christ, God dwelled among men (John 1:14). In the church age, Theos indwells the church in a spiritual sense (Ephesians 2:22). On the new earth, faith will be turned into sight; hope into reality; expectation into fulfillment. The Holy Trinity dwells among His people, and His people taste the ripe fruits of fellowship with Him.

The phrase, "*they shall be His people*," introduces the hope of the Torah, the goal of the prophecy, the results of Christ's redemption, and the purpose of our Heavenly Father coming to fruition.

Revelation 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

No tears: Tears are the physical manifestation of overwhelming emotion. They are the result of frustration--the inability to articulate joy and grief. In this new order, emotions will be able to be totally expressed without tears.

No death: The king of the ages will not enter here. Destruction of death is not an end in itself. It is the result of fellowship with God. Death was defeated at Calvary by the Savior (Hebrews 2:12ff), but its realization happens at this point in time.

No sorrow or crying: When the New Jerusalem intersects time and history, there will be no more sorrow over losses, setbacks, failures, death, or sins. There will be no crying for joy or for sorrow. There will be no more pain, no disease, no fractures, not heart attacks, no terrorism, no war, and no cancers. What a glorious day that will be! Even so come, Lord Jesus.

Revelation 21:5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

Back of this new creation is the One that sits on "*the throne*" and who makes all things new. The new order is the creation of Christ. The old order will disappear and the new order will saturate existence.

This may seem like a mere dream. It Isaiah But, John reminds us that all things are possible with God and that his vision is true and that it will come to pass. God is faithful! Not one of His good promises will fail.

The Eschaton began with the coming of Christ. The blessings of the Eschaton like justification and regeneration are thrust into the believer's experience in advance of the consummation of history in a first fruits way. "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The life of the Eschaton that indwells the regenerated soul will one day blossom into total fulfillment in a new environment in the kingdom of God.

Revelation 21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

“*It is done*” is God's way of telling us that the future is secure, that it is “as good as done!”

The “*Alpha and Omega*” encompasses all reality and virtue and capacity of the living God.

The figure of thirst represents man's deep sense of need. Not all thirst for forgiveness and a relationship with the living God, but those who do can drink from the wells of eternal life by believing in Christ. This is John's way of telling the reader that the door of salvation is still open for those that hunger to be right with God.

A man will become the sum total of his desires. Having a thirst for God is a blessed spiritual state. And, if a hunger for God is the expression of spiritual health, then complacency must be the fruit of spiritual depravity.

“Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee?” (St. Augustine).

Revelation 21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

The metaphor switches from “*thirst*” to “*overcoming*.” We get the term “*nike*” or “*nikon*” from this word. It means “*victor*” and takes us back to the promises of chapters two and three. “*This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith*” (1 John 5:4). The term overcoming implies that there is tremendous resistance to becoming a true Christian. “*Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life*” (Matthew 7:14).

There is a difference between believing something about Christ and truly trusting in Him. In modern Christianity, it is posh to act like a Christian on a stage of fools. Like a shallow puddle on a sidewalk, few truly absorb the gospel into the soil of their hearts. Many prefer sleeping on comfortable beds of dogma surrounded by pillows of earthly pleasures rather than taking up the cross with all its splinters and rejection. The gospel of wealth and success has more followers than the gospel of “*forsaking all*” to follow Christ (Luke 14:33). To the one who turns his back on the world's attractions and confesses Christ, he will find a homecoming. The one prerequisite to being an overcomer is abiding devotion to our Lord in the face of all opposition. In juxtaposition to allegiance to Christ is the attachment to family, friends, and the State.

Revelation 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall

have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Listed are those God is unwilling to call His sons.

The fearful: The first in the infamous list is the cowardly-- those timid souls that would not commit to Christ out of fear of being ridiculed for His name's sake. Some people have no molars to chew the elephant hide of criticism for Christ.

Fear not, for I have given you authority. – Matthew 28:19, 20

Never be afraid to try something new. Remember, amateurs built the ark, professionals built the Titanic. -- Unknown.

If a man harbors any sort of fear, it percolates through all his thinking, damages his personality, makes him landlord to a ghost. -- Lloyd Cassel Douglas.

Never fear shadows... they simply mean there's a light shining somewhere nearby.-- Unknown.

*The coward believes he will live forever.
If he holds back in the battle,
But in old age he shall have no peace
Though spears have spared his limbs
The words of Har*

Unbelieving: The unbelieving are those who do not seriously examine the evidence for the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and believe. These are the people who prefer to live like a dumb goose in a courtroom of facts. They can believe in Santa Clause and the Easter bunny, but they can't sink their teeth into the forensic evidence of a risen Christ.

Abominable: The "*abominable*" appears to represent those who pollute morals through obscene idolatrous acts. These are the people who court the Sultans of perversion with demonic madness. These are the carrion that feed off the maggots of society. They litter civilization with Jezebels, pimps, and whores.

Murderers: This class would include criminals, crime figures, and abortionists—those immoral butchers who have the conscience of an amoeba. It would also include the irascible, the violent, the incorrigible, rapists, those who use coercion and intimidation. Murder includes not only premeditated murder, but war crimes, suicide, DWI, drug addicts, gluttons, abusers of their body, and those who promote a culture of death. Slander kills the soul and murders men's reputation. Taxation under color of law is a death sentence to the working man. Thugs and thieves would be included in this list.

Whoremongers: This is a term for the sexually immoral. From the word “*whoremongers*” we get the word “pornography.” It refers to the sexually promiscuous, fornicators, prostitutes, rapists, homosexuals, and adulterers. These are the bedroom bimbos that drink deeply from the well of sensuality and who eat the forbidden fruit from the tree of “consensual” sex. Like parasites, they suck innocence out children. Those who board this ship of obscenity will drown in the fiery foaming sea of God’s judgment.

Sorcerers: These are deceivers, cult worshippers, primitive witches, and modern day commercial charlatans. These are the tricksters who consult the dead and allege the ability to read palms; those who practice the black arts and white magic; those who have more frog legs and shed more chicken blood than the Cajun queen of voodoo, Marie Laveau. Politicians and lawyers and bankers engaged in brewing “words of art” to trap the unsuspecting in adhesion contracts and predatory lending practices would also be of this class.

Idolaters: These would include ancient idol worshipers as well as those who presently love money and pleasure above God. Lust is a form of idolatry (Ephesians 5:3ff). Idol worship would include those who reject God’s law-order and who advance man’s legislation in society. Let us not forget the modern State pursues power and arrogates to itself the prerogatives of deity. When the State sees itself as the ultimate source of law instead of seeing God’s Word as the source of all law, then the State claims total jurisdiction over man. To claim total jurisdiction over man, from the womb to the tomb, is to claim to be as god. When it requires allegiance to itself above the Lord and demands a thirty percent tithe or more of all its worshippers, it sets itself up above Christ. The First Commandment is a proscription against statism, tyranny, and totalitarianism. To demand children routinely pledge allegiance to the State while proscribing prayer in the classroom is nothing more State worship—the crowning achievement of the totalitarian, new world order. To surrender to the State and obey its law-order is idolatry—a form of treason-- a defiance of the rule of God. The Spirit calls us to acknowledge His rule and to surrender to His law-order. To reject His rule and to possess a fanatical allegiance to the State is idolatry.

Liars: These include perjurers, defrauders, extortionists, and slanders. Propagandists, gossips, and media bias are accommodated on God’s black list. False advertising, commercial schemes, and fraud are a product of lying. The term “caveat emptor,” let the buyer beware, is a product of humanism not Biblical thinking. The Word of God places the onus of truth telling upon the seller, not the consumer. Valid contracts demand full disclosure.

A liar’s tale is as deadly as a bite from a black mamba. *The trouble with a liar is that he is believed even when he speaks the truth.* The trust of the innocent is the liar’s Trojan horse that captures his soul and plunders his wealth.

The most expensive purchase most men will ever make is their own government. And, when the government lies, you know that it has declared war on its people. And, all war is the art of deception said Sun Tzu. Americans are required to sign all kinds of government documents under “penalties of perjury” while at the same time you can’t get a government agent to certify anything under oath. I wonder why? One asked, “When can you tell if a politician is lying?” “When he has his mouth open,” responded the other.

Thus, misrepresentations, half-truths, and deception by terms of art are the tools of the modern totalitarian and its corporations who engage in ultra vires acts. So damaging are lies that hell eagerly awaits to devour the souls of liars. But, this is not a condemnation of all lying. Abraham, the Egyptian midwives, and Rahab lied. Nowhere does Scripture condemn them for doing so. In some instances, we do not owe the truth to those who would abuse the truth.

The second death is defined as the assignment of the wicked to the lake of fire is documented as a fact.

(Source: Stockton, **Towards Exegetical Eschatology** (2017),
<https://sedm.org/Forms/17-Theology/TowardsExegeticalEschatology.pdf>

15. Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah



Isaiah 1:1-31 Introduction

Isaiah 2:1-5 Messianic Salvation in the Last Days

Isaiah 4:2-6 The Glorious Branch

Isaiah 6:1-13 The Holy Seed, the Stump in the Land

Isaiah 7:1-25 The Greatest Political Power in Israel Since David

Isaiah 9:2-7 The Messianic King: The Mighty God

Isaiah 11:1-12:6 The Salvation of Jehovah

Isaiah 40:1-31 The Comfort of Israel’s Incomparable God

Isaiah 42:1-25 The Servant of Jehovah, the Covenant of the People and Light of the Gentiles

Isaiah 49:1-26 The Glorious Success of the Troubled Servant of Jehovah

Isaiah 50:1-11 The Servant’s Words to Zion’s Children

Isaiah 49:1-26 Degradation and Exaltation

Isaiah 54:1-17 The Glory of the Servants of Jehovah

Isaiah 55:1-13 The Sure Mercies of David

Isaiah 59:1-21 Jehovah's Coming and Covenant

Isaiah 60:1-22 The City of the Kingdom

Isaiah 61:1-3 The Glory of the Servant

Isaiah 63:1-64:12 The Advent in Judgment

Isaiah 65:1-25 Jehovah's Answer to Israel's Appeal

Isaiah 66:1-24 The Seat of the Scornful in the Day of Salvation

Source: <https://www.preceptaustin.org/messianic-prophecies-in-isaiah>

We extend our many thanks to the enormous work of Raymond Miller, S Lewis Johnson, and Preceptaustin for putting this theological chart together so that men may know and believe that Jesus is the Christ of God promised in the Old Testament.

1 John 3:23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

1 John 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

John 6:69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

John 11:27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

16. Jeremiah's Gospel

One Man Converted

"Heal Me, O LORD"

Jeremiah 17:9-11



Many seek God for physical healing, and many want God to heal their nation, but how many people want to be healed of their own bitterness and rebellion? Jeremiah shows us the way.

Why Men Need Healing

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

This text answers the question, “If a man is blessed for trusting in the Lord, and cursed for following man, why do men choose the path of cursedness?”

And the answer is found in the mysterious self-deceit of his “heart” or sin-nature – a condition of man blinding his perceptions of good and evil.

“*deceitful*” (*aqob*) is in the emphatic position of the sentence. Men are easily propagandized, consumerized, and mesmerized by cultural salesmen offering circus trinkets and colored beads to the public. The wretchedness of deception is that the deceived does not know he is deceived.

The word “*desperately wicked*” (*anash*) is one word meaning “weak” or “sick” like David’s child was incurably “ill” (2 Samuel 12:15).

If there is a reason not to follow Godless politicians, theoreticians, and academicians, this is it! They are the blind leading the blind, the diseased pretending to heal the sick.

10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

“*heart*” and “*reins*” (kidneys) refer to workings of the soul.

To make matters worse, NO MAN knows his own heart. But, the LORD is perfectly acquainted with it, and with all the twists and turns it is capable of: He knows all its desires and designs. All its intentions, affections, and determinations lie exposed to his inspection. His eye penetrates into the dark corners and closets of every man’s soul. Because he knows the heart, He can be trusted to guide us and correct us.

11 As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

The Lord appeals to the knowledge of Jews regarding birds, particularly the partridge or even the cuckoo bird – birds that abandon their nest or lay their eggs in another bird’s nest abandoning them to be hatched by another (Leviticus 11:16; Deuteronomy 14:15).

The bird analogy refers to the covetous man who piles up riches through corrupt business practices that “*make to themselves wings*” never to be enjoyed.

Using the art of deception, this slick entrepreneur collects riches only to leave them to another.

The Hope of Israel

The remedy for sin is not in psychology, anthropology, or sociology, but theology. Jeremiah does not order men to correct their own soul. The prophet does not recommend introspection of the heart, but inspection of the Throne on High. The remedy is not a change of officers within government on earth, but a change of government in one's heart from Heaven.

12 A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

The word "is" is not in the original text, and should be read without the verb.

The voice is in the vocative indicating the one being addressed. He speaks in second person. Glorious High Throne is a metonym for the LORD, the Hope of Israel. He, not government, is the place sinners find sanctuary.

Thoughts shift from the wretchedness of man to the wonders of the LORD; from one's deceitful heart to the true God. Jeremiah lifts our eyes from the human heart to Heaven; from sin to the Sanctuary; from hearts of stone to Heaven's Throne; from man's choices to God's sovereignty and authority.

Unlike pop-psychologists, Jeremiah does not send men on archaeological journeys into their past or ask them to probe their inner feelings. Rather, He points us to the One outside of the heart . . . on the throne . . . in Heaven from where He administrates the affairs of the universe. "*The LORD reigns*" is the gospel of the Old Testament (Psalm 97:1).

*No, Christ as a Divine Person does **not** live inside the human heart!* He is in heaven at the right hand of the Father as the glorified Lord-Christ. He dwells within only in the sense men have faith. Even then, it is **not** faith in the heart as a virtue that makes men righteous, but faith in the accomplishments of Christ at the cross that justifies sinners (Romans 5:1).

13 O LORD, the hope of Israel. All that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

We have a dramatic shift in this address from second person ("*O LORD*") and ("*all that forsake thee*") to first person ("*they that depart from me*"), and from first person to third person ("*they have forsaken the LORD*").

The word "*forsake*" (*azab*) means "to leave alone," "abandon," or "neglect."

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 12:3)?

The word "*ashamed*" (*buwsh*) refers to being found naked before God (Genesis 2:25: 3:1-16).

“written in the earth” suggest those that abandon the Fountain of Living Waters (2:13) belong to earth and not heaven. There is a *“Lamb’s Book of Life.”* Is your name in it?

The hope of Israel was not in a new government administration, a change of guards, or in some political revolution.

Like Israel our hope is not in new statutes, codes, and regulations. It is not in politicians or psychologists, but in the one, personal, infinite, triune God of Scripture – the *“LORD.”* The remedy for sin is not political, but spiritual; not the economy, but theonomy; not in seeking the will of man, but in seeking the will of God.

If Jeremiah were preaching in New Testament times he might put it this way;

“The highly –exalted, resurrected Christ full of glory sitting at the right of the Father on the Throne of Grace has defeated Satan, sin, and death. He is my Hope, your Hope, and the Hope of the World. Believe in Him.”

Luke 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Hebrews 1:8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Revelation 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Those that forsake God shall be ashamed (discovered naked); those that seek Him shall be honored. Those that forsake the Lord shall be written in the earth; those that cling to Him shall have their names written in Heaven. Those that forsake the Lord shall wake up thirsty in hell, but those that trust Him shall be refreshed by the Fountain of Living Waters.

The Sinner’s Prayer

14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

Only one man responded to Jeremiah’s sermon, and that was Jeremiah. As all good preachers, this pastor followed his own advice.

“Heal me” (raphani) – the imperative, the language of prayer. The *“LORD”* is called *“Jehovah Rapha”* – *“For I am the Lord who heals you.”* – Exodus 15: 25b-

26. This title was announced to Israel at the bitter waters of Marah and where Moses threw in a tree to purify the alkaline pond — a type of the cross.

This wilderness area exposed two problems: (1) bitterness in the waters of Marah, and (2) *marah* (bitterness) and complaining in the hearts of the people. God healed the waters, but the people needed to be healed of their bitterness and complaining: “*So the people grumbled against Moses . . .*” but they did not pray that God would heal them. The word “*marah*” is translated “*rebelled against thee*” in Psalm 5:10 and “*provoking (marah) the most High in the wilderness*” in Psalm 78:17.

The object of the verb “*rapha*” is not the nation but “*me.*” Jeremiah prayed that God would heal him.

Jeremiah contrasted himself with the deserters. In this text he focuses on his own need for healing and salvation. This is not a self-righteous, “better-than-thou” prophet. He too was a sinner that needed healing. The prophet obeyed his own message and trusted the Lord. Unlike the apostates, Jeremiah knew where to go to find a cure for his own sin — the LORD, the Hope of Israel, the One on the Throne, the Fountain of Living Waters. Because of the Lord’s wondrous grace, Jeremiah called God “His Praise.” This pious man prayed, “*Save me, Oh LORD, and I will be saved.*”

Do not be deceived. Look at the cross. Repent and seek Christ. Surrender to His authority, and you will enter his kingdom.

If you are a preacher, make sure there is at least one man saved by your preaching.

17. The Gospel of Habakkuk

The Just Shall Live by faith

Habakkuk 2:4



Background: Habakkuk was disturbed by the “violence” in his day (1:1-11), and he wondered why the LORD did not intervene.

God answered by informing the prophet that He would send the Chaldean military vanguard to humble the nation for its indulgence of evil.

This answered stunned . . . but, raised a second question: Why would God use an evil empire to chastise God's dirty sheep (1:12-2:20).

The LORD comforts the grieved prophet by giving him direction with the following text, and with the assurance the Babylonians will receive the God's just punishment:

In Wicked Times the Just by faith shall live

2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

*The Spirit contrasts *the soul of the wicked* with *the soul of righteous*.

The Soul of the Wicked

In saying, "*his soul is not right with in him*" is God's way of explaining the twisted spiritual condition of the treacherous Chaldeans.

Because the Babylonians did not seek the LORD nor align themselves with the law of God, they became the grim reapers of the Levant.

The Spirit uses the Hebrew term "*not upright*" (Heb: *yasar*) to describe the Babylonians. It means "**not** level, straight, or smooth" in an ethical sense. *Caveat emptor*: Don't expect a "*square deal*" from these fraudsters.

The second word used to describe the crookedness of the Babylonians is the term "*lifted up*."

The Hebrew verb for "*lifted up*" (*aphal*) is an Pual verb—an intense passive form of the Piel verb stem. It can be translated, "*has been puffed up!!*" The word *autonomous* comes to mind. Because the Chaldeans exercised little restraint over their desires, sin grew in their hearts until their vessels were capsized by their own pride.

The word "*autonomous*" comes from the Greek words *auto* which means "*self*" and "*nomous*" which means "*law*" i.e., or *self-lawed*. In a negative sense these Chaldeans were *a law unto themselves*. They recognized no authority over their own souls but their own will; that is, as rebels against God's law they chose to be governed by their own rules.

In contrast to the autonomous Babylonian, we have the righteous who live by faith while believing that the LORD God is the Supreme Ruler of the Universe and that His law is absolute; that all men are accountable to Him as "*Judge of All the Earth*" (Genesis 18:25).

The Soul of the Righteous

In Hebrew the text reads, "*By faith . . . the righteous shall live.*"

The Hebrew word for "*faith*" is *emuwnah* which means "firmness," "steadfastness," "faithfulness," and "reliable." It is translated "steady" in Exodus 17:12, "truth" in Deuteronomy 32:4; "faithfulness" in 1 Samuel 26:3; "faithfully" in 2 Kings 12:15; and "ordain in their set office" in 1 Chronicles 9:22.

- By faith the Spirit does not mean faith in faith.
- Bu faith the Spirit does not suggest belief in any religion will result in righteousness or that all faiths are equal. That faith in any religion or all religions lead to heaven is hereby denied. Few seem to recognize there are many roads to hell.
- By faith the Spirit does not refer to the power of positive thinking.
- By faith the Spirit does not imply there are other ways to be righteous without faith. Only those with faith are righteous.
- By faith the Spirit does not suggest faith in one's own righteousness will justify the sinner.
- By faith the Spirit is not referencing one's "profession," but one's holy disposition.
- By faith the Spirit is not directing the reader to "faith in the heart," but a faith that looks away from self to Another.
- By faith the Spirit is not suggesting faith relies up some ritual like praying the rosary to obtain favor with God.
- By faith the Spirit instructs Habakkuk on the core mark of righteous men. Righteous men believe in the LORD God . . . in the Holy Scriptures . . . in His revelation to Israel . . . in His law . . . in the basics of OT gospel proclamation . . . and, righteous men display faith-conduct consistent with the holy profession.

The apostle Paul uses the spiritual rule, "*The just shall live by faith*," as the cornerstone of his treatise on the gospel (Romans 1:16-17). Before us is a faith that believes unto justification (4:5), and a faith that sanctifies (12:1ff)

- a faith that believes God and works righteousness (Habakkuk 2:4; James 2)
- a "*faith unto faith*" where faith leads to faithfulness
- a faith that grows in time drawing a man closer to Christ
- a faith that receives Old Testament and New Testament revelation regarding Christ the Savior and the progress of redemption.

The righteousness that justifies a man is entirely of faith, from faith, and by faith. This statement leads Christians to conclude that salvation is wrapped up in Reformation theology: sola fide, sola gratia, sola Christo, and sola Scriptura.

18. The Gospel in Zephaniah

"they shall trust in the name of the LORD."

Zephaniah 3:8



Q: What is the Old Testament gospel?

A: Part of the answer is found in the Book of Zephaniah.

The background for the Book of Zephaniah is the events surrounding the Babylonian Captivity (606-536 BC) and the promised return of the surviving remnant which became a miracle of history circa 536 BC.

Zephaniah penned his work around 625 BC before the Babylonian campaigns against Judah: 605, 597, 589 BC.

His short three chapters announced judgment on Judah and the nations -- "the great day of the Lord" (1:14).

Judgment requires a response of silent reflection where men shut their mouths and listen (1:7), grief over sin (1:11), sacred assemblies (2:1), genuine seeking of God (2:3), a pursuit of righteousness (law) and genuine humility (2:3). But, Zephaniah also announces hope.

Let's take a look at Zephaniah's gospel in chapter 3 beginning with Zephaniah 3:8:

The Bad News:

3:8 Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

The Lord announces His judgment on Judah and the Nations of the Levant

There is only one reason for judgment and that is men "*have sinned against the Lord*" (1:17) and performed the dance of joy over their violence, conquests, lies, deceit, and schemes to accumulate wealth through fraud (1:9).

"*Wait upon me*" is Zephaniah's invitation term which is synonymous with the word "Trust in me."

The New Testament equivalent of this bad news is found in John 3:36 " . . . he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The Good News

9 For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

The kingdom of God involves two dynamic, paramount events: (1) the judgment of the wicked, and (2) the salvation of the righteous. John the Baptist called it a baptism of fire, and a baptism of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11).

Turn: When the kingdom of God arrives, God will act to save his people.

The verbal term for salvation is "**to turn**" (change or transform); and, the expression "**a pure language;**" literally, "**a purified lip**" penned a metaphor for God's golden work of conversion.

When God saves a man, He changes a man's legal standing from "unrighteous" to "righteous;" He changes his constitution from "carnal" to "spiritual;" his practices from "unholy" to "holy;" and, his speech from "impure" to "pure."

Call: Salvation is not in a government program or UN promoted religion or a sectarian ceremony, but in "**the name of the LORD**" and His work at Calvary.

Serve with one consent: All true Christians speak the same language about Christ and follow the same orthodoxy. There is no babel or confusion of tongues with every man having his own interpretation of the gospel. There is one Bible, one faith, one hope, one Lord and Savior, one body, and one baptism (Ephesians 4:3-6).

10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

Ethiopia: The Ethiopians were the furthest people with whom the Jews had contact. . . and, in their minds the outer most boundary of the civilized world.

Though not within the capacity of these Hebrews to grasp, God's salvation in Christ is for all men even to the ends of the earth. The gospel of Christ alone satisfied the spiritual needs and desires of all humanity.

Supplicants: pre-converts are identified as supplicants, pleaders, and even beggars coming to the Living Waters to quench their thirst from the River of life that flows from the throne of God.

*There is a river that flows
from God above;
there is a fountain
that's filled with his great love.
Come to the waters;
there is a great supply;
there is a river
that never shall run dry.*

Daughter: Zephaniah uses the tender term "*daughter*" to describe the relationship of the remnant to the LORD. The LORD is the Father of all the redeemed, and they are affectionately called His sons and daughters. Once alienated from him by the ugliness of sin, the Spirit presses upon us the warmth of being daughters in the bosom of the LORD, our Heavenly Father.

Mine Offering: Those who once groveled in darkness as blind men stained by Adam's transgression have been washed from their filth by the blood of Christ. Cleansed and beautified, we come to him with "the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).

11 In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

In that day: There is a day when courageous men and women come out of darkness into the sunshine to plead for God's mercy. "*that day*" is the day of salvation -- the day the light of the gospel of Christ shines on the sinner to cleanse the man from all unrighteousness.

Shame: Whether it be pride, sexual sins, or deceit, sin shames the man and burdens him down with guilt and regret. Shame drives a naked man to cover himself with fig leaves and to hide in the shadows out of fear of exposure.

Not be ashamed: When a believer accepts the powerful work of Christ at Calvary and appropriates His forgiveness by faith, the Spirit regenerates the man, makes him "a new creature" renewed in the image of God so there is no shame, guilt, or residue of humiliation stemming from wicked deeds "for all thy doings."

Regeneration is God's remedy for shame. All who are "born again" have the Spirit and are being transformed into the image of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Faith is the golden key to appropriating the emotional benefits of being born again, and the key to overcoming the power of shame at work in the human conscience.

Them that rejoice in thy pride: Here is a reference to the proud religious Israelite that rejoiced in his own righteousness due to his devotion to the external requirements of religion.

On "*that day*" of true salvation when the seeking sinner sees with the eye of faith the wonders of the cross, he is not only delivered from shame, but from pride and arrogance associated with works-based religions. A man who truly climbs up Calvary's mountain with his eyes on the humility of the Savior "shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain."

12 I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

Afflicted and poor people: The reference identifies the remnant who would return from Babylon under the command of Cyrus for the purpose of providing the world with a Redeemer for Whom and by Whom their return and restoration of Palestine was intended.

Here is a remnant who trusted "in the name of the LORD" to provide a way for them to escape the Babylonian captivity and to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem -- an historical, political, economic impossibility without the power of God.

The cross not only humbles the man, it creates a humble community where all confess, "They are great sinners with a Great Savior."

13 The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

The remnant of Israel: These people are the true Israel of God that foreshadowed the New Israel of God that began with the 12 apostles resulting in the community of faith known as the *holy catholic church*.

The character of this community is ideal -- the bride of the Lamb is seen clothed in royal garments having no moral blemish, no iniquity, no lies, no deceit -- a loved and protected people that live on the earth without fear. This beauty dawns from the radiant splendor of the Redeemer's love for his people who have been purified by the healing powers of the cross.

14 Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.

O daughter of Zion: note the trilogy of glorious titles that describes the remnant: "O daughter of Zion," "O Israel," and "O daughter of Jerusalem" - the very people who delivered Christ the Savior in the fullness of time who in turn established His church, the true People of God brought near to the covenants of promise by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:12-13).

15 The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.

Taken away thy judgments: the reference is to the humble remnant who returned by Babylon under the command of Cyrus at the end of the seventy years of captivity (606-536) and seventy years of desolation (586-516) (Jeremiah 25:11) -- a glorious shadow of the benefits of the cross and the purpose for which the remnant returned -- to build a stage for the coming Messiah where He would purify a people unto himself where "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

Cast out thy enemy: The enemies of the remnant were from within and without; from hypocrites and rebels that rose to power in the nation's political system, and nations like Assyria and Babylon that conquered and enslaved the people.

Whereas the Old Testament remnant saw the enemies of Israel as foreign invaders, the New Testament identifies Satan, sin, and death as the vanquished enemies of the church (Luke 11:20; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 2:14).

Hidden in these promises is a resurrection of the remnant of Israel from the graveyard of the nations.

16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.

Fear thou not: The command to fear not is repeated at least 365 times in the Word of God. Israel being the land bridge between Europe, the East, and Africa, the nation had reasons to fear.

One of the benefits of the Christian gospel is that God has **not** given believers the spirit of fear (1 Timothy 1:7). Moreover, "*perfect love casteth out fear*" John 4:18. Even our Lord commanded His followers: "*Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*" Luke 12:32.

Who then should the People of God fear today seeing the Scripture says, ". . . the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4)?

Therefore, the fearful believer should "*lift up the hands which hang down,*" and strengthen his "feeble knees" (Hebrews 12:12).

Moreover, when trouble abounds, we are exhorted to "*humble ourselves while casting all our care upon him; for he careth for you*" (1 Peter 5:7).

17 The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

The LORD . . . is mighty: notice the fourfold benefit of being in a covenant relationship to the LORD thy God: salvation, joy, love, joy with singing. So Isaiah put it this way:

"As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in My people" (Isaiah

62:5, 19).

The New Testament equivalent to these marvelous promises is to believe that you are special in God's eyes:

"I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." (John 10:28-30); and,

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

18 I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden.

The *sorrowful* were the surviving remnant who was burdened over Israel's idolatry, and who shared in their chastisement as members of the nation. Though they grieved over the sins of their countrymen (Lamentations 1:4), they are blessed because the Lord heard their groaning and counted them members of the "*solemn assembly*," the true Israel of God.

The true Israel of God groans like wounded doves over the sins of men, but they are blessed to share in the affliction of Christ being "grieved for the affliction of Joseph; to whom the reproach of it was a burden" Amos 6:6;

Likewise, suffering is a holy calling for the New Israel:

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:" (1 Peter 2:21).

19 Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

At that time I will undo: While the wheels of justice grind slowly in Divine affairs and God seems still (Isaiah 18:4), silent (Habakkuk 1:13) and asleep at the wheel (Psalm 44:23), the remnant could not only rest assured that the Lord would drive out their enemies (Isaiah 40:11), but bring honor to the exiles in Babylonian cities.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Likewise the true catholic church should understand that -

"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of this world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" 1 Corinthians 1:26-28.

Even our precious Lord who we esteem greater than gold and silver was esteemed as "*naught*" (Luke 23:11).

"The truly contemptible flouted Him. The lowest soldier in the petty army of a petty prince made unholy mirth of heaven's high Lord and earth's Re-deemer" (Spurgeon).

20 At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.

"*At that time*" refers to the return under Zerubbabel (536 BC). The "you" existed in Zephaniah's time and were here promised that the holy remnant would return from the Babylonian Captivity (606) BC. This miracle of miracles that cured when Cyrus the Persian stunned the survivors when he released his grip on the Jews ordering them to return to their land and to rebuild their temple.

"*I will turn you back*" refers to a conversion of Jews from being ardent polytheists to being devout monotheists.

"*Before your eyes*" refers to the wonder of this event which was parallel to their exodus from Egypt. Not only were the Jews astonished by their political reversal, the whole Levant trembled with astonishment by the order of Cyrus.

What Jew was not shaken to the core when Cyrus gave the order to return, surrendered the sacred vessels, and gave gold and silver from the king's treasury to finance the return? If there is proof there is a God in heaven, this is it.

The return of the Jews to the Holy Land under Zerubbabel is considered one of the great miracles of history alongside the Exodus and the resurrection of Christs from the dead.

While the Jews continued to have spiritual challenges after the return, never again did they bow the knee to idols. In fact, after the decree of Cyrus, the Jews became the most monotheistic people on earth. They returned to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple under the burdens of deprivation because they knew the LORD was the true God -- the only God . . . because only a true God could predict their captivity and then deliver them from it.

The original Hebrew people, in their original land, with their original language, and their original religion after 70 years of exile . . . and with the blessing and support of the Persian king-- What a miracle!

Likewise, the God that caused the remnant to rise from the dead as a nation is the same true God that sent His Son to die for our sins on the cross and then literally, tangibly, physically rise from the dead. This is our gospel and glorious it is (1 Corinthians 15:1-12).

Gospel Sermons from the
New Testament



“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” – 1 Timothy 3:16

19. The Gospel of Arrival of the Kingdom

The Invasion of the Kingdom of God into History

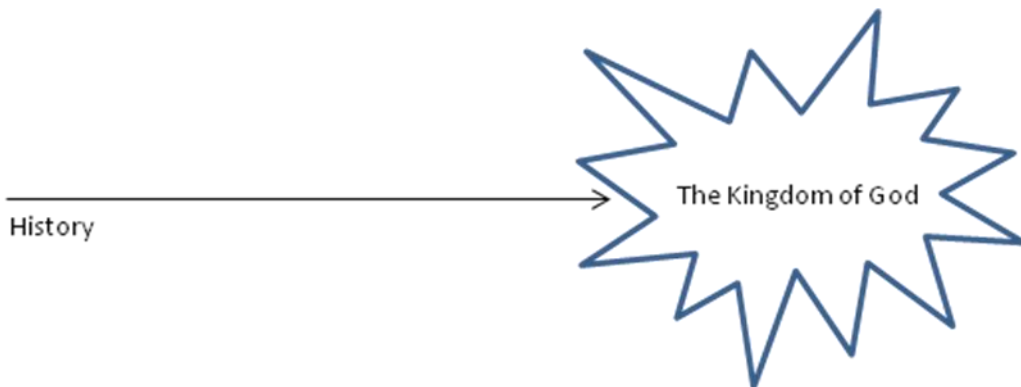


The kingdom of God was the major message of Jesus.

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand repent ye, and believe the gospel.

The Kingdom of God was not only the major message of Jesus, it was the major message of Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, Malachi, John the Baptist, Philip, Peter, John, and Paul.

The Kingdom of God was not only the major message of Jesus, it is the destiny of history, the *terminus ad quem* of all politics, the hope of all mankind (Isaiah 11).



Since ancient times, men have dreamed of an ideal age. The Greeks pictured an ideal "*politeo*" based on philosophical principles. Marx envisioned an ideal age based on economic equality. Freud viewed utopia as unrestrained sexual fulfillment. Hitler tried to create the perfect race by eliminating the "*unwants*" from society. Modern politicians seek to reshape society into a humanistic utopian ideal by legislating thousands of new laws that abrogate human rights. Freedoms disappear faster than a morning mist. Perhaps John Lennon's song expresses what many dream today: a world with "no countries," "no religion," "no heaven," "no hell," "no possessions," and everyone "living for today," "with the world as one" (John Lennon, *Imagine Meaning*, 1971).

Plato: An ideal political state run by philosophical principles.

Freud: A society which put no restraints on sexual drives.

Marx: Redistribution of wealth: Rich . . . to the poor.

Hitler: Dominance of the blond, blue-eyed, white race.

Huxley: No hope . . .escape into the mystical ideal through drugs.

When David understood the kingdom of God and rested in the hope of its appearing, his prayers ceased.

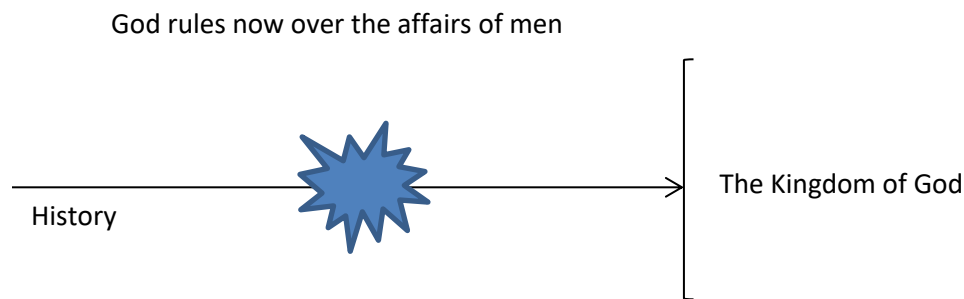
Psalm 72:20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

A LITTLE THEOLOGY

Entrance of the Kingdom into History

There are two ages: The Age to come and this age. They are separated by the Parousia of Christ. The KOG belongs to the Age to come. However, if the salvation of the KOG is only future, then it has no practical value today! It is merely a dream, a fantasy. It acts as an insurance policy, a form of eternal security. However, the kingdom is more than this.

Figure 28: The Parousia of Christ



With the coming of Christ, there is an overlapping of this age with the Age to come. The Kingdom of God intersected history. The Kingdom was present according to the announcement of Jesus, but without consummation! The salvic powers of the Messianic Age were present in Christ in a limited but powerful way in advance of the climatic end of history. The Kingdom of God invaded history to establish a beach front in order to create sons of the Kingdom.

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand (h;ggiken): repent ye, and believe the gospel.

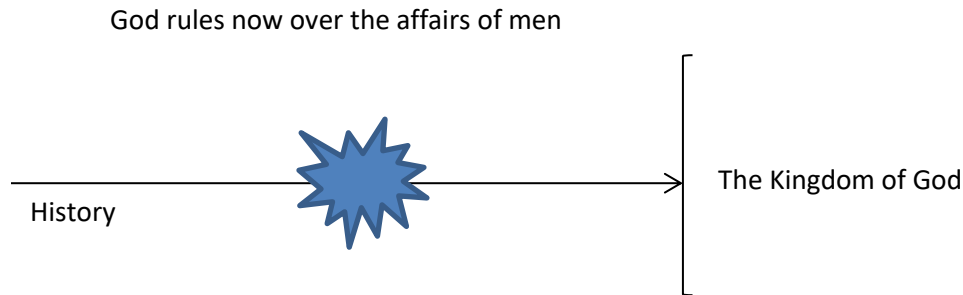
Matthew 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

Matthew 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

John announced the coming of the Kingdom, but Jesus asserted that the promised Kingdom had appeared in and through his ministry. The Greek verb *eggiken* (h;ggiken) in Mark 1:15 is a perfect active indicative indicating that the Kingdom (the rule of God) arrived in history and was active during the

ministry of Christ. His sermon in Luke 4:18-19 assured fulfillment. His Kingdom is not an apocalyptic Kingdom but a Kingdom offering the blessings of salvation to men without the final, climatic, cataclysmic, disruptive judgment of mankind associated with the end of history.

Figure 18: The Arrival of the Kingdom in History



The Kingdom was present because the Bride Groom was present for the wedding—a metaphor for messianic salvation. The day of salvation arrived and fasting became an inappropriate response. (Hosea 2:20; Ezekiel 16:8; Isaiah 54:1; Isaiah 62:4).

Mark 2:19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

The Kingdom was present because Satan was being defeated. He was not obliterated, but his authority was challenged and his work diminished. He did not become powerless, but his power was frustrated. The tide had turned. Righteousness was on earth breaking the power of Satan over the minds and bodies of men. Whereas O.T. saints saw the enemies of God's people as hostile nations, the focus in the Synoptics is upon the source of evil—upon the spiritual powers of evil behind the scenes of history. The victory of God's Kingdom is an invasion into the kingdom of darkness—an attack on Satan at the Gates of Hell.

Luke 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

Luke 11:20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

The Kingdom of God entered history in the person and ministry of Christ. Note the connection between the gospel of the Kingdom and healing those possessed of Devils. In Mark's gospel, the first recorded miracle is one of casting out an unclean spirit. The people, called it a "new teaching." It was new because Satan was being defeated. It was **not** new because it was a new teaching, but because it was **a new reality** -- a new phenomenon. It was novel because deliverance

was with authority. Christ proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom and then proved its power with proof of claim by defeating Satan.

Matthew 12:25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

Matthew 12:26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his Kingdom stand?

Matthew 12:27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.

Matthew 12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come (e;fqasen) unto you.

Matthew 12:29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

What is the meaning of the word “*is come*” (e;fqasen) in verse twenty-eight? This verb is an aorist active indicative indicating punctiliar, completed action. The KOG has come and is now active among men to deliver them from the power of Satan. If Satan is being defeated, then the Kingdom of God has arrived in history, reasoned Jesus. *But, it has arrived without consummation.* The Messiah entered the Kingdom of Darkness (KOD), not to judge men, but to deliver them from the power of Satan.

The Kingdom was present because the OT hope appeared before men in NOW-TIME. Sins were being forgiven, NOW. Diseases were cured, NOW. Death released its grip at the command of Jesus. Men obtained the blessings of the Kingdom in NOW-TIME during the ministry of the Savior.

Luke 10: 23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: 24 For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

The Kingdom was present by virtue of the fact Jesus said people could enter into it.

Luke 16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses (biazo: violently forces or pushes his way) into it.

Matthew 21:31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before

you.

Luke 11:52 Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

The Kingdom was present because the Scribes and Pharisees who prevented men from entering the Kingdom in their time were being exposed. Light drove away darkness.

Matthew 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the Kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

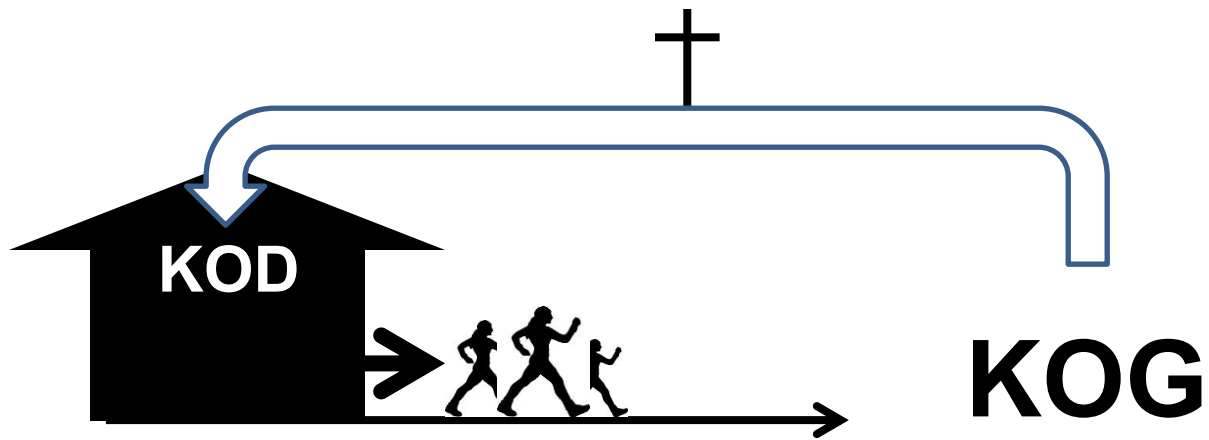
The Kingdom was present as a divine activity because of fulfilled prophecy:

Matthew 11: 11-15 Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

John did no miracles. He stood at the threshold of fulfillment and announced the new order. Kingdom fulfillment was not obvious to the casual eye. People had to accept it. A willing heart was necessary to perceive its activity among men. Many did not recognize John and did "whatever they pleased" to him (Mark 9:13). Messianic salvation was present in time and space, but in unexpected ways – in first fruit ways not revealed in the Old Testament.

The New Testament announces the "good news" that the Kingdom of God entered history in the person of Jesus Christ. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He demonstrated His authority to heal the sick, to raise the dead, and to control the elements. In every way, His life vindicated the hope of the prophets. Jesus Himself affirmed by his miracles the powers of "the Age to come" were present in His ministry. God mounted a heavenly offensive on the beach of Satan's kingdom in order to rescue people from the chains of slavery.

Matthew 12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you.



John's Dilemma Solved

When John was in prison, he sent messengers to query Christ, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matthew 11:3), Jesus answered, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see."

Jesus knew that His Kingdom was genuine and true. Jesus announced John's preaching was correct. Jesus recognized the Kingdom he preached was consistent with the OT revelation of the Kingdom. BUT, he also understood that His presentation of the Kingdom was dissimilar to John's perception of the kingdom. The Kingdom in and through Jesus ministry was dynamically present defeating man's enemies, Satan, sin and death . . . but not with irresistible force. It was present, but not taking global dominion of the earth. It was present in a true, but limited way – something not anticipated in the OT.

John was not wrong in his interpretation or preaching of the Kingdom. He simply did not know where he was in history.

John thought he was at the end of history. When John announced "the kingdom of God is at hand," he was expecting the dynamic and irreversible intervention of God's reign into history to usher in the age of regeneration through the Holy Spirit and the climatic, radical, ultimate defeat of the wicked through His Appointed King.

John's Confusion About the Kingdom

John was actually in the middle of history. He did not know the Kingdom was present only in a preliminary way, or that it was a secret invasion of God's rule into history in a limited way. He did not perceive there would be a time gap between its inauguration and consummation . . . or that there would be a church age between the inception of the Kingdom of God into history and the dynamic, irresistible, universal realization of the Kingdom at the conclusion of this age.

The Kingdom of God is real and true. The powers of the Kingdom were manifest in and through Jesus' ministry. The first stage of the Kingdom was open for all to see. Men could enter the Kingdom and experience its powers, but the full, dynamic, irresistible, universal manifestation of the Kingdom awaits the end of the age. It was present in and through Christ in advance of its climatic conclusion and judgment of the wicked.

The Kingdom of God is a living hope -- a hope illustrated in the miracles of a carpenter from the hill country of Nazareth. Jesus' presentation of the Kingdom was dynamic, but it didn't rise to the level of the cataclysmic, disruptive, irresistible rule of God proclaimed by Daniel and the prophets.

Christ did not judge the wicked, disrupt society, or crush His political enemies. The Kingdom invaded history, but without disrupting society. Jesus was a seed sower, not Alaric the Visigoth the brutal warrior who sacked Rome. This global upheaval is reserved for His Second Coming. He came the first time, not to destroy His adversaries, but to redeem men spiritually, and deliver them from the power of sin and Satan. He came not to bring judgment, but to offer men the life of the Kingdom in advance of its future climax. He came not to condemn men before God, but to bring men into a right relationship with God before the ominous Last Judgment.

The kingdom of God arrived in history in and through the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The arrival of the kingdom demands a response -- a radical response.

Do you want to enter the kingdom? Then you need to make a radical decision that will cost you your precious all.

Matthew 11:12 "From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven works mightily, and men of violence take it by force."

The term "*violence*" is the Greek word *biazo* which means "to use force." "Violence" describes the radical nature of the opportunity to enter the Kingdom. Entrance was paramount but it demanded a radical decision. The more powerful the will embraces sin, the more costly and dynamic the decision has to be. A violent decision involves a reversal - a turbulent, cataclysmic, convulsive decision.

The word "*strive*" means to "*strain every muscle*," and that is what one must do to enter the Kingdom.

This is not works theology! Indeed, nothing man does is meritorious. Men are saved by the works of Christ, not their own weak, flimsy good wishes and charities. However, for some, a decision for Christ can be violent --an end to one's worldly ambition of collecting gold or obtaining fame; and, an end to

one's narcissistic lifestyle. In some places in the world, the choice is between Christ and family.

Consider the rich young ruler's story and the radical decision Christ ordered him to make: "Sell that thou hast . . . and thou shall have treasure in heaven" (Matthew 19:21). How was the man going to enter the Kingdom? By obeying the King, selling all he had, and following Christ. Christ's mandate did not set well in his soul. Christ gave a radical answer to the man's good question and Christ's answer disturbed the man's wealthy, comfortable, powerful, peaceful world.

To enter the kingdom you must give up your throne and surrender it to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to enter the kingdom, then you must acknowledge His authority and surrender to Him now . . . in this life . . . today . . . forever.

Source: <https://sedm.org/Forms/17-Theology/TheGospelOfTheKingdomOfGod.pdf>

20. God's Christmas Storm

*The **Other** side of the Manger*

Revelation 12:1-5



We say, "It was the night before Christmas, and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse." Is this really the way it was on the first Christmas?

When Christians celebrate Christmas, we erect nativity scenes with a lovely young mother figure, a handsome father symbol, and an image of the Christ child lying in a manger. Surrounding the clean stable are lambs, donkeys, camels, and cows. These beautiful pastoral images communicate nothing but peace, tranquility, and happiness.

But, there is another side to Christmas story--John's violent account of the birth of Jesus found in Revelation twelve—the power of God in human flesh--God's Thunderclap!

In this book, God reveals blood-curdling images of collapsing mountains, burning forests, demonic locusts, and Herculean dragons. And when John

discusses the birth of Jesus, he does not show us a peaceful village in Judea, but a terrifying storm brewing in the Holy of Holies — God’s Christmas Storm.

The contrast between Matthew and Luke’s account of the birth of Christ and John’s account in Revelation is like looking at the two sides of a hand-embroidered picture. The front side reveals the artist’s beautiful stitch work. The backside of the art exposes a mass of tangled knots and threads. Matthew and Luke portray the birth of Christ in a simple, pastoral setting. John shows us the complicated tangled knots of human history — the violent storm surrounding the birth of Messiah.

Background

As the seventh trumpet sounds, voices boom: *“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ”* (Revelation 11:15). In the midst of terrifying judgment (8:7-9:20) the reader might wonder how God’s kingdom could ever be realized in a world full of unrepentant hearts (9:20). The answer to how God gains dominion over the earth is found in Chapter 12 of Revelation. Let us take a look at it.

Rev. 11:19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightning, and voices, and thundering, and an earthquake, and great hail.

John sees a horrendous storm brewing in the temple of God.

All Bible students understand this symbolic language. The temple is the dwelling place of God. The ark represents His throne of justice and mercy. The storm brews because holiness and love prepare to release their fury on the landscape of human history.

John uses mythological images to describe the chilling contest. This vision portrays the climatic struggle between good and evil--the conflict of the ages. The war is about how the kingdom of God will be realized on earth. Though the triumph of God’s kingdom was announced when the seventh trumpet sounded (11:15), a question remains, “How will God’s rule be manifest on earth?”

This horrific vision is God’s answer, and it reveals how the kingdom of God assumes ascendancy on earth through Christ and the proclamation of the gospel. Before us comes a blinding electrical storm, crackling thunder, loud voices, a rippling earthquake, and bone-crushing hail proceeding from the temple of God. Out of this blizzard appears a sign.

The Woman

Revelation 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

The word “*and*” connects this vision to the intense storm brewing in the Holy of Holies in chapter 11. Christ coming into history was a cyclone--a massive, discharge of unyielding holiness and pure love swelling with divine energy like giant electric capacitors in the sky.

The vision is a mythological presentation of spiritual truth. We see a woman, the sun, the moon, stars, a child, and a huge, ugly red dragon in cosmic proportions.

The woman is Eve and Israel and Mary and humanity combined into one.

“*Clothed with the Sun*” speaks of her royal splendor and honor. Israel was heaven’s beautiful princess who gave birth to God’s downpour of love in Christ. With the moon under her feet, Israel became the hope of humanity. Only she could bring forth the Champion that could defeat the powers of darkness.

The Sun appears to represent Joseph’s father, the moon is Joseph’s mother, and the stars Joseph’s brethren, the twelve tribes of Israel.

The moon under her feet and a crown of stars speaks of conquest, authority, and majesty.

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me (Genesis 37:9).

Our gaping eyes stare at the glorious, majestic, regal queen mother nine months pregnant. She does not smile. She's in a state of shock and trauma experiencing the symptoms of fatigue, difficulty walking, trouble sleeping, trouble holding her bladder, shortness of breath, varicose veins, and stretch marks.

But, the scene is more than this. Before us is woman overwhelmed with contractions of the muscles around the uterus. Feeling the intense pressure on the cervix, bladder, and colon, her eyebrows quench exposing the pain shooting through her lower back. Her open mouth and heavy breathing reveals the body's demand for oxygen. Looking like someone has stabbed her in the stomach and with contractions twisting harder and harder, we perceive the pain has become more unbearable. Her insides are expanding to dimensions she never thought possible. A baby is about to be born.

A Bible verse comes to mind, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children” (Genesis 3:16).

Revelation 12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be deliverer.

The “she” is the nation of Israel.

What a scene!

We hear blood-curdling cries shrieking from a woman in the final stages of labor. She is alone and double over in pain clutching her midsection ready to give birth. But, it is more terrifying than this. Before us is a scene from a horror movie. This woman is on the run, bleeding, seized by labor pains, and searching for a safe place to deliver a child – alone! Could anyone be more vulnerable?

The Red Dragon

Revelation 12:3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

John looks up and sees a horrible sign that causes his legs to tremble like a pair of oak trees in an arctic blizzard. The lonely woman agonizing with powerful contractions is being stalked by an adversary – a gigantic, hungry, hideous red dragon – a platted monster lusting to eat her baby. Could anything be more terrifying?

The beautiful, multi-colored, little serpent in Genesis has become the repulsive, ugly red dragon in Revelation. Through the millenniums the massive monster has morphed into a grotesque beast with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads conquering all humanity but One.

To John's audience the seven heads speak of nations under Satan's control which he used to terrify humanity. The dragon is the serpent, Satan, Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome rolled into one. The ten horns speak of smaller jurisdictions, and seven crowns speak of raw political power. Rome comes to mind. (See *Surviving the Dragon's Breath*)

To us, the beast is a symbol of the twisted instruments of sin and evil as exercised through powerful governments and their corrupt institutions to enslave men and to crush the truth of the gospel.

The Gospel in a Sentence

Revelation 12:4-5 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

Before us is the imagery of a mammoth, cosmic confrontation between good and evil. So destructive is this red behemoth that it destroys a third of the stars with one whip of his massive tail. With sticky saliva dripping from his bulging lips, the sniffing dragon stalks the pregnant woman eager to devour her wet, wrinkled newborn child while still connected to her body with the umbilical cord. This predator comes to "steal and destroy." The woman is Israel who

gives birth to the Messiah, and the red dragon is Satan who seeks to devour Him.

Historically, Satan attempted to destroy the Messianic line. Cain, Pharaoh, Jezebel & Athaliah, and others were Satan's instruments to annihilate the Promised Seed. The savage military machines of Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece ravaged the nation. The conquest of Israel by these alien powers made it difficult to maintain the Hebrews' purpose, purity, and innocence.

The birth of Jesus is viewed in universal, cosmic dimensions – the contest of the ages. The quiet, pastoral scene with sheep, goats, and cows on a peaceful night in a shepherds stable in Bethlehem is obscured by the hunter's chase behind the scenes. Before us is a deadly pursuit by a dreadful monster – like a new born lamb in the pit of a python on a dark, cold night. In labor, the woman appears so alone. Helpless without assistance of another caring human being, the growling, sniffing monster prowls through the forest eager to rip the baby from the birth canal.

Despite the miserable conditions, the woman gives birth. The child born is the Ruler of the nations the political Enemy of this hideous dragon. The baby is God's terrifying electrical Storm, His bone-crushing Hail, His crackling Thunderclap to humanity, His rippling Earthquake, and His deafening Thunderbolt from God's sky to Earth. This baby is destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron and to smash them to pieces . . . and to kill the red monster (Psalm 2:1).

Like a dream, the story changes dramatically.

Suddenly, the child is snatched from the clutches of the dragon and "*caught up to God and to His throne.*" This is John's way of telling us that Jesus' purity and obedience was rewarded by a promotion to sit at the right hand of God as Christ and Lord (Acts 2:36).

Having defeated the trilogy of evil (Satan, sin, and death), the Lord Jesus is exalted in God's presence as the Messianic King and Savior of His people.

"And, He shall reign for ever and ever, King of kings, Lord of lords . . . repeat in one mighty chorus."

John wants us to know that God did not send religion to save us. He sent his Son. He did not send an impersonal, menacing, military machine to defeat Satan. He sent a baby. God's power and holiness and love are perfected in Jesus. He defeated the trilogy of evil (Satan, sin, and death), and was exalted in God's presence as Lord and Christ. This is John's way of informing us that The Babe in Bethlehem is destined to rule the world with a rod of iron and to slay the red monster.

Conclusion

Remember, the great question in Revelation is this: *“How will God’s kingdom be realized on earth?”* John hears the whistling winds of a cyclone thrashing in the Holy of holies. He then receives a vision—a mythological vision of a monster’s hunt for a woman and her baby. This is Revelator’s way of telling us that Jesus is God’s terrifying electrical storm.

Jesus is God’s thunderclap! Do you hear him? Jesus is God’s lightning bolt. Do you see Him? Jesus is God’s rippling earthquake. Have you felt Him? Jesus is God’s bone-crushing hailstone that ushers in the rule of God. Have you yielded your heart to Him?

In summary, Christmas is a time to reflect on the meaning of the birth of Christ. As you think about baby Jesus lying in a manger, remember that his birth was a miracle of history-- a messy affair, the result of a cosmic crisis between good and evil. All the forces of Serpent sought to destroy him. But, baby Jesus was no ordinary child. He is God’s Christmas Storm, the perfection of holiness and love blasting forth from the temple of God to wage war against sin. Through Him salvation has come to mankind.

Jesus is God’s precious gift to humanity. The gift cost us nothing, but it cost him everything. Let us take a little time to thank God for his Christmas Storm-- a Champion who defeated our historic enemies by virtue of his death, burial, and resurrection. For it is through the Gospel the power of God is revealed unto salvation (Isaiah 53:1; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:16).

21. The Mystery of Godliness

Six Parts of the Gospel Held Up by the Pillar of Truth

1 Timothy 3:15-16



“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” – 1 Timothy 3:15-16

Paul identifies six parts of the “*mystery of godliness*” held up by the Pillar of Truth.

Therefore, this brief seeks to answer the question, “**What is the mystery of godliness?**”

Without Controversy

The word “*controversy*” comes from the Greek word *homologoumenos* which means to perceive, understand, grasp, observe, and see.

We get the word *homoletics* (studies on how to preach) from this term. It works as an adverb modifying the being-verb “is” meaning undeniably, certainly.

The word “*without controversy*” acts like our English legal terms “notwithstanding,” “undeniable,” “indisputable,” “irrefutable,” or “unassailable.”

That is to say, any argument contrary to what he is about to state admits no dispute and has no standing. Metaphorically speaking Paul is saying, “you can take what I am about to say to the bank. It is as true as true can get.”

Great is the mystery

The Greek word “*mystery*” (*musterion*) does **not** refer to something difficult or impossible to understand.

Rather, it informs us of something hidden or concealed in the Old Testament that has manifested itself to mankind, namely, the arrival of the Christ in history.

Great (Mega)

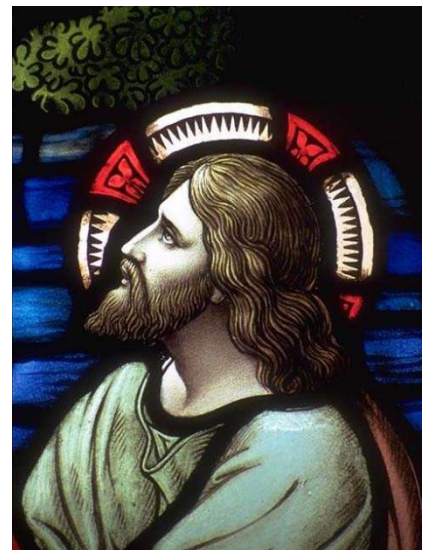
While we use the term “*great*” frequently, very few things are really great! But, GREAT is the mystery of godliness.

The Greek word for “*great*” is *mega*. A superlative adjective, it identifies the wonder and superior quality of a thing. We use this Greek word as a prefix to many English terms: *megabyte*, *megawatt*, *megastar*, *megabuck*, *megavolt*, *megolomanica*, *megaflop*, and many more.

Keep this word in mind as the apostle reveals six facts about the indivisible MEGA mysteries of godliness that form the pillar of truth (3:25).

Godliness

The term “*godliness*” refers in a general sense to the heart of the gospel, the eye of God, true religion,



piety, and sanctification.

The term “*godly*” usually refers to acts of piety or to being God-like in habits and character. But, this is not the stress of the word “godliness” in this text. In this passage “*godliness*” (*eusebeia*) is a noun and not an adjective; a fact, and not a fantasy; a reality and not a theory; the absolute gospel and not a nice story; the God-man, and not a myth;

Having listed the character qualities that should mark pastors and deacons, the apostle is **not** referring to the Christian’s duty to be godly in verse 16. Rather, he shows us the Source of Godliness by using the genitive case. Paul points to a person in history – Someone Who actually existed – Someone Who is our Banner for righteous living. Any other Model is idolatry.

Paul takes us on a journey to the core of Divine concerns, the invasion of the kingdom of God into history through the Son, “the real McCoy,” the prototype of godliness, the source and display of God-like attributes, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Savior is not like *Theos*, He is *Theos*. He does not resemble God; He is very God of God!

John 1:1, 14 “In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word was with God (Theos), and the Word (logos) was God (Theos) . . . and the Word (logos) was made flesh and dwelt (skenoō = tabernacled) among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten (monogenēs = one of a kind) of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 10:30 “I and my Father are one .”

(Note: The word “*one*” in this text is a nominative, neuter, adjectival pronoun. The text does **not** refer to our Lord being one in personality with the Father, but having the same substance as Father, being very God of God as a spiritual being– the neuter referring to substance and not personality. No other being in the universe can make this claim, but with Christ, the claim came with proof of claim.)

Thus, the core of “*godliness*” in this text is **not** about our duty to perfect holiness, but about the marvelous history of Christ: His incarnation, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of the Father – the pillar of the gospel – that God was among us in the Person of His Son. Great is the mystery of *Theos* becoming *anthropos* – something more significant in history than alleged encounters of a third kind.

SIX HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE MEGA MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

The six verbs in this section are all aorist passives ending with the same sound (*theta, eta* – the “*uh*” sound). They form a rhythmic cadence like a military hymn.

You can almost hear the apostle pounding a railroad spike at the beginning of each stroke while he sings the wonders of this mega mystery:

ephanerothera (bam),
edikiotha (bam),
ophtha (bam),
echaruchtha (bam),
episteutha (bam), and
anelamphtha (bam).

When it comes to godliness, the best among us are like the solar panels on a Mars Rover covered with dust, but Jesus?

The Son does **not** shine as example of godliness. He IS the essence of Godliness. He does **not** mirror the sunlight of holiness, the nucleus of holiness that lights the cosmos burns eternally within the Core of the Savior. He IS to mankind what the Sun is to God’s creation.

Theos was in Christ and Christ was *Theos* in His birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and present exalted reign at the right hand of God.

(1) The first fact regarding this mega mystery is the incarnation of Christ – the day that God became a man.

“*God was manifest in the flesh*” (KJV) or the alternative, “*Who was manifest in the flesh*” or “*He was manifest in the flesh*” (ESV and others).

Because *the first rule of interpretation* is to “secure the text,” we must diverge here to wrestle with a textual problem. The KJV translated the text as “God was manifest in the flesh” while the NASB and ESV and others translate the text as “Who” or “He was manifest in the flesh.”

Without bogging the reader down in the detail of textual criticism, the reader should know that the original Greek was written in Uncial letters (uppercase without space between words). Over time, ancient manuscripts wore out and developed smears and smudges. This is the case here. Moreover, translators often abbreviated words like Θς for Θεος *Theos*, “God”

Earlier manuscripts use the term “*He who was manifest*” and **not** “God was manifest.”

However, **we must consider the theology** surrounding the textual variance. John is very clear the “Word (logos) was with God (Theos) and was God (Theos) . . . and that the “logos became flesh” (John 1:1, 14).

Because Jesus is Theos, I tend to sustain the legitimacy of the KJV translation, “*Theos was manifest in the flesh . . .*” But, in comparing ancient texts, the proper translation appears to be, “*He was manifest in the flesh*” (Robertson, Metzger, Aland and Aland).

Getting past the textual variance, let’s move on to the truth of this passage.

The GREAT mystery is that God / Elohim / the LORD of the Old Testament became a man; that is, *Theos* appeared on earth, in space and time, as a living, breathing, flesh and blood human being — a man (*anthropos*) called “*the Christ.*”

Forget alien sightings and invasions. Nothing in history compares to that day when *Theos* entered history in and through the Son in Bethlehem around 2 BC.

That *Theos* appeared in a human body with a human nature is the MEGA TRUTH of the gospel. This fact became the pillar of the gospel, and the theme of Renaissance Christmas Art and historical Christmas carols.

(2) The second fact regarding this mega mystery is that Christ was “justified in the Spirit . . .”

The legal, court-room word “*justified*” means “*to declare righteous,*” or “*to declare authentic, genuine, or real.*” In law, we demand verification, confirmation, validation, authentication, endorsement, and certification of all kinds of truth claims, real estate transactions, and money matters involving controversy.

What could be more controversial than Jesus is God, born of a virgin, died for our sins, and rose from the dead?

Any megalomaniac can claim to be God, but where is the evidence?

Pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act (5 USCS 556 (d)) the proponent of a rule or order has the burden of proof.

Hearsay, wishes, hopes, presumption, theory, and opinion are not accepted as facts in a court of law.

Rule 301. Presumptions in Civil Cases Generally

In a civil case, unless a federal statute or these rules provide otherwise, the party against whom a presumption is directed has the burden of producing evidence to rebut the presumption. But this rule does not shift the burden of persuasion, which remains on the party who has it originally.

Our Lord not only claimed to be God, He provided *proof of claim with strict proof of claim — even infallible proof of claim* (Acts 1:3).

His miracles were His credentials. Only God can turn water into wine, heal the sick, and walk on water. Out of death, the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead vindicating His claim that He is God, that He is Lord over the grave.

Over 500 witnesses testified to a real, tangible, historical encounter with the living Christ. Thus, the phrase “justified in the Spirit” announces lawyer-like verification for Divine assertions.

That Jesus is God is an absurdity . . . without substantial proof of claim. The miracles of our Lord and especially His resurrection from the dead is the Spirit’s proof of claim — His legal verification that Christ is indeed Theos, very God of God, in human flesh.

Romans 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

C.S. Lewis, the great English literary genius said it like this,

*“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, Mere Christianity*

(3) The third fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “seen of angels . . .”

Can you think of anything on this earth that might be of interest to angels?

To my knowledge, I’ve never encountered an angel. And, I can’t think of anything in American politics that would attract angels: WWI, WWII, 9-11?

But, the day that God became a man excited the angelic mind. The incarnation was like the Super Bowl of history and every angel wanted a ticket to the main event.

So GREAT was the Divine visitation to earth, Angels fell from skies like falling stars with wonderment and power to assist Christ in the grandeur and glory of His advent, temptations, ministry, crucifixion, and guardianship of His tomb.

See: Luke 2:9-13; Luke 22:43; Luke 24:4; Hebrews 1:6; Matthew 4:11; John 20:11-12.

The modern mind would do well to take an interest in that which captures the attention of angels.

(4) The fourth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “Preached unto the Gentiles . . .”

The Apostle places preaching of the historicity of Christ among the “*great*” (*mega*) things which constituted the “mystery” of Divine truth.

By preaching, the Apostle is **not** referring to well-prepared sermons, but the factual reporting of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ with conviction and confidence as the newsworthy event in the hostile climate of the first century. This “preaching” was the opposite of fake news by the fake media as it was characterized by formality, gravity, and authority (Strong).

Consider the adversarial environment in which these historical events took place. It would have been natural for the early disciples to go *sub silentio* and remain mute. But, they didn’t. The only ones remaining silent were the hostile witnesses (the Pharisees). The disciples possessed a conviction that what they saw and heard was as real as a smile that brightens your day. They could not help but proclaim the facts of Christ’s victorious history. That these fantastic claims were preached at all was a miracle of miracles. After all, you could get jailed, stoned, or crucified for preaching a message that challenged the authority of Caesar. Stephen comes to mind (Acts 6:1ff; 4:12; 17:6-7).

Second, the message was not only preached to Jews, it was preached to all the nations hugging the Mediterranean — the world jury hearing the facts of the Case.

Before our Lord’s advent, a wall of partition divided the Jewish and Gentile world. In Christ’s gospel, we find that the playing field for salvation was leveled for Jews and Greeks, rich and poor, men and women, slaves and free men. What Jewish man in his right mind would extend this gospel of hope to Gentiles? None, unless the message had been justified by the Spirit!

No wonder Paul listed the preaching of this gospel as a mega event in the first century! See Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 1:26-27; Colossians 4:3.

(5) The fifth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “believed on in the world . . .”

Jesus said to his disciples, “*You are my witnesses . . .*” (Acts 1:8) . . . and, witnesses must be cross-examined and directly interrogated to test the credibility of the witness and the truth of his testimony.

The gospel message was not preached in “safe zones” or “free speech cages” in back alleys or in government-approved amphitheaters. It was preached to juries in the market places of the Roman world *mano a mano* among Jews and Greeks competent to judge faith claims and to cross-examine the witnesses.

The Apostles announced the hope of salvation among the Gentiles. . . . and the reasonable, serious Romans and Greeks examined the evidence for the resurrection of Christ and believed the gospel.

While extraordinary claims demand proof of claim, they do not demand extraordinary evidence. These disciples used the same rules of evidence that we use today. What did you see? What did you hear? What did you feel and touch? (1 John 1:1-3).

The early disciples considered themselves witnesses of the Christ event. They were not fideists who believed faith operated apart from facts and reason. Thomas said he would NOT believe until he could place his fingers in the wounds of Christ. Thomas was not being an ornery doubter or skeptic. He was a normal, empirical man who rejected the fantastic and hearsay regarding a resurrected human being. The burden of proof rested on the claimant and he refused to believe until he could personally verify the claim with his five senses (John 20:24-29).

The Apostle identifies faith (“believed”) in this incredible message as something remarkable among pragmatic, coherent, thinking men prone to shun outrageous claims. Belief in this mystery shows the accuracy of the testimonies and the power of the truth to convince the most skeptical but honest mind.

(6) The sixth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “received up into glory.”

Concerning the ascension, Paul identifies it as the punctuation mark of the great mega mystery of all time.

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus was taken up into heaven in the sight of his disciples. His ascension and session at the right hand of the Father as the exalted Christ ended the earthly history of our Lord.

While the story provides a nice ending to an incredible event, people do not normally levitate off the earth without some modern rocket-propulsion system. Even though such an event is highly improbable, the witnesses said this is the way Jesus left earth (Acts 1-2:30-32).

Thus, the ascension of Christ and His session at the right hand of God not only concludes the historical account of the great mystery of godliness, the Bible

It is a kingly coronation where the triumphant Savior receives a golden crown. Having accomplished eternal redemption for all mankind, He now sits on the eternal throne as “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

With this good news, you don't want to be a person who is absorbed in science fiction, extraterrestrials, and alien-invasion theories to annihilate the human race only to miss THE ONE, TRUE, HISTORICALLY, VERIFIABLE VISITATION of *Theos* in history in and through His Son. Forget aliens! Investigate the Christ event!

The context of this passage is the previous verse:

1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Every Christian church has the potential to be a “*pillar and ground of the truth.*”

Paul anticipated a delay in his visit to Timothy, and informs him of his purpose in writing his letter: “*that thou mayest know,*” a hina clause with a subjunctive holding out the possibility that Timothy and his readers might come to a full knowledge on how men “*ought*” (*de*) to behave themselves “*in the house of God.*”

The “*house of God*” would be a church gathering, not a church building. A true church doesn't practice social distancing. Healthy Christians don't self-quarantine.

The word “*conduct*” or “*behave*” comes from the Greek word *anestrepo* which means to “*turn upside down*” or “*turn up and down.*”

Christianity has a code of conduct which is accurately portrayed in chapter 3:1-14. A true believer changes his ways, his dress, his attitudes, his demeanor, and his habits when he or she takes up the cross to follow Christ.

Paul established Christian ethics consistent with the law of the LORD God (Romans 13:10).

He commands believers to put off the old and put on the new in Ephesians 4:21-24.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul orders men to remove their headwear and for women to veil themselves when meeting in the house of God to remember the headship and history of Christ (1 Corinthians 11).

In 1 Timothy faithful men are exhorted to pray with clean hands (2:8), and women are commanded to dress modestly and take on the role of a student.

In chapter three, the apostle lists the virtues that must mark elders and deacons in pursuit of Divine interests.

In chapter four, Paul exhorts Timothy to avoid (Jewish) myths (fake history) and to train himself in godliness (4:7). If Godly commands like these were put into practice, it would turn the average American church upside down . . . or is that “right side up?”

If you want to be Godly, don’t look in and in and in. Forget New Age meditations influenced by Eastern philosophy, mysticism, yoga, Hinduism and Buddhism. Rather, look at the glory of our Lord.

“But we all, with open face beholding (present middle participle) as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed (metamorphoo) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Change comes to our values and perceptions when we see and treasure the mystery of godliness of the Lord Jesus.

Believe the gospel and be saved; reject this gospel and be lost.

22. The Broad Way and the Narrow Way

Matthew 7:13-14

The World Hates the Narrow Way



The wind sweeping across the planet is omnism – the belief that all religions are good and that any or all of them can get you to heaven. This epicenter of this movement appears to be centered in England. When King Charles became king, he saw himself as the “Protector of faith” and not “Protector of the faith.”

Interestingly, these same people never seem to talk about there being many ways to hell.

While there may be many ways to Town Hall, there is only one way to heaven.

Our text informs us that the way to life is narrow and the way to destruction is broad.

Entrance into the kingdom of God is not on the path of diversity, multiculturalism, or ethnic inclusiveness. Living life “my way” is the path of destruction (Isaiah 53:6).

Matthew 7:13-14 – Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are those entering through it. Because narrow is the gate, and difficult is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

How Broad is the Broad Way?

As an example of the Broad Way and Narrow Way, let’s take a look at Noah’s flood.

According to *Answers in Genesis* there could have been over 4 billion people that perished in the flood –

<https://nikeinsights.famguardian.org/forums/topic/23858/>

How Narrow is the Narrow Way?

According to Peter, only 8 souls were saved during the flood judgment.

1 Peter 3:20 . . . to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

8 souls out of four billion is not only narrow, it is thread thin.

Q: Am I on the narrow way or broad way?

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Hebrews 11:5 – But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Religion is not the way to heaven. Christianity is not the way to heaven; faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his accomplishments at Calvary is the only way to heaven.

The Source of this omnistic belief that all faiths are good and that any faith will secure your eternal future appears to be rooted in modern moral relativism.

The foundation of modern society is moral relativism — that there is no absolute law.

Chief Justice Frederick Moore (1890-1953) said, “There is nothing more certain than there are no absolutes.”

In the world of relativism, there is no black and white, no light or darkness, no red or yellow. Everything is grey!

“Every man has a different philosophy; this is my philosophy and it suits me”

In a relativistic society there is absolute standard of right and wrong. There are only 50 shades of grey, 99 genders, 100 reasons to kill a baby, 200 reasons to take a *vaccine* death jab, and 500 reasons to start a war.

The grey siblings of relativism are permissiveness, pluralism, multiculturalism, skepticism, indulgence, laxness; celebrate diversity, tolerance of evil, equivocation, and intolerance of absolute truth. Grey gives birth to the grey corpses of abortion, divorce, adultery, oath-breaking, Sodomy, queer-marriages, lesbianism, wretched-feminism, critical race theory, open borders, and about anything associated with a grey corpse.

In the religious, relativistic mind there are many gods, many lords, and many roads to Rome. Relativists will tolerate everything but virginity, truth, and the man who seeks to restore absolutes to a society intoxicated with “doing your own thing.”

The World Hates Absolutes

The maxima of relativist is that you must choose your own religion, but

“A man can no more possess a ‘private religion’ than he can possess a private sun or moon.” — G.K. Chesterton.

Religion is not choosing your favorite flavor of ice cream.

In a system of relativism there is no definition marriage — marriage is whatever you want it to be: two men living together; two women sleeping in the same bed; two people living together under the same roof.

What cannot be defined cannot be protected or prohibited. When the whole world is darkness, there is no light. Where there is no garden, there are no weeds. When the whole world is an ocean, there is no shoreline to guard. Where there are no borders, there are no nations. When men love death, there is no life to protect. Where man has no rights, he has no property. You will own nothing and must enjoy it. Where there are no rights, there is no such thing as justice. There is only power.

In a system of relativism there is no crime, no sin, no adultery, no truth, no lies, no treason, no state theft, no bribery, no definition of good and evil, and no absolute standard of right and wrong. In this system both the totalitarian state and the totalitarian, anarchistic man thrive. Under relativism, you can choose your own god, your own truth, your own law, your own morals, and make your own choices. . . .except choices that conflict with the truth and choices of the totalitarian state.

“Whether a man is a criminal or a public servant is purely a matter of perspective.”

— Tom Robbins, *Another Roadside Attraction*

“A world without values quickly becomes a world without value.” — Jonathan Sacks

Thus, a world without absolute truth will become absolutely worthless. A world with the Absolute God as its source of law is priceless.

The relativistic society is an open society — open to all evil and no good. Its heroes are Henry David Thoreau, feminists, BLM racists, gender-bender psychologists, drag queens, homosexual presidents and transgender first ladies. Because there is no good and evil, the government cannot offer protection from evil. It can only permit evil in the name of freedom and protect society from those who seek to restore the definition of good and evil in terms of Holy Scripture.

In this world of grey there is no such thing as child abuse, sexual abuse, or spouse abuse. It is only abuse if it happens to you. There are no predators and victims, only whiners. Assault and murder is merely a choice of legitimate occupations.

The system of pluralism and multiculturalism produces the honorable cat burglar who is talented, sophisticated, noble at his trade, and who is more valuable than the law-abiding citizen. This system introduces the Don Juan with multiple lovers whose conquests are to be admired. It offers movie heroes like James Bond — a cool, suave, fornicator with a license to kill.

Even something so basic as sex turns grey when relativists “promulgate the view that sexual identity is solely a social construct rather than a natural or biological fact.”

The problem is that no man can live in this world and be happy, especially if he is the victim of aggression. Therefore, relativists become hypocrites by borrowing Christian’s values and talking right and wrong, good and evil, in order to condemn behavior they don’t like.

Under a pretense of humility, the relativist claims not to know the truth. But, at the same time he claims the power to be the arbitrator of right and wrong in politics. This is not humility, but stinkin' pride.

Relativism is dangerous: R.C. Sproul said,

"I do not want to drive across a bridge designed by an engineer who believed the numbers in the structural stress models are relative truths."

Moral relativism is just as dangerous . . . omnistic, religious relativism is eternally dangerous. In this grey world love is no better than murder. Killing a baby in the womb or outside the womb is perfectly acceptable. Reducing the population for the good of humanity is perfectly acceptable to the grey mind.

"The double minded man is unstable in all his ways" — James 1:8

But, the strength of the Christian man is the absoluteness of God. The Bible teaches there is one; true God and one absolute law-order. It matters what you worship and who you worship . . . what you say and what you do . . . what you believe and what you achieve.

Psalms 119:113-115

Samekh.

I hate those who are double-minded,

But I love Your law.

You are my hiding place and my shield;

I wait for Your word.

Depart from me, evildoers,

That I may observe the commandments of my God.

In Christianity words matter because they define the nature of a thing — a definition that separates it from all others: "Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). Here is good news. In Christianity there is good and evil, right and wrong, righteousness and sin, night and day, morality and immorality, male and female, true news and fake news, true science and fake science.

The Christian gospel offers you the Savior who saves from the penalty of sin and restores you to a right relationship to the one, true absolute God—the God of Creation, the God of the Bible, and the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In a spinning color wheel, the red, yellow, and blue melds into grey. To see the colors, you have to slow the wheel down to distinguish them.

Likewise, our mad spinning society has melded grey. If we want to see the colors of life, we have to get off this merry-go-round, pick up the Book, and see the rainbow of absolute truth in God's Word.

Carefully consider this absolute statement by Christ:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6).

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

Salvation is not something you chose.

Furthermore, salvation is not about what man does, but what God has done in Christ to save men.

Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

He is the subject; shall save is the action verb; and, the object is "his people."

A friend called me disturbed about a t-shirt that all staff members were wearing on baptism Sunday. The t-shirts had these words: "I" chose Christ. Can you get any more humanistic and Armenian that this? You can choose Christ a hundred times a day, but you will not be saved until God does the saving. Selah!

The World Does Not Hate Christians

During these days of a liberal revolution, Christians feel like the world hates them, but the world does not hate Christians . . . nor the church . . . it hates Christ and mature disciples who teach there is only one way to God and the absoluteness of our God.

Consider the following:

John 7:6 Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.

Background: The time of the Feast of Tabernacles was near -- in the 3rd year of our Lord's ministry. This was a fall / September national holiday -- a festive occasion that commemorated Israel's sojourn through the wilderness as they traveled from Egypt to the Promised Land (1445-1405 B.C.). Groups of villagers would travel together to Jerusalem and live in tents as they did after their release from Egypt. One great big Bible camp, it was a time of seeing old friends, meeting family members, and exchanging news. During this time, Jesus' brethren ordered him to go with them to the festival. Their interests were in celebrating the national holiday, but Jesus had more pressing, heavenly concerns weighing on his heart -- in particular, his vicarious suffering and redemptive death during the upcoming Passover season. The words that follow are Jesus' corrective.

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.

Jesus drew attention to the celebrants that they're going to Jerusalem for the festival presented no problem for them. The world had no quarrel with them because they had no witness against it . . . but, for Christ, things were different. They hated him. For Jesus to go to Jerusalem with the throng was a lamb going into a den of wolves.

The "*you*" in this passage refers to Jesus' brethren, family, and fellow citizens. The "*you*" included the twelve who had not yet matured in their faith; that is, the world does not hate Jews, religious people, converts to Christianity, church goers, or even students of Christ. They hate Jesus because He testified that their "works thereof are evil."

But, things changed. In John 15, we have this statement by Jesus to his disciples:

John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

The "*if*" in this text is a first class conditional clause meaning "*since the world hates you*" or "*If the world hates you, and it does hates you . . .*"

The "*you*" refers to the disciples who has followed Christ for three years and who would be testifying for Christ and witnessing against the sins of the nation following the Feast of Pentecost some 50 days after Jesus' death.

The lesson here is that the world does not hate Christians. It hates Christians that teach Christianity if right and all others religions are wrong; that Jesus is the ONLY way to the Father. It hates mature, witnessing disciples who confront the sins of national leaders, government, and fellow citizens. It does not hate nice, compliant, wishy-washy Christians. It hates discerning ministers that preach Jesus is the ONLY Savior . . . that the way to heaven is narrow . . . that men need to repent and believe the gospel.

Furthermore, it hates preachers know God's law and expose evil in government officials and ordinary people.

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

There is a second lesson from this text and it is that mature, discerning believers must witness for Christ and testify against evil even though the world does not have the capacity to hear the gospel or rebukes from God's Law-word.

Jeremiah 6:10-11 To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it. But I am full of

the wrath of the LORD, and I cannot hold it in. "Pour it out on the children in the street and on the young men gathered together; both husband and wife will be caught in it, and the old, those weighed down with years.

Doctrines the World Cannot Tolerate

The world can tolerate many things, but it cannot tolerate the doctrine that Jesus is the only way to God . . . that all religions are wrong and that Christianity is the only religion that has the truth . . . that the Christian God is the true God and that all other religions serve a false god.

That there is only one way to God is the most hated doctrine contained in the Scripture.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." - John 14:6.

Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Matthew 7:13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it

The world can tolerate religion but it cannot tolerate the doctrine that men can only be saved by Christ's work on the cross . . . and redemption by blood . . . (Galatians 6:14).

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Galatians 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Hebrews 9:22 And by the law almost all things are purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

The world can tolerate a message of love and being a "spiritual" person, but they cannot tolerate the truth of God's law and the need to repent.

Matthew 4: 17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

Acts 17:30 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,

The world can tolerate old philosophies and new philosophies, but they will not tolerate the doctrine that the Scriptures are true and they must surrender to its authority (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Psalm 119:151 You are near, O Lord, And all Your commandments are truth.

John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

Gallup Poll: Americans who believe the Bible is the literal Word of God is less than 24% (<https://news.gallup.com/poll/210704/record-few-americans-believe-bible-literal-word-god.aspx>)

The world can tolerate Christian morality but they cannot tolerate the message that they must submit to God's law-order because it is the standard of right and wrong for all men and all of man's institutions. Because God's moral law is rooted in His very character, is timeless and eternal.

The Ten Commandments and its relevant case law is God's Absolute Demand on his Moral Creatures. If God's law is not the standard of right and wrong, then what is?

Moreover, God's law is His authority for the conduct of men and government. The law cannot save men, but it is the standard for human conduct. There is all the difference in the world between being saved by law, and being saved to keep the law.

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.

Luke 11:28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Romans 2:12-16 Romans 2:12-16: "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Romans 8:4 In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Nevertheless believers must witness for Christ and testify against evil even though the world does not have the capacity to hear the gospel with the hope

that "if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" 2 Timothy 2:5).

The world will love you if you are religious and believe all roads lead to heaven; but, the world will hate you if you teach there is one absolute God, one absolute law-order, and one absolute Savior.

What do you really believe . . . and, if you really believe that men and women are on the road to destruction without Christ, why don't you tell your friends and neighbors about Him who is the Only Way to the Father?

23. Do You Like Thorns?

Most people do!

The Path to Hell is Paved with Thorns



Matthew 13:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

This passage is part of the Parable of the Sower and the Seed. It is called a mystery parable because it reveals characteristics of the Kingdom of God in and through Christ not previously revealed in the Word of God, particularly showing the contrast between the irresistible entrance of the Kingdom into history as declared by the O.T. prophets, and the entrance of the Kingdom into history in and through Christ and the persuasive nature of Kingdom presentation and the possibility of people resisting the Kingdom Gospel.

Interpretation: The Kingdom is liken to a sower sowing seed in a field. Our Lord is the Sower; the seed is the Word of God; the ground represents the various conditions within the heart of men as they hear the gospel of the kingdom. One of the conditions of the heart is called "thorny ground." It is the third kind of heart the Lord describes. The first two are called the hard heart and the shallow heart. The thorny heart is a crowded heart.

Do you like thorns? Many people do!

Thorns are a product of the poisonous tree.

When Adam sinned, God cursed the ground. He did not curse work, nor did He curse the original couple. Thorns and thistles are products of the poisonous tree and the curse that ensued.

Thorns hurt and distract us from duty.

If you have ever pulled weeds, you had that bitter unpleasant experience. Thorns hurt. Everything stops until you have removed that little splinter-like thorn. Sometimes you can't remove it, and days later it looks white because of a minor infection.

Thorns can be a product of judgment in time.

Thorn can represent all kinds of problems. At times, God uses the metaphor of thorns to describe the painfulness of His judgment: Is. 7:23-25; 27:4; 32:13; 34:13; Jer. 12:13; Hos. 2:6.

The Lord identifies the thorns

Matthew 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

Mark 4:19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Luke 8:14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

Here the thorns represent spiritual marriages; that is, products of the poisonous tree.

The first thorn represent the cares of this life.

The Greek word for "care" is *merimna*. It means "to care" or "to be anxious" about something; that is, it is an undue, preoccupation about a matter.

The Greek word for "world" is the Greek word "aeon" which means "age." There are two ages, "this age" which is full of evil (Galatians 1:4), and "the age to come;" that is, the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

The word "care" is translated "thought" in Matthew 6:25; i.e., our Lord said, "Take no thought (care)" about what you eat or drink or wear for life is more than these things; that is, Christ is telling not to spend an undue amount of time and energy worrying about what we are going to eat or wear. The problem, of course, is that some people are totally consumed by foods, meals, types of foods, diet, clothing, colors, styles and the like. So much so, they don't have time to read the Bible, pray, go to church, or attend a Bible study. Consider Martha:

Luke 10:40 But Martha was cumbered (distracted) about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus

answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful (merimnas) and troubled (disturbed or distracted) about many things:

As the woman of the house, Martha was all wrapped up with duty of preparing a meal for the Lord, his twelve disciples, and her guests. What woman would not be in sheer panic of having to feed that crowd? But, the Lord said that her anxiety over meal preparation was a thorn that prohibited her from hearing and being edified by the teaching of God's Word.

Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4: 6 admonishes us to be anxious for nothing, pray about everything, and be thankful for anything. The Lord knows that we have need of all these things.

The lesson our Lord is driving home is that we are not to expend an inordinate amount of energy thinking and worrying about foods and dress and daily chores. The house will never be perfectly clean. Avoid obsessive, compulsive impulses to correct every detail. That's just life and to invest one's self in keeping perfect house can drive a soul crazy. Don't hear what is not being said. The Lord is not saying we should not clean our house or iron our clothes. He's informing us that *life is more than this* and that we should not be dominated by such matters. Some people believe their business is the most important thing in the whole world and they don't have time for the Bible or anything really important.

Take a look at Luke 14:16: Notice a great man had prepared a great banquet and invited many guests. Some of the invited were consumed with purchasing property, oxen, wives, etc. When these things consume us to the neglect of our soul, they are a poisonous thorn to us.

The second thorn represents the deceitfulness of riches

Many people think that if they could just have more money, they would be happy. We all know someone whose hobby is making money. Ever met a man who said, "I love to make money"? Many are like the Rich Young Ruler who have an addiction to wealth building and simply will not drop their plow to come and hear Jesus. Wealth has its own problems. The Puritans use to say that *sometimes God curses His enemies with riches*. This is certainly true and stuff has its own burdens.

1 Timothy 6:9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

1 Timothy 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

1 Timothy 6:8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

Did you hear about that man that hid his gold in his attic? He told his wife that when he died he was going to grab his gold on the way up. After his death, the wife went upstairs and the gold was still there. She said, "I knew he should have hid it in the basement."

1 Timothy 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

1 Timothy 6:18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

1 Timothy 6:19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

It has been said that *when a Christian gets rich that either God gains a fortune or . . . He loses a man.*

The third thorn represents the lust for other things

The word "*Lust*" means to set your affection upon something. The lust for things includes pride, promotion, hobbies, work, houses, recreation, or host of other things. Some people are consumed by sports or fishing or motorcycling. Your hobby can be the lust of other things.

The fourth thorn represents the pleasures of this life.

Paul said about Demas, he has forsaken me because he loves this present evil world (2 Tim. 4:14).

It is no test to turn down the worst the world has to offer, but it is a test to turn down the best the world has to offer.

The Greek word for *pleasures* here is "*hedone*" from which we get the word "*hedonist*" – a person devoted to the pursuit of pleasure and self-gratification -- a person who wants the maximum amount of pleasure and the least amount of pain. Think of Hugh Hefner and that clan. Their only concern was about themselves.

The word "*life*" in this passage is "*bios*"; that is, the things of this earth, this life, this earthly existence in contrast to "*zoa*" which refers to the life in the Age to come. We use the word "*bios*" in biology, and biography, the study of man.

Thorns are distractful, hurtful, and harmful to man. Sow good seed among thorns and those thorns will choke the life out of good seed. And, yet many people are in love with thorns. Though they inflict pain, distract from the important things of life, create infections in the soul and spirit, they are in love with the cares of this life, business and the deceitfulness of riches, the pursuit of stuff; and the pleasures of this life. And, the point of our Lord's instruction is that those clinging to their thorns lose their own soul.

Do you like thorns? There is a man who does not want to experience judgment or go to hell, so he lays hold of the Christian gospel as some kind of fire insurance policy, but he never deals with his sins. There is no repentance. He wants to be saved “in his sins” and not “from his sins.”

The thorny ground is someone that wants to build his own kingdom, not God’s kingdom; that wants riches on earth, but not riches in heaven; that is in pursuit of pleasures of this life and avoids the Old Rugged Cross. His gospel is what God can do for man in this life. For those who love thorns, Jesus says the following:

John 8:21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins . . .

Jeremiah 4:3-4 For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

There is a man who hates thorns and earnestly prays, “Lord save me from my sins.” This is, the man that is ashamed of his sins and fears the poisoning of his own soul; And, this is the man that hears the gospel of Christ and rejoices in the power of the cross. This is the good soil that bears fruit to the glory of God. Amen.

24. At the Feet of Jesus

*“ . . . and cast them **down** at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them:”*

Matthew 15:30



Have you ever noticed all the wonderful things that happened at the feet of our Lord . . . and still happen when men bow the knee to Him?

Today, we want to look at what happens when men and women fall at the feet of Jesus?

At the feet of Jesus, the sick, lame, and blind found healing!

Matthew 15:30 "And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:"

At the feet of Jesus Jarius found life for his daughter

"And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,"

At His feet, a Phoenician woman found deliverance from demons for her daughter.

Mark 7:25-26 "For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter."

At His feet, a woman of the street found forgiveness from all her sins.

Luke 7:27 – 38, 47 "And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment . . . Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven;

At His feet, the wild, naked man living in the tomes of the Gedarenes with a 1000 demons found deliverance, sanity, and love.

Luke 8:35 "Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid."

At His feet, Martha found correction, and Mary found commendation.

Luke 10:39 "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word."

At His feet, Mary found acceptance and protection from the censorship of Judas.

John 11:2 "(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment . . . Then said Jesus (to Judas), Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this."

At his feet, women found angels and a message from God.

John 20:12 "And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."

At His feet, the disciples found proof of claim that Jesus defeated death.

Luke 24:29-40 "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet."

Matthew 28:9 "And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him."

But, there is more.

At His feet, you find all principalities, powers, and jurisdictions are subject to His control.

Ephesians 1:22 "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

Hebrews 2:8 "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him."

At His feet, John found comfort, authority, and inspiration for ministry.

Revelation 1:17, 19 "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last . . . Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

But, there is a somber side to this story.

At the feet of Jesus, the enemies of Christ will be crushed in judgment.

Revelation 1:15 "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters."

1 Corinthians 15:25 "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

Among the tombs the Demoniac (Legion) found demons and swine full of sores, corruption, and devils, but at the feet of Jesus he found peace and devils driven into the sea.

One day the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Won't you come, fall at His feet, and learn His Gospel?

25. The Rich Man in Hell

Luke 16:14-31



“And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. 15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”- Luke 16:14-15

The Lord told this story of the rich man in hell for the benefit of the Jewish Pharisees whose spiritual state is revealed in in verse 14-15:

This narrative does not appear to be a parable, but a true story. Real people with real names are not used in parables of our Lord: the names of Lazarus and Abraham and the use of the indefinite article “certain rich man” provide evidence this is a true version of actual events and not a metaphor.

This is a true story of two men: one, the envy of the world; and, the other despised by the world — a condemnation of the rich, and a comfort to the poor.

Two classes of people are in view: The rich who are the political elite of the nation, and the poor disciples who forsook all to follow Christ. The former were destined to hell because they made friends with the “*mammon of unrighteousness*” (Matthew 11:8; Luke 7:25) and the latter were destined for ‘heaven’ because they made friends with the Master.

The Scribes and Pharisees sucked up to Herod hoping to gain some advantage from the Roman government; the disciples followed Christ because He had the words of eternal life. The Scribes and Pharisees were attorneys at law twisting Scripture to control the people; and, the disciples were simple, humble men under the control of their Savior.

Luke 16:19-20 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

There are two characters in this story: (1) the rich man clothed in royal clothing who enjoyed pomp and circumstance due to the benefits of wealth every day; and (2) Lazarus, the beggar at his gate who was sick with skin lesions and an autoimmune bleeding disorder.

Sanity: The word “*insane*” is defined as a mind that is not in touch with reality . . . a thought process that can’t distinguish between reality and fantasy . . . good and evil . . . of persons who are danger to themselves . . . a mind that

flees legal / lawful responsibility to the one true Lawgiver (James 4:12). Sane people contemplate God and his works; insane people flee reality.

Do not look at the rich man as a sane man. He was crazy as a fly circling a toad! He was dead wrong about God, about money, about his brothers, about Abraham, about Lazarus, about the nature of man, about values, about sin, about time, about death, about Hades, about the Scriptures, and about salvation. Robbed in purple flaunting his wealth, his eyes shined with pride while his tongue trumpeted a discord of self-esteem. He was a Jew full of himself — a man without sentience and compassion. Even though his madness was acceptable to other psychopaths of his day, he is a paradigm of the psychologically derange mind — a fool who said in his heart, “there is no God” (Psalm 14:1).

Purple is the color of kings; that is, the rich man adorned himself with clothing stained in the dyes of Tyre — a reference to the indulgence and luxury of the man. We are not told how the rich man obtained his wealth. There is no indication in the text that he increased his earnings through dishonesty and deceit. Moreover, there is no mention the rich man did anyone any harm. Only his neglect of the poor comes into view.

The story is not a rebuke to wealth, but the abuse of wealth and the selfish use of it.

Names: We know the name of God’s child, Lazarus, but we do not know the name of the rich man. Christ simply identified this historical person using the phrase “a certain rich man” without referring to his name.

Proverbs 10:7 “. . . the name of the wicked will rot.”

Beggar: We learn that Lazarus was a beggar. He was not a professional “down and outer” that we see on street corners in America, but a true man suffering with an unwelcome disease and hunger that accompanies unemployment. Due to no fault of his own, disabled-Lazarus ended up on the street begging to sustain life.

What a contrast: an unknown rich man and a helpless beggar known by Christ. Which one do you want to be like?

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

Desiring to be fed: Lazarus is further described as a hungry man — a human being with basic unfulfilled desires — ambitions for the bare necessities of life. This text is a challenge to the modern belief that none of God’s children suffer from hunger (Proverbs 37:25).

Dogs: The only friends Lazarus had were the street dogs that came and licked his sores — probably, a contrast between the compassionate scavengers and the cold, unsympathetic rich man.

Thus, the tongue is referred to twice: once in relation to the dogs licking the sores of Lazarus and once in relation to the on-fire tongue of the rich man and his longing for a drop of water.

22 *And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;*

"It came to pass" is a solemn word that reminds all of us that life on earth has an end. It is a reference to time. Time catches up with all men.

Lazarus died. The rich man also died, and was buried. There is no mention of a formal burial for Lazarus. The mention of the burial of the rich man causes us to speculate he had a stately funeral with all the pageantry and accompaniment of hired mourners associated imperial Jewish ceremonies. Who can doubt flowery benedictions by dignitaries were made about the achievements of the rich man? No one mourned the death of the beggar. To the world, he had no name and no significance. He was simply *"the beggar."*

Death knocks at the door of every house, the rich and the poor, the prince and the pauper, presidents and peasants, religious and non-religious.

Angels: There is no mention of angels at the death of the rich man, but Christ informs us that angels carried Lazarus into the *"bosom of Abraham"* — a reference to the eternal "comfort" of the man, the hope of every Jew.

The bosom of Abraham: The Jews styled *"the bosom of Abraham"* as Paradise with a heavenly banquet; the place or state where the souls of good men remain from death to the resurrection. The Lord did not correct this belief; rather, He reinforced it with this account.

23 *And in hell (Hades) he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

Hell: this is the term Hades.

Jesus did not tell us anything this man did wrong nor does it list a particular sin that was the particular cause of the man being thrown into the fiery flames.

This statement is a rebuke to Rabbinical theology which taught all Jews, good and bad, would enjoy Paradise just because they were physical descendants of Abraham . . . that all nasty gentiles would suffer torment. Today, we call this racism.

The conscious dead: The rich man's faculties appear to be fully intact: he sees, feels, speaks, prays, remembers, and hears.

Torments: The Greek term “*torments*” (*basanos*) is a most disturbing dative plural noun. *Basanos* refers to a black Roman stone where victims were tied down by soldiers and interrogated through torture.

Chasm: Hades has two sections which are separated by a great chasm: a place of torment for the wicked dead, and a place of rest and comfort for the righteous. Furthermore, the rich man recognizes Abraham. He knows Lazarus by name and can see him in Paradise.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

The agent of the Rich man’s torment — an inferno of fire. All of the man’s suffering is compressed into the term “thirst.” Even his tongue felt the oppressive blaze. Helpless, his whole gestalt focused on a quest for water. He summarizes his agony using the phrase, “I am tormented in this flame.”

Theos: Surprisingly, he does not blame God for his agony. In death as well of life, there is no mention of God by the rich man. In fact, there is no mention of Theos in this story. The emphasis is on the status of two men and two eternal destinies.

Prayer: We learn that people pray in hell. In this case, the rich man prayed to “Father Abraham” for mercy . . . Mercy was something the rich man did not show Lazarus. He wanted mercy, but did not show mercy. He prayed for mercy, but it was too late. Now is the time to pray for mercy . . .

Pride: We see the rich man’s arrogance. He still saw Lazarus as his servant to fetch water to quench his thirst.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

Son: The rich man prays in a tone of desperation. Abraham calls the rich man his “*son*,” and answers in a tone of compassion and tenderness. He was a son in the flesh, but NOT a son in the faith (Galatians 3).

Remember: Abraham ordered him to remember (call to mind) “the good things” he sought and received in his lifetime; and, to remember the “evils” Lazarus received in his lifetime — in part due to the rich man’s neglect of human suffering and his addictive self-interest.

How troubling is the command, “*remember*” — an aorist imperative means to start at once to reflect on God’s goodness to the man and his abuse of Lazarus; on the suffering of Lazarus; and on two paths with two different destinies.

Hades: In describing Hades, Jesus used a paradigm of a two-part Hades and not 'heaven' and 'hell.'

Abraham records two facts about Hades: that it is a place of comfort for the true sons of Abraham; and, a place of torment for the hedonist.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

The "gulf fixed:" Abraham adds another reason he could not fulfill the rich man's request — the Great Chasm.

Another fact about Hades is — a corrective to Jewish theology. All men die. All go to Hades; and, that there are two parts to Hades: a place of comfort and a place of torment. The two parts are separated by an impenetrable barrier that prevents passage between the two. The imagery is one of a Great Wall or a stony mountains marked by two straight un-scalable cliffs separated by an ocean of air.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

More Prayer: Unfulfilled, the rich man submits a second request: Send Lazarus to my father's house to warn my brothers about this place of torment.

The rich man's request was not pleaded out of concern for his brothers. It was an accusation sandwiched between two prayers that neither he or his brothers had sufficient warning about the character of hell.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

Discernment: The Father of the Hebrew Nation discerns the fallacy of the rich man's assertion. The rich man believed he was not sufficiently warned about hell, but Abraham informs the man that he had Moses and the prophets; that is, he and his brothers had the Scriptures; that the Scriptures (Old and New) provided ample "red flags" regarding hell.

The horror of neglectfulness: The rich man and his family did not neglect business, but they did neglect the reading of Scripture. What a terrible thing it must be NOT to read the Bible and take its instructions seriously: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:3)?

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

“Nay”: This third interchange between the rich man and Abraham involved a dispute. In saying “Nay”, the rich man calls Abraham “ignorant” at best and a liar at worse — a revelation of the man’s pride.

In his pride, the rich man boldly asserts the false proposition that only a physical resurrection is sufficient to warn men of the torments of hell.

Repent: Moreover, the notice the rich man’s positive, Armenian view of man: “They will repent” because man is basically good. This man failed to gain a true theological perspective on the subject of Biblical anthropology and hamartiology.

31 And he (Abraham) said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Abraham’s positive view of Scripture: Abraham ends the exchange auguring for the sufficiency of Scripture which has the power to make a “*make a man perfect*” before God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Abraham’s correct view of human nature: Abraham understood that it is not in the nature of man to believe in the resurrection even though presented with direct evidence; that man’s heart is so hard and cemented in earthly interests that men will not be persuaded about the horrors of hell even though someone rose from the dead.

“if they hear” is a second class conditional clause meaning if they hear and they don’t hear; that is, Torah and the Prophets provide ample warnings about Divine punishment. In other words, I know that your brothers are just like you in that they are so busy making money they will not take the time to listen to the Word of God.

Furthermore, the Jews saw Lazarus raised from the dead and there is no indication that any of them repented and believed. Jesus literally rose from the dead, yet history is full of doubters lost in their sins.

Questions come to mind:

Is there life after death? This story tells us that there is.

What kind of God sentences men and woman to a fiery inferno for eternity? Sovereign, righteous, and holy come to mind, but pure truth fails to impact our detached senses.

Why do sinners have such a positive view of mankind . . . of government . . . of rich men?

What is so wretched about sin? Quite possibly, the neglect of God is the greatest sin on earth.

How about you? Do you believe in the “place of torment?”

Are you more like Lazarus, a true son of Abraham, or more like the rich man, a fake son of Abraham?

The world offers men a life of pleasure, riches, fame, and success . . . but, the end is a place of torment.

Christ offers the kingdom of God to men who repent of their self-centeredness and surrender to His authority. The former leads to hell, the latter to eternal life in heaven with all the sons of Abraham.

The Scriptures inform us about the horrors of Divine punishment, and we have proof there is one man in history that has defeated death. It is sheer madness to pursue wealth and neglect our duties to God and man. Believe in Christ and you too will find comfort in the bosom of Abraham.

The rich man is still in hell, and Lazarus is still in Paradise! Selah!

26. Facts About Hell



“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” - Matthew 10:28

Many have attempted to describe the horrors of hell.

Mozart (1791) composed his masterpiece, “Dies Irae” to present the sounds and solemnity of facing Divine wrath (1791).

With the scroll rolled back from left to right, the righteous judge pounds the gavel, “Guilty, as charged!” Ashamed to the bone, the trembling naked sinner is led away with a black hood over his face to be thrust into the flames of the eternal fire. Who can imagine such a fate, but it is there in the Word of God for men to carefully consider.

Hell is a judicial sentence by the Supreme Court of Heaven.

I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Matthew 12:36, 37).

Every man will have his day in Court. It is called *the Day of Judgment* – a fact that ought to give men pause. The subject of things adjudicated in bar include but are not limited to words, statements, complaints, abuse, slander, contumely, criticisms, swearing and cussing, lies, fornication, murder, fraud, and deceit.

Hell is described as a place of destruction.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it (Matthew 7:13)..

For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing (Philippians 1:28).

To the liberal mind, speaking about hell today seems Neanderthal, archaic, and unsophisticated. It is much more posh to speak about passion-peck, honey-coated love. But, Jesus talked about two roads, two gates, and two paths. One leads to eternal life, and the other to eternal death.

The term "destruction" does not appear to refer to annihilation or cessation of existence, but to a terminal illness from which one does not heal and a prison from which one cannot escape. In hell, things do not get better. The hell of hell is that there is no escape, no respite, and no relieve. Who can imagine? Hell makes the prisons of Urga, Mongolia and Port Arthur seem tame.

Hell is a Prison

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

Jesus taught that hell is a terminal, underground, maximum security prison – an awful, inescapable place with no sunshine, the eternal assignment of body and soul – a sentence for the guilty by the Judge of all men.

Some teach that when men die they will die like animals and cease to exist. But, such a doctrine denies the resurrection of the just and unjust (Daniel 12; John 5:25-26; Acts 4:1-2. 1 Corinthians 15:35-37:

Hell is compared to a Fiery Furnace

" . . . and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42).

If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they. . . The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, she profanes her father. She shall be burned with fire (Leviticus 20:14, 21:9).

And Joshua said, "'Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day.' So all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they stoned them with stones" (Joshua 7:25).

Few executions are more feared than death by burning. Death by fire was the severest penalty under the Mosaic law, and it was only inflicted for the most heinous sins – a warning to the living to avoid mortal sins.

Hell is described as a place of unquenchable fire

“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12).

We get the term “*asbestos*” from the word “*unquenchable*.” This raging inferno is never deprived of fuel, heat, and oxygen. There are no fire trucks in hell . . . no fire hydrants . . . no water pumps at ground zero. This hot spot burns and burns with no surfactants that lower the temperature of this blaze.

Hell is described as outer darkness.

“But the heirs of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 8:12)

And cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: “*there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 25:30) . . . “*to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever . . .*” (Jude 1:13).

There are dark places and then there are cave-dark places where no light beam can penetrate. Men invest trillions of dollars to silence the darkness in homes, streets, and office buildings . . . but in hell there is no sun, no moon, no electrical plants, no neon signs, no stoves, no candles, no flashlights, no LED or incandescent light fixtures. Buried forever . . . alone . . . in a tenebrous cave a prisoner to darkness.

Oh, the night with all its monsters and eerie sounds – with its paralyzing fears – with no stars – with no sunrise, morning, or day. Who can imagine an existence with total blindness in total midnight . . . an aeon when midnight seizes existence with unending blackness? Having spent a lifetime fleeing the light, *nyctophobia* (fear of darkness) seizes every heart in hell.

Hell is described as a place of weeping and grinding of teeth.

“The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will collect out of His kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:41-42).

The term “*weeping*” describes the heart-wrenching pain and throat-choking fear that suffocates the soul when the Judge pronounces his binding sentence. We get the term “*orthodontist*” from the Greek word for “*teeth*.” Grinding teeth expresses the moaning, guttural sounds escaping the larynx due to stress and hopelessness.

Hell is a place of no rest.

“And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:11).

The term “*smoke*” reinforces the imagery of a roaring inferno – a five-alarm fire that never goes out.

Sleep is an escape from the pressures of the day . . . but, in hell there is no sleep, no rest, no nap, no escape, and no breakouts or blackouts from the wall of flames and choking smoke that leaves a man in a symphony of pain with his body screaming for the relief through death.

Hell is a place of no healing:

“where their worm (maggots) diets not” (Mark 9:44).

Who can conceive of a place of pain where one is dying in agony with no hope of death, no relief, no morphine, no recovery, and no healing – a place here the maggots bite away chomping on raw nerves, but the flesh is never consumed?

Hell is the absence of God.

“in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

The emphasis is on flesh-licking fire, vengeance, punishment, and eternal destruction.

In saying “*from the presence of the Lord,*” Paul adds the hopelessness of relief because of the sinner’s separation from God. Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body, but here the stress is on the soul’s separation from God, the Creator, Healer, and Redeemer.

Existence without God? What melancholy, gloom, and misery! Everyone has an opportunity to seek God and find Him in this life, but in hell there will be cries for help . . . but no answers -- prayers for relief but no saviors -- always dying, but the body never dies! The hell of hell is the absence of God. The echo of silence deafens the ears and strips the heart of hope.

Hell is a place Incredible loneliness and solitary confinement.

Jude 1:13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Men often joke, “See you in hell.” But, the truth is that men are compared to wandering stars –stars that never touch or embrace – always invisible in a room full of darkness – an insignificant, unremembered prisoner. There is no contact with family, friends, or neighbors in hell–only intense, incredible loneliness associated with the stunning realization that one is absolutely alone, forsaken, and abandoned in a prison cell that has no key, no bailiff, and no doors. In fact, it has no walls. It’s an enormous inferno with a fire wall encircling the charred groveling in pitch black with fears realized.

Hell is a Lake Of Burning Sulfur.

And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. (Revelation 19:20).

Bad smells warn us of danger. Few things are more obnoxious to the human smell than sulfur or the stench of dead corpses. The sulfur pits at Yellowstone National Park come to mind. So offensive to the nose is sulfur and the stench of death that riot control agencies use these fume-odors to disperse crowds. But, in hell there is no place to run or to escape the reek of death.

There are no roses in hell . . . no fragrance of rain after an evening shower . . . no smells of freshly baked cookies . . . or clothes fresh out of the dryer – only the rotten odor of burning sulfur, rotting compost, and decaying flesh.

Burned flesh is so intensely painful, men cry for morphine to endure the excruciating agony. But, there is no morphine in hell – no sunburn lotion and no Aloe Vera in that wretched place to relieve the pain – no nose plugs or fresh air to relieve the unbearable stench of sulfur.

Hell is eternal and everlasting.

Jesus: *“And if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire”* (Matthew 18:8).

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41):

Jude: *“As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them . . . are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”* (Jude 7).

The curse of Sodom and Gomorrah draws our attention to the LORD’s assessment of the sins of Sodom which were *“indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave”* (Genesis 18:20).

The LORD is not describing peccadillos here, but serious violations of natural law. The deviant act of *“sodomy”* is derived from the name of this city. The term *“great”* means numerous; and, the verb *“grave”* means burdensome, or heavy. The adverb *“exceedingly”* or *“very”* expresses the extraordinary gravity of the acts committed in these two communities – mortal sins that marred the entire man.

The term *“everlasting”* is the adjectival form of the term *“age”* or *aeon*. It expresses the unlimited nature of affliction by fire in the unbeliever’s *“age to come.”* The term *“age”* is used by Jesus to describe the final, eternal, unlimited, inextinguishable state of the wicked – an entire age dedicated to punishment.

Hell is not gay. There are no block-parties or fall festivals in hell. Unlike this life which has an end, eternity has no boundaries, no walls, no shores, no end, and no time.

Use of the term “*everlasting*” reinforces the seriousness and eternal consequence of sin. What a man does in this life, impacts his eternal destiny.

Jude connects the adjective “*eternal*” (*aeonios*) with the word “*suffering*” which means “to hold under” a judicial sentence; that is, detained by guards with knees on the neck in order to be punished with a life-sentence for an aeon.

He also uses “*vengeance*,” another judicial term related to sentences for crimes issued by a court. In this case, death by burning—but, it is a death that never arrives. It is really a life sentence with no end – a death penalty without a terminus ad quem.

Oh, Lord have mercy!

If there is no hell, why did the Lord Jesus Christ die on the cross? Why did Christ exhort men to believe in him and say “*for God’s wrath remains on unbelievers*” (John 3:36). If they stakes are not high, why did Christ call his disciples to forsake all and send them into the entire world to establish churches?

If you are concerned and want to escape hell, you are not alone. There is a safe place . . . Do what Christians have done . . . Flea to the cross where the ground is already burnt. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and His work at Calvary, and ye shall never perish (John 3:14-16, 36; Romans 10:9).

Dies Irae

“ . . .Earth will be in ashes:

As David (King David and Sybil witness (also called Sibylla, virginal prophetess in Greek legend).

How great the tremors will be

When the Judge comes

To examine everything strictly!”

Listen to Mozart, 1791, “Dies Irae”

27. Dante’s Nine Circles of Hell

There is a Place of Punishment

Imagery Regarding the Horrors of Hell



“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28)

Medieval people lived short, miserable lives.

Hearing death creeping up the steps of one’s front door caused men like Dante to think a lot more about hell than modern man.

But, concepts like sin, judgment, and hell are not on the minds or lips of people caught up in TV, sports, and video games.

Modern scholars in their pride and arrogance show disdain for any concept of hell, but such perspectives are the result of pride and willful neglect of the Word of God.

One of the values of Dante’s masterpiece is that it causes the reader to consider the negative consequences of sin on their own soul.

Dante paints a vivid word-picture of the various kinds of sins. He even categorizes them from the least to the greatest.

Moreover, Dante’s work creates a question, “What is Heaven’s fitting punishments for soul-devouring sins that maim mankind?”

Sin is a lost doctrine in modern man’s psychological-world blurred with humanistic values such as self-esteem, equality, and the apotheosis of women.

The reader would do well, like Dante, to consider the nature of sin and how it deforms the soul.

No matter how much we might need to accomplish, life was never meant to be a list of tasks. Life is more about who we are becoming through our experiences – not just what we’re doing with our time.

Dante’s perspective sheds light on the probability of suffering in hell for Christ rejecters.

Like the Book of Revelation, Dante’s 9 Circles of Hell are designed to impress the imagination with the horrors of this wretched place, and to motivate us to purge our souls of sins.

Revelation 21:8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

The Sign at the Gates of Hell in Dante's Inferno reads:

"Abandon All Hope Who Enter Here!"

Circles of Hell (Dante's Inferno)

Source: <https://historylists.org/art/9-circles-of-hell-dantes-inferno.html>

"Inferno, the first part of Dante's Divine Comedy that inspired the latest Dan Brown's bestseller of the same title describes the poet's vision of Hell. The story begins with the narrator (who is the poet himself) being lost in a dark wood where he is attacked by three beasts which he cannot escape. He is rescued by the Roman poet Virgil who is sent by Beatrice (Dante's ideal woman). Together, they begin the journey into the underworld or the 9 Circles of Hell.

First Circle (Limbo)

Limbo

Dante's First Circle of Hell is resided by virtuous non-Christians and unbaptized pagans who are punished with eternity in an inferior form of Heaven. They live in a castle with seven gates which symbolize the seven virtues. Here, Dante sees many prominent people from classical antiquity such as Homer, Socrates, Aristotle, Cicero, Hippocrates and Julius Caesar.

Second Circle (Lust)

Lust

In the Second Circle of Hell, Dante and his companion Virgil find people who were overcome by lust. They are punished by being blown violently back and forth by strong winds, preventing them to find peace and rest. Strong winds symbolize the restlessness of a person who is led by desire for fleshly pleasures. Again, Dante sees many notable people from history and mythology including Cleopatra, Tristan, Helen of Troy and others who were adulterous during their lifetime.

Third Circle (Gluttony)

Gluttony

When reaching the Third Circle of Hell, Dante and Virgil find souls of gluttons who are overlooked by a worm-monster Cerberus. Sinners in this circle of Hell are punished by being forced to lie in a vile slush that is produced by never ending icy rain. The vile slush symbolizes personal degradation of one who overindulges in food, drink and other worldly pleasures, while the inability to see others lying nearby represents the gluttons' selfishness and coldness. Here, Dante speaks to a character called Ciaccio who also tells him that the Guelphs (a

fraction supporting the Pope) will defeat and expel the Ghibellines (a fraction supporting the Emperor to which Dante adhered) from Florence which happened in 1302, before the poem was written (after 1308).

Fourth Circle (Greed)

Greed

In the Fourth Circle of Hell, Dante and Virgil see the souls of people who are punished for greed. They are divided into two groups – those who hoarded possessions and those who lavishly spent it – jousting. They use great weights as a weapon, pushing it with their chests which symbolizes their selfish drive for fortune during lifetime. The two groups that are guarded by a character called Pluto (probably the ancient Greek ruler of the underworld) are so occupied with their activity that the two poets don't try to speak to them. Here, Dante says to see many clergymen including cardinals and popes.

Fifth Circle (Anger)

Anger

The Fifth Circle of Hell is where the wrathful and sullen are punished for their sins. Transported on a boat by Phlegyas, Dante and Virgil see the wrathful fighting each other on the surface of the river Styx and the sullen gurgling beneath the surface of the water. Again, the punishment reflects the type of the sin committed during lifetime. While passing through, the poets are approached by Filippo Argenti, a prominent Florentine politician who confiscated Dante's property after his expulsion from Florence.

Sixth Circle (Heresy)

Heresy

When reaching the Sixth Circle of Hell, Dante and Virgil see heretics who are condemned to eternity in flaming tombs. Here, Dante talks with a couple of Florentines – Farinata degli Uberti and Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti – but he also sees other notable historical figures including the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and Pope Anastasius II. The latter, however, is according to some modern scholars condemned by Dante as heretic by a mistake. Instead, as some scholars argue, the poet probably meant the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I.

Seventh Circle (Violence)

Violence

The Seventh Circle of Hell is divided into three rings. The Outer Ring houses murderers and others who were violent to other people and property. Here, Dante sees Alexander the Great (disputed), Dionysius I of Syracuse, Guy de Montfort and many other notable historical and mythological figures such as

the Centaurus, sank into a river of boiling blood and fire. In the Middle Ring, the poet sees suicides who have been turned into trees and bushes which are fed upon by harpies. But he also sees here profligates, chased and torn to pieces by dogs. In the Inner Ring are blasphemers and sodomites, residing in a desert of burning sand and burning rain falling from the sky.

Eight Circle (Fraud)

Fraud

The Eight Circle of Hell is resided by the fraudulent. Dante and Virgil reach it on the back of Geryon, a flying monster with different natures, just like the fraudulent. This circle of Hell is divided into 10 Bolgias or stony ditches with bridges between them. In Bolgia 1, Dante sees panderers and seducer. In Bolgia 2 he finds flatterers. After crossing the bridge to Bolgia 3, he and Virgil see those who are guilty of simony. After crossing another bridge between the ditches to Bolgia 4, they find sorcerers and false prophets. In Bolgia 5 are housed corrupt politicians, in Bolgia 6 are hypocrites and in the remaining 4 ditches, Dante finds hypocrites (Bolgia 7), thieves (Bolgia 7), evil counselors and advisers (Bolgia 8), divisive individuals (Bolgia 9) and various falsifiers such as alchemists, perjurers and counterfeiters (Bolgia 10).

Ninth Circle (Treachery)

Treachery

The last Ninth Circle of Hell is divided into 4 Rounds according to the seriousness of the sin though all residents are frozen in an icy lake. Those who committed more severe sin are deeper within the ice. Each of the 4 Rounds is named after an individual who personifies the sin. Thus Round 1 is named Caina after Cain who killed his brother Abel, Round 2 is named Antenora after Antenor of Troy who was Priam's counselor during the Trojan War, Round 3 is named Ptolomaea after Ptolemy (son of Abubus), while Round 4 is named Judecca after Judas Iscariot, the apostle who betrayed Jesus with a kiss." (History Lists).

"Abandon All Hope Who Enter Here!" – Dante

Like Dante, Biblical authors seek to impress our senses with the horrors of hell. Unlike Dante, Biblical authors wrote under the infallible inspiration of the Spirit.

Emotions: Like the isolation and loneliness of wandering stars (Jude 1:13). **Sensation:** Heat as in fire (Matthew 5:22). **Hopelessness:** Like being abandoned in a pit (Matthew 11:23; Matthew 23:23; Mark 9:45). **Sight:** nothing to see like being in total darkness (Matthew 8:12). **Thirst and torment** (Luke 16:24). **Obnoxious smells** like burning sulfur (Revelation 20:10)

But, there is hope to escape hell by pleading that God would be merciful to you, a sinner; and, by investigating the work of the Son at the cross on your behalf.

Jesus — “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

Psalms 86:13 For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

Revelation 20

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

28. God's Stargate

The Portal into the Afterlife

Luke 23:46

Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*”
Luke 23:46

Mission accomplished, in control until the end, the Savior peers through a portal into eternity to fulfill the prophetic hymn,

Psalms 31:5 – “Into thy hands I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.”

Who can understand the mysteries taking place between the Father God and God the Son who was “*slain before the foundation of the world?*” There were

proceedings happening at the cross that only the Father and the Son can comprehend. (Revelation 13:8)

This is the dutiful Son as the Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1) extinguishing His last drop of devotion to the will of His Heavenly Father *“being obedient unto death”* (Philippians 2:12). His mission complete, **“he bowed his head and handed over the spirit.”** He breaths his last.

“Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, *“Certainly this man was innocent”* (Luke 23:47).

“I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father” (16:28).

The word *“commend”* (*paratithemi*) is a present, middle indicative verb, and it is translated “to put before” (Matthew 13:24), “to set before” (Luke 8:16), or “commit” (Acts 14:32). It is Jesus Who with the eye of light acts on Himself. He exits this life through a portal between heaven and earth into a mysterious field of blessed intelligent energy to place His conscious Spirit into His Father’s hands. The cross is heaven’s stargate.

John 10:17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

And, He does . . . three days later . . . in a literal, tangible, physical resurrection . . . on the first-day Sabbath . . . that we might find rest for our souls. The cross is heaven’s stargate – the link between heaven and earth.

In the fictional universe of the Stargate movie franchise, built on Egyptian mythology, the people of Earth have encountered numerous extraterrestrial species on their travels through the stargate portal into the fifth dimension. In addition to a diversity of alien life forms, there is also an abundance of other human species, scattered across the cosmos by advanced aliens in millenniums past. To access the fifth dimension, star travelers have to enter the mouth of a powerful magnetic vortex, travel down its throat, and exit into another cosmos.

In the Egyptian Book of the Dead, we learn that the Ancient Egyptians thought the purpose of life was to nourish the seeds of the divine within all of us. They believed a person or god must achieve Maat, or balance in this life. If he is successful in this and passes the test of the Tuat, or Underworld, and the Weighing of the Heart which must be lighter than a feather, the Enlightened one would be rewarded with a state of blessedness with the gods among the stars. Thus, Egyptians searched for the stargate or wormhole that would enable them to access eternal life.

But, this parable is a sophisticated works program that is ignorant of Biblical truth and the accomplishment of the Son on behalf of sinners.

It was at the cross Jesus exited this life into the presence of the Father, and if you want to enter Paradise, you must meet God at the cross.

You will search in vain to find portals into other dimensions in the Giza, or Antarctica, or Stonehenge. There is only one stargate to that blessed state and that is through Calvary.

Then central message of the Christian gospel is that the cross is God's stargate to the afterlife? It is the portal through which souls must travel to access the blessings of Zion. It is Jacob's ladder, the means of entering that dimension Jesus called "Paradise." It is the sky ship one must use to travel over the glassy sea to the shores of heaven; it is the bridge men must walk to cross the chasm caused by sin into the presence of God.

Cruci dum spiro fido

29. Open Door; Closed Door

Acts 24:25

A Time Convenient

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." - Acts 24:25

Before us is a busy government official who had a chance to enter the kingdom, but delayed hearing the truth thinking he might have more time in the future to consider things eternal.

Being falsely accused, Paul was in custody of Rome for two years without a trial.

Felix(1), the Roman Procurator, and his wife, Drucilla, came to Caesarea where Paul was imprisoned.

Drucilla was a Jewess, daughter of King Herod Agrippa, and former wife of Azizus, king of Emesa. What a name, "Drucilla!" Reminds us, of the fictional villainess, Cruela de Vil!

During their stay, Felix summoned Paul to hear him speak about his "faith in Christ" as a form of entertainment. At the same time, he hoped the preacher would offer him a bribe. But, Felix got more than he bargained for.

Instead of seeking to impress Felix and Drucilla with the wonders of our Lord, Paul discoursed with the adulterous couple about “righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come.”

Notice the content of Paul’s messages.

Even though Felix and Drucilla were highly educated and occupied a position of the Roman government, Paul taught them the ABC’s of the Christian faith.

A. THE NECESSITY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS:

“Without holiness no man shall see the Lord” – Hebrews 12:14.

Paul discussed the duties of a man to live his life under the LORD’s law-order as delivered to mankind in the Ten Commandments . . . and, the duty to be holy as He is holy (Leviticus 19:2).

Possibly, Paul asked Felix the same question David asked his audience in Psalm 24:3:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?”

Possibly, Paul gave Felix the same answer as did the psalmist.

“He that hath clean hands(2), and a pure heart(3); who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity(4), nor sworn deceitfully(5)” (Psalm 24:4).

B. THE NEED FOR TEMPERANCE OR SELF-CONTROL

Eight of the Ten Commandments are preceded by the negation “*not*” or “*Thou shall not.*” The “*not*” requires man to restrain his passion for idols, for sex, for other people’s possessions.

In Psalm 24:4 supra, “*not*” is used twice inferring that those qualified to enter the holy city are people who have restrained their sinful impulses.

C. THE JUDGMENT TO COME:

The Third Commandment mentions judgment:

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

Because the Lord is Israel’s “*Lawgiver, King, and Judge,*” He “*has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness*” (Isaiah 33:22; Acts 17:31).

Hearing of God’s judgment against idolaters, adulterers, and deceivers, Felix trembled like strings on a violin. Drucilla, the adulteress, was unfazed by Paul’s proclamation of judgment against sinners. While Felix the Roman had an open heart, Drucilla hardened her cold Jewish heart.

Cutting the discourse short, Felix promised the apostle: "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

It was a promise Felix broke . . . adding to his sins.

The "*convenient season*" to hear the gospel never came. This was Felix's one time opportunity to hear the gospel and to enter the kingdom. The door opened; and, then closed. This was the "*day of salvation*" for Felix (Isaiah 49:8; 2 Corinthians 6:2), but he let the tyranny of the urgent take priority over the necessity of conversion (John 3:3-5).

Psalm 32:6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.

NIV Luke 13:25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

You have today, but there is no guarantee of tomorrow. Let those who have ears, hear; let those who have knees fall down and pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) Felix: Felix was the younger brother of the Greek freedman Marcus Antonius Pallas.
- (2) Clean hands: The rule of law that lays down the principle where a petitioner seeking justice must himself be free from crime: lies, deceit, murder, slander, belligerence, bias, prejudice, adultery, theft, bribes, and covetousness of all kinds.
- (3) A pure heart goes to the intent and motivation of a man.
- (4) Vanity includes the pursuit of pleasures, lusts, materialism, entertainment, and forbidden pleasures associated with the fruit of the Poisonous Tree.
- (5) Sworn deceitfully goes to the heart of the Third Commandment which requires men to be honest, true, and trustworthy; that is, men who keep their Word, agreements, and contracts; men void of sophisticated schemes designed to fleece the sheep.

30. Jesus Solved Man's Fundamental Problem

Proof Death Has Been Conquered

“ . . . to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Acts 1:3

Part I

The gospel is the good news about Jesus’ historical resurrection.

Personally, I have conflicted feelings about the word religion, and consider myself an unreligious man in light of humanistic spirituality.

The word *religion* is used in different ways and has many definitions. Most Christians have little use for the term, and rightly so. The **connotation** of the word is associated with bosom subjectivism and man’s effort to reach God by his own effort.

The **denotation** of the word religion comes from the Latin word *religare* which means “to bind tightly: re-, an emphatic term, and ligare,” or “to bind.” Hence, religion enslaves men! Yikes! If by “religion,” a person means a wretched, subjective system of slavery designed to control men, then I want nothing to do with it!! Islam, Hinduism, and Western religious psycho-therapy are of this sort.

But, there is a generic definition of *religion* that I can accept and that is true in its purest sense: ***Religion is any system of belief about man’s fundamental problem.***

Man’s fundamental problem is that he is going to die.

Since men will be dead longer than they will live, men have proposed ideas about an afterlife. Death is the big unknown. In this sense, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Reincarnation, Christianity, and Atheism share man’s fundamental problem.

Every man is religious because every human being has a set of faith propositions about man’s origin and man’s destiny—a set of beliefs about man’s fundamental problem and what to do about it. Every man!

Even atheists are religious because they possess metaphysical beliefs about what happens after death. All possess beliefs about an afterlife or no-afterlife. Secular atheism is very religious because it possesses a very strong set of convictions about what happens after death.

Man’s fundamental problem is death!

Is there any tangible, forensic proof that there is a second life, continued existence, a heaven or hell, a nirvana, or an afterlife? Is there any proof the soul dies with the body and there is no such thing as continued existence after death?

What qualifies as “proof?”

When I speak of proof, I am not talking about “analytical proof,” or “theoretical proof,” or “mathematical proof.” I am talking about strict proof . . . legal proof . . . something you can touch, see, hear, and feel.

All religions but one offer convincing theories about an afterlife.

Hinduism proposes a view that life is cyclical and advance the proposition of reincarnation.

Islam promises a blessed existence for the faithful, even seventy-two virgins for the martyr.

Atheism proposes there is no such thing as an afterlife! All these views about man’s fundamental problem are simply theories, propositions, and proposals. They have no basis in reality.

There are many religious claims, but what is the evidence the claims are true?

All law is about “proof of claim.” 5 U.S.C. I, 5, II, § 556 states a truth,

“the proponent of a rule or order has the burden of proof” wherein the proponents of a claim are responsible to provide reliable, probative, and substantial evidence and to exclude irrelevant, immaterial, repetitious evidence when advancing a rule or order.

By proof, I mean synthetic proof, forensic proof, or legal proof.

When it comes to beliefs about an afterlife, I want the kind of proof that I can see, hear, feel, touch, or taste. I want proof that will stand up in a court of law against shrewd, aggressive prosecutors. As a juror listening to religious advocates offer evidence about an afterlife proposition in the courtroom of life, how am I going to know if there is an afterlife if they do not offer me legal proof? If I cannot see it, hear it, touch it, feel it, or taste it, how am I going to know that it is true?(1)

All religions (including atheism) offer mathematical, analytical propositional theories about what happens after death. None of them can be proved or disproved. For example: Suppose you hear a theory: “God is a force for good and evil and she lives on planet 2009985 in Galaxy 9,784,327.” O.K., there is a proposition. How would you prove it or disprove it? It is impossible to do either!

Christianity is completely different than the propositional religions.

In the historical records known as the gospels, held in the custody of the early church, eyewitnesses saw, heard, and touched a living, resurrected Christ.

They were **not** giving us theories about a resurrection. They participated in the event. Convinced that Jesus rose from the dead to solve man's fundamental problem, 100% of the early followers of Christ spent their life proclaiming the good news. In fact, most lived under the imminent threat of death refusing to renounce their testimony. In death, they did not recant!

These witnesses are no longer on the scene of history. But, they left us their eyewitness testimony and the frail objections of hostile witnesses regarding the resurrection event.

Eyewitness testimony is legal, forensic proof because eyewitness testimony is based on what people see, hear, feel, touch, or taste. In the case of Christ, over 500 men witnessed a dead man come back to life (1 Corinthians 15:1-12). Here is one account (John 20):

JOHN'S RECORD

John 20:1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.

The first day of the week would be Sunday morning. Sunday to a Jew began at 6:00 p.m. Saturday night instead of 12:00 p.m. midnight. Because Christ's body was prepared for burial in haste between 3:00 and 6:00 on Passover evening, Mary and other women came to complete the task of mummification. On the day Christ died, his body was taken down from the cross, wrapped in strips of linen cloth, and carried up the Mount of Olives to a tomb. Inside the tomb, the corpse was washed and then wrapped in several layers of linen soaked in an aloe paste mixed with spices.

On that Sunday morning, Mary led volunteers to complete the encasement of the cadaver while it was still cool before the heat of the day caused the corpse to putrefy and emit unpleasant odors. It had been three long days, and the daunting task of completing the mummification was before them.

When Mary arrived, she noticed the three thousand pound wheel-like stone sitting in the granite track. It had been rolled away from the entrance of the man-made cave. When she last visited the tomb, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus bullied the stone over the four-foot entrance. What she did not know was that Pilate ordered a clay seal to be placed on the tomb to indicate Rome's seizure of the property, and that he ordered soldiers to stand guard at the site lest any try to steal the mummified corpse. Furthermore, she had no idea the guards ran for their lives sometime on Saturday night when the stone was rolled away. This they would learn later.

THE EXPERIENCE OF PETER AND JOHN

Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him (John 20:2).

Apparently, Mary looked in, saw the body was missing, and assumed the cadaver had been stolen. Fleeing as fast as her feet could stomp, Mary rushed to report the news to Peter and John.

Peter and that other disciple rushed to the sepulcher. So they ran both together: and the other disciple (John) did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed (John 20:3-8).

Immediately, Peter and John raced to the tomb. Being younger, John arrived first. Leery about entering tombs, John just peeked inside. Huffing and puffing, Peter arrived.

When Peter and John entered the site, they did not see an empty tomb!! What they saw was the unfinished, collapsed, mummified encasement and the isolated headpiece which had rolled down hill into a corner.

If the body had been stolen or transferred to another location, the grave robbers would have picked up the whole mummy and left the tomb completely empty.

If the body had been resuscitated, and by some miracle Jesus' was able to wiggle out of the mummified encasement, Peter and John would have seen strips of aloe-soaked, blood-stained wrappings strewn all over the cave and around the plot.

They saw none of this!

What they saw was a completely intact, collapsed, mummified encasement, and the isolated headpiece rolled in a corner.

What happened?

On Saturday night, Jesus' body was raised from the dead. His resurrected body passed through the encasement without disturbance causing it to collapse by the forces of gravity. His headpiece also impacted by gravity rolled to the side.

When the angel rolled the stone away from the tomb, the clay seal was broken and the soldiers, as frightened as teenagers in a haunted house, split the scene as fast as their sandals could slap.

In the morning, Mary arrived and saw the stone rolled away. The stone was rolled away, not to let Jesus out, but to let people in to see, touch, and feel the perfectly intact, collapsed mummified encasement. They witnessed forensic evidence the body was not stolen and that the Jesus had not merely resuscitated and escaped to an unknown location.

None of the disciples saw the resurrection! Rather, they participated in the historical event.

THE EXPERIENCE OF MARY MAGDALENE

And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God (John 20:14-17).

When Mary saw the resurrected Christ, she supposed him to be the gardener. When Jesus said to her, "Mary," she immediately recognized Jesus' voice. She heard the "corpse" speak, but it wasn't a corpse. It was the risen Savior!

Astounded and delighted, she threw herself at his feet and grasps him as if she was never going to let him go. "Rabboni," (master), she exclaimed! Her arms did not pass through the image. She touched and felt a real, live being, the resurrected body of Jesus. Jesus spoke to her again in a gentle, comforting way. He explained to her that He was not going to ascend into heaven to be with his Father on this day. Having seen and heard and touched Christ, Mary hurried to inform the bewildered disciples.

Interestingly, a woman was first to see the resurrected Christ. Jesus did not appear to Mary the Holy Virgin first, but to Mary Magdalene a sinner.

In Jewish law, a woman's testimony could not be used in a court of law. If this story was fraudulently fabricated and perpetrated on the naïve, the defrauder would never, never, never included a woman's testimony in the account, must less solicit a woman as the first eyewitness of the resurrection.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DISCIPLES

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord (John 19-20).

By this time, Mary had seen, heard, and touched the Lord (20:8-18). Reporting this to the disciples, they were in a quandary about the event. Fearing Mary was hallucinating, but still clinging to hope, and fearing a governmental investigation, the disciples hovered together in secret.

While they were querying the day's events, Jesus appeared to the frightened men. He did not enter through a door. As his body had so easily passed through the mummified encasement, his body easily passed through the material door blocking entrance into the gathering of men. They **saw** Jesus. They did not see a phantom, a ghost, a spirit, or a hologram. They saw a real, tangible, living being.

They **heard** him speak saying, "Peace be unto you . . ." "They were glad" was the understatement of ages! These men were thrilled!! But, weeks passed before the reality of Easter Sunday settled into a firm conviction that Jesus solved man's fundamental problem.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE THOMAS

The other disciples therefore said unto Thomas, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing (John 20:24-27).

When Thomas heard the report that the disciples saw the Lord, he remained unconvinced. Possibly, he thought they were all delusional.

Unfortunately, Thomas has been labeled "Doubting Thomas" by undiscerning historians. Thomas was not a man filled with wretched unbelief. Nor, was Thomas a naïve, gullible, simpleton who could be easily swayed by hallucinating men and delusional women.

Thomas was a realist—a juror, sort of speak, who demanded **empirical proof** of resurrection. He had to **see**, to **touch**, **feel**, and to **hear** the resurrected Christ before he could draw a conclusion that the report of a resurrected Christ was indeed and indisputable fact.

When Christ appeared, Thomas *saw*, *touched*, and *heard* the risen Christ. He did not see a phantom or a spirit, but he saw and touched a real, tangible, squeezable, physically alive body of Christ—a resurrected body.

After Christ appeared to Thomas personally so he could *see*, *hear*, and *feel* the resurrected body of Christ, Thomas announced his verdict, "My Lord and My God!"

If Jesus conquered man's most fundamental problem, then He is God! If he defeated death in time and space, then death is no longer master of man's fate. Jesus is Lord of life. He must be served.

The disciples traveled the Roman world proclaiming what they had *seen, touched, and heard*. They did **not** offer men theories about an afterlife; they presented forensic evidence to jury of the Mediterranean world that One Man in history conquered death in a visible, tangible, physical, material, corporeal way which we call "the resurrection." They did not offer men "religion," or "duty," or propositions about heaven, but testified, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1:3).

They did not pummel men with religion or chain men to religious duty. They provided empirical proof that One Man in history solved man's greatest problem!!

Since this is true, He must be worshiped as Lord and God.

In conclusion, not all religions are the same. All religions but one are suppositions about an afterlife. Only Christianity *offers proof with strict proof of claim* that there is life beyond the grave. Since this is the case, Christianity is the only true religion.

All other religions are false, fake, subjective, illusory, artificial, fictitious, imaginary, nebulous, misleading man-made systems! All of them!

For those who examine the evidence and commit themselves to Christ as "Lord and God," the risen Christ promises to give them the gift of eternal life and to solve their fundamental problem:

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (John 10:28).

This is our hope! This is our gospel. It is claim with proof of claim. We do not ask men to believe the fanciful or even to believe in Christianity, we call men to examine the evidence of a resurrected Christ and to commit to the same.

Part II

Legal Proofs that Death has been Defeated

DIRECT EVIDENCE

Jesus' body lay in the tomb three days and three nights. The confused disciples were scattered. None of them expected a resurrection. Though Jesus spoke of these things, most thought he was speaking parabolically.

Will it stand up in a court of law?

To prove a case in court, the defendant needs primary, direct evidence. Direct evidence is firsthand evidence. There are no living witnesses today. That generation has passed from the stage of history, but their testimonies remain. The NT documents record their witness. We have demonstrated that the NT witness is abundant, recorded scientifically, and passes all the tests of the ancient writing rule. We can, therefore, examine their testimony.

You can have confidence that the resurrection is true based on the evidence surviving the cross-examination of eyewitness testimony.

THE TESTIMONY OF EYEWITNESSES

The Eyewitnesses:

2 Peter 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

There is a difference between myth and history; fact and fiction. For example, who is Little Red Riding Hood? Where did she live? When did she live? What country is she from? Did anyone in history know her? None of these questions can be answered affirmatively because Little Red Riding Hood is a myth. However, when we come to the person of Christ, we know when he lived, where he lived, what he did, and we know about the people who knew him.

There is a difference between hearsay and eyewitness testimony; between analytical evidence and synthetic evidence. Analytical evidence is pure proof or mathematical proof. It works in theory. Synthetic evidence is historical, legal proof—the establishment of fact by use of evidence. Our God is not theoretical. He has entered history in time and space in the person of Christ with many infallible proofs — proof standards common to all courtrooms (Acts 1:3)(2).

Who were these witnesses?

Matthew: Levi, son of Alphaeus, tax collector, one of the twelve disciples, author of the Book of Matthew—an account of the life of Jesus Christ.

Mark: cousin of Barnabus, assistant to Paul, intimate friend of Peter from whom he received much information about Jesus, and author of the Book of Mark

Luke: doctor, historian, traveling companion of Paul, possibly a Gentile convert, friend of the family of the Latin poet Lucanus; author of Luke and Acts: His description is found in Luke 22-24.

John: Son of Zebedee, brother of James, fisherman by trade, one of the twelve, one of the inner three, stayed close to Jesus death on the cross, and records his eyewitness testimony.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome and Joanna.

Two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Ten disciples including all but Judas and Thomas.

Thomas: One of the twelve, the empiricist who insisted on proof of claim.

More than 500 people witnessed the risen Christ.

Saul of Tarsus, adversary and skeptic, persecutor of the church, author of 13 letters in the NT

Surviving Evidence

The testimonial accounts vary in minute detail. But all agree (Matthew 27:50, 59, 28:8).

Jesus was alive. Jesus was dead. Jesus was alive after His death.

Legal Considerations

Courts are not interested in possibility, but probability

Suppose you saw a midget fleeing from a room with a knife in his hand. Looking inside the room you see a dead body. Blood is oozing from his chest. There are no windows or doors in the room other than the one you entered. Though it is possible a Martian killed the man, it isn't probable. The detective would not be interested in a Martian theory. He would want to know all about the midget who fled the scene with a knife in his hand.

The courts are interested in proof beyond reasonable doubt. There is no such thing as absolute certainty, only reasonable certainty.

Perjury must be attacked. How do you attack perjury? First, attacking either the character of the witness or the facts of his testimony can expose perjury.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence? People can make any faith claim they wish, but all must ask, "What is the evidence?"

Evidence Surviving Cross Examination

Prosecution Strategy One: Attack the testimony. Because the gospel accounts differ in the detail, and because there are omissions in the records, the testimonies can't be trusted.

Example: Matthew records an earthquake on Easter morning, Mark does not. Mark mentions Salome, Luke does not. Luke mentions the presence of two angels. John does not. John records the investigation of Peter and John. Matthew does not.

Defense: Omissions are not contradictions. Agreement on detail demonstrates collusion, while differences in detail substantiate a true eyewitness account.

These differences testify to the honest, but different perspective each witness possessed.

Prosecution Strategy Two: Destroy the credibility of the witnesses.

These men were credulous men and easily deceived.

Defense: Not so. These were ordinary men. Just as we have never seen a resurrection, neither had they. The Gospels record their skepticism. Look at Thomas. He would not believe without empirical, proof. He demanded to see, hear, and touch this “so called” living Christ. There is almost no evidence these men were credulous men or fell into the plight of “easy believism.”

These men were dishonest and tried to deceive the public.

Defense: You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence. They had no reason not to speak the truth. It would have been easier to lie that the resurrection did not happen than it was to testify that “the impossible” (the resurrection) did happen. Their testimony brought trouble into their lives. They faced persecution, even death. Furthermore, these men were Jews who lived under a strict, high moral code, and they followed Jesus who was a moral teacher. The idea that they were evil, wicked, lying men is contrary to the Biblical record.

These men colluded together to deceive the public.

Defense: You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence? The differing details in their testimonies indicate that they did not get together and create a story. Their testimonies are filled with historical detail but they are not smooth and polished.

Unity was fragile among the disciples: They were fishermen, tax collectors, zealots, and businessmen. They could not agree in life, much less in death. One has to wonder if they had the capacity to agree on anything. However, they did agree on history’s most amazing event because each saw the living Christ.

There were women witnesses.

Defense: No Jew, seeking to delude the public, would ever include the testimony of women. In Jewish eyes, women could not be trusted as witnesses in a court of law. Even Paul, the rabbi, did not include women in his defense of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-12). These men simply called it as they saw it. Thus, women bore witness to what they saw.

The apostles manufactured a testimony to establish a new religion and to gain for themselves a place in history.

Defense: These men were not “religious masochists.” So hostile was the vanguard of Judaism, these men faced arrest, torture, excommunication, loss of family, and execution for their testimony. Imagine a discussion of the disciples:

“Fella’s, I know we are going to lose our families, our fortunes, our country, and our lives. We will probably be beat and bruised, tarred and feathered, beheaded and crucified for this lie, but let’s go ahead and do it anyway.” This would be nonsense.

The presence of hostile witnesses: If these men had varied from the truth, many would have gladly pointed out the inconsistency in their message. They couldn’t afford to risk inadequacies. “We are witnesses of these things,” said the apostles (Acts 5:32).

There is a story of Sherlock Homes and the Barking dog. When Watson asked Sherlock how he solved the crime, Homes remarked, “It was the silence of barking dog that told me who the murderer was.” Homes reasoned that the dog always barked when strangers came near the house. On the night of the murder, the dog did not bark. The silence of the dog alerted Homes that the murderer must have been a family member with whom the dog was well acquainted. The silence of the Pharisees about the resurrection is amazing. Why didn’t these hostile witnesses bring forth evidence of a stolen corpse? Why didn’t they produce a body? Why didn’t they bring forth witnesses regarding a thief?

Look at present day media and the “Shark attack” that occur when a politician slips up. They become shark bait.

If the disciples respected Christ so much and stole the body, you would think they would have buried the body and set up a memorial for him so his followers could make visits to the site. But, they could not do this because there was no body to bury.

Evidence Surviving Prosecution

Jesus was alive. Jesus died and was buried Jesus was alive after the resurrection

COUNTERCLAIMS

Testimony of Hostile Witnesses of the 21st Millennium: Many existed, and Luke and others had opportunity to interview them. Who could prove Jesus was dead? Where was the body located?

Counterclaim No. 1: Jesus swooned, or the disciples thought they saw a resurrected Christ.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

“Damp tomb” is not a cure for crucifixion. How would a severely wounded man move a 3000 pound rock, tippy-toe past the soldiers, and escape to a secret location during Passover with a swarm of pilgrims camping all around Jerusalem and on the Mount of Olives? This claim is more incredible than the resurrection.

Counterclaim No. 2: The disciples stole the body.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Their lives were in danger. Why would they steal a body? A Roman guard would have to be overcome by force. The records reveal the apostles weren't expecting a resurrection. What could possibly be their motivation? What did they do with the body? How did they keep the secret under threat of life? How did they deceive the public? It takes greater faith to believe this than it does the resurrection.

Counterclaim No. 3: Romans or Jews stole the body.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

What would be the motivation? A stolen body was the last thing the Jews, Romans, or the disciples wanted. Rome wanted peace at all cost. Jews wanted to silence the name of Jesus at all cost, and a dead, lying prophet was of no advantage to the defeated, disappointed, devastated disciples—and they did not want to experience the same fate as their former Leader—death by crucifixion.

Counterclaim No. 3: The disciples experienced mass hallucination about a resurrection.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Anything is possible, but is it probable? Evidence points to a literal, physical, resurrection. They touched, handled, and saw a risen Christ.

What caused the hallucination? Could it last over a 40-day period? What is the probability of all the disciples and 500 others hallucinating? It is easier to believe the resurrection than the wild claim of mass hallucination.

Counterclaim No. 4: They were all crazy.

You can say anything you want, but what is your evidence?

These men didn't act or speak like crazy men. They appear to be normal, capable men.

Could crazy men follow the greatest moral teacher ever to walk this planet, mobilize an army of Christians to saturate Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures, and to totally dominate an entire planet by 350 AD?

Crazy men don't unite: I once heard a story about a preacher who visited an insane asylum where he observed about 200 patients walking about in a large courtyard. He asked the one attendant on duty, "Aren't you worried about an uprising and a takeover?" The attendant replied, "No! Crazy people don't unite."

Counterclaim No. 5: The disciples visited the wrong tomb.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Why didn't the hostile witnesses take them to the right tomb? What about the Roman guards? Couldn't they find the right tomb? There are not many tombs on the Mount of Olives. The women knew exactly what tomb Jesus was buried in . . . and they visited the tomb in the morning during daylight hours. Why would they be confused? The crucifixion event left an indelible impression on the senses.

Counterclaim No. 6: It's kind of fishy that only Christians saw the resurrection, and only Christians wrote the NT. This resurrection story has bias written all over it.

You can claim anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Do we accuse witnesses in a court of law of bias because they testify to their experience or write down what they saw? Do we accuse witnesses of bias because they were there and saw an event?

Could any man witness a resurrection and remain an unbeliever? Reason tells us that witnesses to a trauma of this nature would indeed be compelled to speak about their experience, write it down, or publish their findings. All books are written because of the experience and motivation of authors – and, we don't accuse them of bias for authoring a book.

Counterclaim No. 7: Jesus only appeared in private and not in public.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

How would you explain the resurrection? You would have to use the same criteria for evidence we are using now. This objection presupposes we are free to dictate what kind of post-resurrection appearances are acceptable. If it happened that way it was reported, why should we expect it to be any different? If the living Christ did appear in public, the evidence needed to prove a resurrection would still be the same as it would in a court of law, and we would still have to examine the original, written documents.

Maybe he did appear in public. It is hard to remain an unbeliever once you have seen a resurrection. The fact of 500 witnesses is a very public event. All were converted. All were convinced! How many more witnesses do you need in a court of law to prove a fact? Because so many saw the resurrection, a public refutation was impossible even in Jerusalem.

Counterclaim No. 8: The church created the resurrection and it became a myth.

You can claim anything you want, but what is the evidence.

Accurate presentation of facts, historical detail, geographical accuracy, and cultural specificity indicate men who lived at the time of Christ wrote these records. How could a churchman living after the destruction of 70 A.D. know anything about Jerusalem, Bethany, the temple mount, Passover traditions, etc.?

Myths take time for legends to develop. There are too many details and addresses and personal names in the resurrection account to merit a myth. There is no “once upon a time . . .”

Myths did develop, but not until the second century. These myths were refuted by the gospel accounts to bring imaginations in line with historical facts. These myths were refuted by stewards of the gospel.

Silence of the Hostile witnesses: Finally, what evidence was brought forth in the first century by hostile witnesses to remonstrate against the resurrection? There is absolutely nothing! There is no evidence, no documents, no books, no letters, and no pottery shards. Why didn't highly motivated men who had power to protect write or publish counterclaims? They simply could not refute the clear facts . . . and they had no facts in support of a counterclaim.

If a man wants to disprove the resurrection, he must answer the following:

- The empty tomb: How do you account for it?
- The transformation in the disciples' character. How do you account for it?
- The rapid spread of Christianity while hostile witnesses could marshal evidence and counterclaims. How do you account for it?
- The silence of Hostile witnesses. How do you account for it?
- The use of women in testimony. How do you account for it?
- Why the burial place of Jesus never became a sacred place. How do you account for it?
- Why the disciples died violent deaths for a lie. How do you account for it?

Conclusion of the Defense: A number of reliable men and women witnessed a medical death and burial. Three days later these same witnesses saw, touched, and heard the living Christ. Consequently, they rightly concluded that Jesus of Nazareth literally, physically, materially rose from the dead, thus solving man's fundamental problem. If Jesus rose from the dead, he is Lord. Whatever he says is absolute truth. If you will believe that He literally, tangibly, materially, physically rose from the dead, and you will confess Him as Lord and Master of your life, you can have everlasting life (Romans 10:9,10). Trust Him today, and he will be your Savior for eternity.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

Legal Testimony to the Resurrection

Simon Greenleaf (1783-1853) was one of the founders of Harvard Law School. He authored the authoritative three-volume text, *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence* (1842), which is still considered “the greatest single authority on evidence in the entire literature of legal procedure.” Greenleaf literally wrote the rules of evidence for the U.S. legal system. He was certainly a man who knew how to weigh the facts. He was an atheist until he accepted a challenge by his students to investigate the case for Christ’s resurrection according to Greenleaf’s own expertise on the rules of evidence. After personally collecting and examining the evidence based on rules of evidence that he helped establish, Greenleaf became a Christian and wrote the classic, *Testimony of the Evangelists*.

Let (the Gospel’s) testimony be sifted, as it were given in a court of justice on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth (Greenleaf, 1995).

Sir Lionel Luckhoo (1914-1997), a modern day Sherlock Homes, is considered one of the greatest lawyers in British history. He’s recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records as the “World’s Most Successful Advocate” fifteen times because of his amazing record of 245 consecutive murder acquittals. Luckhoo received the CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in 1962. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II – twice; once in 1966 and again in 1969. He was the world’s greatest expert on the rules of evidence (*The Guinness Book of World Records*, 1990 edition). Luckhoo declared:

I humbly add I have spent more than 42 years as a defense trial lawyer appearing in many parts of the world and am still in active practice. I have been fortunate to secure a number of successes in jury trials and I say unequivocally the evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt (Sir Lionel Luckhoo, *The Question Answered: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* Luckhoo Booklets, back page.

http://www.hawaiiichristiansonline.com/sir_lionel.html).

Lee Strobel was a Yale-educated, award-winning journalist at the Chicago Tribune. As an atheist, he decided to compile a legal case against Jesus Christ and prove him to be a fraud by the weight of the evidence. As Legal Editor of the Tribune, Strobel’s area of expertise was courtroom analysis. To make his case against Christ, Strobel cross-examine d a number of Christian authorities, recognized experts in their own fields of study (including PhD’s from such prestigious academic centers as Cambridge, Princeton, and Brandeis). He conducted his examination with no religious bias, other than his predisposition to atheism.

Remarkably, after compiling and critically examining the evidence for himself, Strobel became a Christian. Stunned by his findings, he organized the evidence into a book entitled, *The Case for Christ*, which won the Gold Medallion Book Award for excellence. Strobel asks one thing of each reader – remain unbiased in your examination of the evidence. In the end, judge the evidence for yourself, acting as the lone juror in the case for Christ . . .

As a “lone juror,” I sat quiet in my chair... As jurors often do in the jury room, I asked to return once again to a provoking piece of evidence... (Strobel, 1988)

It is good news that Christ’s resurrection is true and certain. Consequently, we have assurance that His claims are true and that His promises will be fulfilled as we face man’s most fundamental problem.

(1) The reader would do well to get familiar with the rules of evidence and the different kinds of proof required in court: probable cause (police tickets), preponderance of the evidence (civil cases), beyond reasonable doubt (criminal cases), and clear and convincing evidence like in child custody cases.

(2) Note: the Book of Acts was written by a legal mind recording the presentation of the gospel in the courtroom of the world. The reader should study the book of Acts from a legal perspective and note the many forensic terms used to advance the facts of the resurrection to a practical, skeptical jury in the Roman world.

(Source: Stockton, “Five Pillars of the Gospel”, unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theology)

31. The Simple Gospel

John 3:16



What is the simple gospel?

The gospel, though it is deep and rich, should be made simple and clear for those who have never heard it. Paul spent two whole years teaching the Gospel in Rome (Acts 28:31) . . . but, that same wonderful message can be simplified so a child can understand it.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God: *For God so loved the world . . .* The personal, infinite, triune God of the Bible loves you. The proof of his love is that he sent his Son to solve your major problem (true guilt incurred by your sin and disobedience to His law).

Christ: *That He gave His only begotten Son . . .* Jesus is the only declared Son. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, and God's appointed King. You deserve to die: "the wages of sin is death." But, God gave his only Son for you because there was no other way for you to pay the debt you owe to Him. Christ died for your sin as your substitute so you would not have to face the horrors of God's judgment.

Faith: *That whosoever believeth . . .* The "*whosoever*" is you. If you want God's love and forgiveness, you must personally respond to God and receive His gift of eternal life by faith. No one is born a Christian, and you can't do enough good to merit heaven. Every man woman and child must hear this good news and trust the Son and His death on Calvary as his substitute if they want to enter life.

Judgment: *Should not perish . . .* God is just. The penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Without a Savior, the mallet of justice will fall on all sinners. Failure to respond in faith to His Son's shedding His blood on the cross for you will result in eternal death (hell). You can escape the darkness of God's judgment by accepting his remedy for your sin--the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Salvation: *Should have everlasting life . . .* If you will confess that you are a sinner . . . that you deserve judgment . . . and, receive Christ as your Savior, God will graciously grant to you eternal life – the major gift belonging to the kingdom of God. To believe is to be saved and to possess eternal life. To have eternal life is to know God (John 17:1-3). To have life means you will share in the benefits of the Age to come, and that when you die, you will be ushered into the presence of your Heavenly Father.

Will you bow your knee today and ask God be merciful to you, a sinner?

32. The Legal Effects of the Cross for Those Who Believe

A Word Study on Romans 3:21-31.



Literary Genre: The Book of Romans is a Courtroom Drama filled to the brim with the best of law.

Case: God v. Mankind (1:17-3:20)

Prosecutor: Paul, the Apostle of God (1:17-3:20)

Defense Attorney for Believers: Paul, the Apostle of God (3:21-8:32)

♦ Note the legal language in this section. These are terms used in a court of law. In Romans 1:17 - 3:20, Paul assumes the role of a Prosecutor presenting God's verifiable claim against mankind which demands a "guilty" verdict.

In Romans 3:21-31, Paul assumes the role of a Defense Attorney for those who believe which demands a verdict of "justified" because of Christ's faithfulness to obey the law and to die as the believer's substitute for sin. This passage is the Rosetta Stone of the gospel.

Verdict: Both Gentiles and Jews are pronounced guilty in God's Courtroom (3:10-20).

Premise: One must possess righteousness in conformity to law to be accepted in God's sight (Romans 2:7-12).

Good News: God has provided a righteousness in conformity to law which is the faithfulness of Christ to all who believe.

The gospel is NOT about what we must do to win God's favor, but what God has done through Christ to secure salvation toward those who believe. Romans is a book of law expounding the legal aspects of the gospel and the righteousness (faithfulness of Christ) available to those who believe.

Take Notice of the marvelous effects of God's presentment at the cross in Romans 3:21-31. NOTICE the legal terms in this section.

21 But now the righteousness of God (dekaiosune) (opposite of sin and condemnation in v. 20) without the law (personal works-righteousness) is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets (Genesis through Malachi);

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith (pistis is a subjective genitive = the faithfulness) of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe (PAP): for there is no difference:

The term "*pistis*" can be translated "*faith*" or "*faithfulness*." Here it is a subjective genitive referring to the "*faithfulness of Christ*" and not our faith.

23 For all have sinned (aorist, active) (harmatia = like an arrow misses the mark), and come short of the glory of God (His righteousness as expressed in His law);

24 Being justified (diakioumenoi = pap) freely (an adverb = free gift) by his grace (character of the Giver) through the redemption (setting free) that is in Christ Jesus:.

23 For all have sinned (aorist, active) (harmatia = like an arrow misses the mark), and come short of the glory of God (His righteousness as expressed in His law);

24 Being justified (diakioumenoi = PAP) freely (an adverb = free gift) by his grace (character of the Giver) through the redemption (setting free) that is in Christ Jesus:

The term "*justified*" refers to a judicial decision and it means "*to be declared righteous and treated as such.*" The term *justified* is a passive verb meaning the action defined is happening to us, NOT BY US.

The term "*justified*" does not mean "*to be made righteous;*" nor does it mean to be "declared innocent." It doesn't mean "just as if I had never sinned." If it did, you could fall again into a state of condemnation.

The word "*justified*" is a present passive participle indicating that the verdict of "just" can be enjoyed and claimed now. It means "to declare righteous" and to treat one as such.

The word "*redemption*" (*apolutrosios*) means to release from debt, to set free, and to release by a ransom (blood).

25 Whom God (Theos) hath set forth (a legal term for presentment of evidence) to be a propitiation (mercy seat, satisfaction of justice. Think "Day of Atonement.") through faith in his blood (currency of the spirit world), to declare his righteousness (conformity to his own character or law) for the remission of sins (delay, suspension, suspended sentence, letting go, release, injunctive relief, res judicata) that are past, through the forbearance (patience, tolerance, delay, suspension of judgment, a stay or proceedings) of God;

Subject: "*God*" (*Theos*) is the subject of the sentence, not man! The gospel is about what God has done for men at the cross through the faithfulness of the Son, and not what men must do for God.

Propitiation comes from the Greek word *hilasterion*. It is translated "*mercy seat*" in Hebrews 9:5. It refers to the place blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement to pay the debt for Israel's sins. Blood on the mercy seat meant that justice had been satisfied . . . that the debt was paid . . . that God (the creditor) was satisfied with the debt payment by the debtor; that the debt was properly discharged.

Blood: God did not set believers free for nothing!! Jesus gave His life as a ransom so we can be set free from condemnation in verse 20. The term

"*redemption*" is used in Greek literature of slaves being set free by ransom. Moreover, blood is the currency of the spirit world. Christians are purchased by blood . . . not money . . . not good deeds . . . not good intentions. For this reason Hebrews says, "and God commanded that all things be purified with blood, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22).

26 To declare (a formal presentment of proof, evidence, demonstration, sign), I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just (character of the judge, morally and legally right), and the justifier (judicial act disposing of the case before the court) of him which believeth in Jesus

The Greek word "*declare*" (*endeixis*) means to present as evidence -- a summary judgment motion by the Court declaring the ruling of "*justified*" is in conformity to law and the rules of the Court.

The phrase "*believeth in Jesus*" is correct theologically but it is a bad translation of the Greek text. This is a subjective genitive ("*ek*" - genitive) It refers to the righteousness belonging to Christ not man's "faith." Yes, we have to believe, but man's faith is not what is emphasized here. This text refers to the fidelity of the Son, and not a response of faith by believing men.

The emphasis on the present time: The verb "*might be*" is a present tense indicating that the verdict of "just" can be enjoyed and claimed now in a first fruits way; that is the verdict of the Eschaton has been thrust into our present knowledge to be claimed and enjoyed now.)

27 Where is boasting (bragging rights) then? It is excluded (opposite of "include."). By what law? of works? Nay (a strong negation): but by the law of faith (a faith that sees and accepts the accomplishments of Christ on his behalf).

Note: There is no antinomianism in this text. The law of faith that looks to the cross and receives God's work at Calvary on behalf of sinners for themselves.

28 Therefore we conclude (count, reckon) that a man is justified (declared righteous and treated as such) by faith (faith in the accomplishments of Christ) without the deeds of the law (without facts establishing personal accomplishments).

The term "*conclude*," (*logizomai*), is an accounting term which can be translated count, reckon, calculate, credit, consider, think suppose, maintain, or think. It is a mental act (a final decision of the mind; a conclusion following an investigation into the law and facts of the case. Here it refers to accepting the just discharge of debt to those who believe the blood of Christ satisfied the claims of law. The term is related to the first command in Romans. (See

Romans 6:11 -- "*reckon*" (*logizesthe*) - a present imperative meaning to START THINKING THIS WAY!).

The term "conclude" means believers have listened to the evidence, found proof of claim with strict proof of claim, and agree to accept God's summary judgment motion before the Court based on God's righteousness in Christ.

29 Is he the God of the Jews only (ones with law)? is he not also of the Gentiles? (ones without revelation) Yes, of the Gentiles also (affirmative):

This discharge of debt through the substitutionary work of Christ is fair and just. Now, both Jews and Gentiles can be justified in this court by accepting this discharge of debt and believing the righteousness of Christ is credited to their account by faith.

30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith (Hebrews), and uncircumcision (the nations) through faith (faith in the accomplishments of Christ) 31 Do we then make void (abrogate, derogate, nullify, discount) the law through faith? God forbid (a denial that faith invalidates the law): yea (we affirm), we establish (validate, verify, exonerate, understand or stand under) the law.

NOTICE

(1) There is no command (imperative) in the above section. Paul is not calling for a response from us. He is informing us about what God has done. He wants us to know the facts before we trust.

(2) Terms like "*repent*," "*obey*," "*receive Christ*," "*regeneration*," "*being born again*," "*follow*," or "*receive Christ into your heart*" are not mentioned in this section.

(3) There is no mention of the "*heart*" in this passage. There is no emphasis on "*personal experience*." This passage is all about what God does at the cross, and NOT about what God does in the heart; what God has done through Christ, and not what God does through His Spirit.

(4) This passage is a presentment of evidence with proof of claim. Understanding this section will deliver men from "*wretched subjectivism*" - establishing religious truth based on human experiences . . . human feelings . . . human reasoning . . . personal existential facts. There is nothing "touchy-feely" about this passage. This passage is pure objective law about how God has disposed of the believer's case in God's Court. This judicial decision is with prejudice.

(5) The locus of salvation is **NOT** the human heart, human experience, human transformation, or human regeneration, BUT THE CROSS!

(6) This passage is **not** about "me," but about what God has done through Christ at Calvary. This passage is about the "righteousness" of God, not the goodness of man!

(7) This passage is about forensic theology, not existential theology; case facts, not human feelings; evidence, not presumptions.

(8) Translators have done us a disservice in translating "subjective genitives" or "ablative of separation" in this passage as "*faith in Christ*" rather than "*the faithfulness of Christ*." Faith is **not** a substitute for "righteousness." *The righteousness of God is the "faithfulness of Christ" to the law; that is, we are saved by the doing (righteousness) and dying (substitutionary work) of Christ for us.*

(9) The main work iterated in this passage is "*justification*." Justification is a judicial term which means "*to declare one righteous and to be treated as such*." There is NOTHING creative about justification. This is **not** an "*infusion*" of righteousness into the heart. Justification is not "creative righteousness" or "*placing righteousness in the heart*" so a person can be "*born again*." Justification is **NOT** regeneration. It is God's act of depositing the righteousness of Christ into Heaven's bank. The "righteousness of God" is external to us!!!! We are dealing with "forensic" righteousness, and not "subjective righteousness."

Moreover, justification does **not** mean "*forgiveness*." It refers to God crediting to your account the righteousness of Christ which gives you a right standing before God. Some call this positional truth as opposed to subjective experience. Our experiences differ, but our standing remains constant.

(10) A response of faith is necessary for salvation. Faith here is **not** a virtue of the heart. It is **not** Christian character. It is **not** faith in faith. **Nor** is it good happy feelings about the subject of religion. Faith examines the evidence. After a preponderance of the evidence, the man of faith agrees to accept God's offer of righteousness based on Jesus faithfulness to God on his behalf. He trusts the doing and dying of Jesus as his claim to Heaven.

After studying this passage, the pious should make a conclusion of the matter (3:28); that the believer "*is declared righteous and treated as such*;" that his case has been rightly disposed in God's court. The Christian who stands under the truth presented in this passage can rest. He experiences "*peace with God*" mentioned in Romans 5:1. The believer can stop striving to be better so God will accept him. Believing souls rest because they know they are accepted in God's sight because Christ obeyed the law for them. Selah

33. What is the "Faith of Christ" in Romans 3:22?



Audience: seminary students.

This gospel message is for thinking Christians.

The most important question ever asked in the Bible is from Job 9:1-2: How can a man be just before God?

The answer is in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Biblical Christianity teaches that to be right with God one must be righteous in God's sight "Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (2:5); that that righteousness required by God is not manufactured by us, but that "real righteousness," the "righteousness of Christ" is given to us when we believe.

The principle in Romans in *sola fide*; that men are saved by the faith in the work and virtue of another; that faith is **not** a virtue in the heart, but a trust in the doing and dying of Christ as sufficient to save the soul.

But, the upside down gospel preached to us by Roman Catholics and ignorant Protestants is that God requires *faith in the heart* to be saved.

Men turn the gospel upside down when they teach that faith is a substitute for substantive righteousness. To be saved for all eternity one must possess substantive righteousness in conformity to law (Romans 2:5-12).

The good news of the gospel is that there is a righteousness available to us, even the righteousness of Christ, unto all that believe. But, saying it and understanding it are two different matters.

The proposition we deal with in this brief is that the "*faith of Christ*" in Romans 3:22 does **not** refer to our faith in the Savior but to the "*faithfulness of Christ*"; that is, His faithfulness is His righteousness given to us who believe.

Q: What is the "Faith of Christ" in Romans 3:22?

The proposition we deal with in this brief is that the "*faith of Christ*" in Romans 3:22 does **not** refer to our faith in the Savior but to the "*faithfulness of Christ*"; that is, His faithfulness is His righteousness given to us who believe. If a man possesses the "*faithfulness of Christ*," he possesses a righteousness which qualifies Him for a right standing in the Court of Almighty God.

Romans 3:22. "*Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ (dia. pi, stewj Vlh sou/ Cristou/) unto all and upon all them that believe (tou.j piteu, ontaj): for there is no difference.*"

What does the phrase “faith of Jesus Christ” mean?

The Contextual Argument

Paul’s treatise on the Gospel in his letter to the Romans is explained in legal terms. It is *a courtroom drama* with Paul acting as both a prosecutor of mankind and a defense attorney for believers.

Prior to this verse, Paul took on the role of a prosecutor in the case God v. Mankind (Romans 1-3). He pronounced all men guilty of breaking God’s law (3:10-20).

But, in verse 21, Paul crossed the aisle and put on the wig of an English barrister, and took on *the role of a defense attorney* in order to argue the case for the justification of the believer.

Paul’s forensic argument is that **not only** has Christ *died for us*, but that the *lived for us*: that, His righteousness is credited to our account so that we might have a right standing before God; that we are saved not only by the *dying* of Christ *for our sins*, but by the *doing* of Christ *for our righteousness*.

The Gospel of Paul

The Principle: To be justified in God’s Court, a man must possess righteousness (Romans 2:1-13).

First, the bad news: all men are guilty of breaking God’s law (3:10ff).

Second, the good news: There is a righteousness that comes from God that enables men to possess what the Court requires. But, what is this righteousness, and where does it come from?

The Semantic Argument

Semantically, the phrase, “*faith of Jesus Christ*,” is usually interpreted as “*faith in Jesus*.” But, if this is so, why did Paul say “*unto all that believe*?”

Why a reference to two responses of “faith” in the same verse (3:22)? Could it be that the phrase “*faith in Jesus*” is a poor translation and should be translated “*faithfulness of Jesus*” instead of the “*faith in Jesus*?”

The Theological Argument

Theologically, it is my contention that Paul is saying that sinners are declared “*guilty*” in God’s Court; that in order to stand before a holy God, a man needs real righteousness—substantive² righteousness, **not** synthetic righteousness;

² **Substantive**: Of the essence or essential element of a thing; as, "substantive information"; Having substance; enduring; solid; firm; substantial. Substantive is opposed to that which is artificial, plastic, and pretentious.

that in the gospel, substantive righteousness is available to the believer, even the precious righteousness of Christ; that faith is **not a virtue** required by God, **nor is faith a substitute** for substantive righteousness; that faith is the confidence that Christ lived a righteous life on behalf of His elect and that God gives the believer Christ's righteousness when he trusts Him so that his spiritual bank account is filled with the righteousness a man needs to satisfy the claims of a Holy Judge.

For example there is a big difference being paid a hundred dollars in gold bullion and being paid a hundred dollars in FRNs. When God justifies a man **he gives him substance**-- the silver and gold of Christ's righteousness, **not** synthetic paper notes.

The Linguistic Argument

Linguistically, the phrase "*faith of Christ*" should be translated "*faithfulness of Christ*" for the following **reasons**:

First, the phrase "*faith of Christ*" (dia. pi,stewj VhSou/ Cristou/) is either a subjective genitive (indicating origin or source), not an objective genitive. A genitive defines and limits the substantive. It asks the question, "What kind" of righteousness?" Subjective genitive is very personal. In this case the righteousness offered is the personal righteousness of Christ.

The term "*faith*" (pi,stewj) is a feminine noun which can also be an ablative of agency. Genitives and ablatives employ the same case form (wj - fem, ou/ -- mas.)

While faith (pi,stewj) can be translated "*faith*," it can also be translated "*faithfulness*." Since "Jesus Christ" (VhSou/ Cristou) is in the genitive / ablative form, this "*faith*" or "*faithfulness*" must be coming from Christ. The righteousness offered has a source. It is in the Christ the Savior who *lived* and *died* for us. Furthermore, because this righteousness comes from Christ, it behaves like an ablative indicating something separated from him and given to believers.

Obviously, Paul is not talking about Christ's faith, but his acts of "*faithfulness*."

Paul is **not** calling for an exercise of faith from the believer at this point in his argument as much as he is informing us that the "*righteousness from God*" is available to the believer by faith is none other than the "*faithfulness of Christ*."

Second, Romans 1:17 states: "*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: As it is written, the just shall live by faith.*" The phrase "*faith to faith*" (evk pi,stewj eivj pi,sti) contains two prepositions and is difficult to translate. The first (evk pi,stewj) appears to be an ablative of source, or that which is produced by a person.

Is this “*faith*” produced by us or does it refer to “*faithfulness*” produced by Christ? Surely, our faith is based on the obedience of Christ to God’s law; i.e., the faithfulness of Christ.”

The second prepositional phrase (eivj pi,sti) is either an accusative of purpose or accusative of result.

This phrase could be saying that “our faith produces faithfulness,” or it could be saying that Christ’s faithfulness is the foundation of our faith, or God’s righteousness comes from Christ’s faithfulness to produce man’s faith.

Third, Romans 3:3 says, “*For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?*” The phrase “*faith of God*” (th.n pi,stin tou/ qeou) indicates that the “*faith*” comes from God. “*From God*” is a genitive indicating the source.

Obviously, this does not refer to “*faith*” being produced by God but to the “*faithfulness of God.*” That is, man’s unbelief does not nullify God’s faithfulness.

Paul uses the term “evk pi,stewj Vihsou/” in Romans 3:26: “*To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (evk pi,stewj Vihsou, faithfulness of Jesus).*”³

Q: Again, is Paul calling for man to exercise faith in Christ or is he referring to the faithfulness of Christ? This seems to be saying that God justifies the one who stands on the fidelity of Christ.

Fourth, Romans 4:16 discusses the “*faith of Abraham*” (tw/| evk pi,stewj VAbraa,m). Does this refer to Abraham’s response of faith to God or does it refer to faithfulness resulting from his faith? Here it appears to refer to Abraham’s response of faith and not his faithfulness. Because Abraham trusted God’s faithfulness, God was faithful to justify him.

Fifth, the phrase “evk pi,stewj Cristou/” is used twice in Galatians 2:16: “*know that a man is not justified by (his own) observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ (evk pi,stewj Cristou/).*”

The phrase “*faith in (ek) Christ*” is another ablative and can be rendered “*faithfulness of Christ.*” So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ (evk pi,stewj Cristou/,, = *faith of Christ*) and not by (our) observing the law, because by (our) observing the law no one will be justified.

³ See John 17:15 on the preposition “ek:”I do not ask you to take them out of the world (ek – indicating separation) but that you keep them away (ek – indicating separation) from the evil one.

It appears best to render “evk pi,stewj Cristou/” here as the “*faithfulness of Christ.*” Paul taught we are not saved by our personal observance of the law. We are saved because of Christ’s personal observance of the law; that we are saved by works – His works! We live because Christ was careful to do all that God requires so the believing man can be justified in His sight.

Sixth, Galatians 2:20 also uses the phrase “*faith of (ek) Christ*” (evk pi,stewj Cristou/).

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of (ek) the Son of God (evn pi,stei zw/ th/| tou/ ui`ou/ tou/ qe), who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

The title “*Son of God*” is in the genitive indicating that “*the faith*” comes from Christ (a subjective genitive or ablative, not an objective genitive). Paul is **not** saying that “I” continue to live my Christian life by faith, but that I live before God because the Lord obeyed the law perfectly on my behalf.

Seventh, Philippians 3:9 says,

“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ (dia. pi,stewj Cristou) the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Is Paul saying, “*I want to stand before God being one who is justified by my faith?*” or, is Paul saying, “*I want to stand before God, not having my own righteousness, but having the faithfulness of Christ credited to my account which comes by faith?*” It appears this is a genitive or ablative of source modifying “*righteousness,*” and therefor referring to the faithfulness of Christ.

The Legal Argument

The word “*justification*” is a forensic term having to do with the courts. In God’s Court, **only** a man who keeps the law can be justified (Romans 2:13).

Christ was “*born under the law*” (Galatians 4:4). He obeyed the law (Philippians 2:9-12), and He was the end of the law (Romans 10:4). Consequently, He was “*justified*” (declared righteous) by the Spirit when He was raised from the dead (1 Timothy 3:15, 16).

Even in God’s Court, faith is **not** a substitute for righteousness. A man must possess real, substantial righteousness if he is to stand before an all-holy God. The good news of the gospel is that the substantial righteousness of Christ is given to the one who believes.

An Argument for Substitution

When we say, “*Christ died for our sins,*” we are saying He became our substitute. If Christ took our sins, then we must take His righteousness. If sin was imputed

to him, then his “faithfulness” is imputed to us! In other words, we are saved by works—HIS WORKS! We are saved, not only by his death, but also by His life of obedience.

In Summary, while it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between “*faith*” and “*faithfulness*,” it is at times important to do so. It would be incorrect to always interpret *pistis* (faith) as objective—something being demanded of man. Sometimes, it is subjective and can refer to that which is produced by an agent—in this case something produced by Christ; i.e., His faithfulness.

It is important to understand the phrase “*faith of Christ*” (pi,stewj Cristou) as the “*faithfulness of Christ*.”

I once asked a Catholic neighbor (Mary) if she had any hope of eternal life. She said she did. So, I asked, “Mary, why do you think you will go to heaven?” Pounding on her heart, she said, “I have faith!” For 10 minutes she discussed her great faith and how much she believed in God. Mary did not believe her works could save her. Her hope rested in her faith which was a personal virtue. However, **not** once did she mention Christ, His life, His death, His atonement, His redemptive accomplishments or His resurrection. It was all about faith in her heart . . . and because she had subjective faith, God was somehow obligated to take her to heaven.

A few days later, it dawned on me what she was really saying. To her, “*faith*” was a virtue and she had this virtue that God honored dwelling in her heart. She expected to enter heaven because she had what God required, “*faith*.” But, I asked myself, “Where was Christ in her testimony?” And, if faith is all that is required to go to heaven, why did Christ have to live and die?

Peter Kreef, a Catholic apologist, has this to say:

But many Catholics to this day have not learned the Catholic and biblical doctrine (of justification). They think we are saved by good intentions or being nice or sincere or trying a little harder or doing a sufficient number of good deeds. Over the past twenty-five years I have asked hundreds of Catholic college students the question: If you should die tonight and God asks you why he should let you into heaven, what would you answer? The vast majority of them simply do not know the right answer to this, the most important of all questions, the very essence of Christianity. They usually do not even mention Jesus! (Catholic Educator’s Resource Center, Kreeft, 1988)

The answer lies in our ability to understand the phrase “*faith of Christ*” (pi,stewj Cristou..).

Our personal faith is **not** the basis of our salvation. The *faithfulness of Christ* is the basis of our salvation. What men need in order to be saved is substantive righteousness, not virtuous faith.

The good news of the Bible is that this righteousness is given to those who believe as a free gift. This "*righteousness*" is none other than the faithfulness of Christ (pi, stewj Cristou). As a Judahite, Jesus was born under the law. His obedience was tested and the Spirit declared, "*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*" (Philippians 2:8).

Because He obeyed perfectly, we can be justified perfectly. We are saved by works—not ours, **but** His. We are saved by obedience—His obedience, and when we believe, His "*faithfulness*" and His "*works*," His "*obedience*" is credited to us (believers) as a gift of God (Romans 5:15ff).

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theology)

34. A List of Gospel Blessings in Romans

A Resource for Further Study



"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation" for those who believe / trust the Savior – Romans 1:16

Whether Christians know it or not, those who believe share the following BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL:

Things we know . . . we have "in Christ."

- Justification (3:21-26; 4:5; 5:1; 8:33-34) – the Mother of All Blessings; and, followed by:
- Redemption / Propitiation (3:24-26) (Positional Truth)
- Reconciliation (5:1, 8-11)
- Regeneration / Transformation (5:3-5) (Experiential)
- Substitution (5:6)
- Identification with the benefits of his death, burial, and resurrection (6:2-10)
- Sanctification (6:1-19, 20-22; 8:1-4) (Experiential)

- Liberation (8:2)
- Causation – vocation (8:4)
- Adoption (8:15)
- Glorification and Redemption of the body (1:17-23, 30)
- Intercession (8:33-34)
- Predestination (8:29-32; 9:23)
- Provision (8:32)
- Indemnification / Protection (8:31-34)
- Connection / Association (8:35-39)
- Jubilation / Celebration (8:37; 15:13)
- Conviction (8:38)
- Election (9-11)
- Implantation (11)
- Salvation (10:10)
- Accreditation (10:15)
- Mission (15:15-20)
- Reputation (16:19)
- Revelation (16:25-26)

35. The Gospel of King Jesus

When is the *last* time you heard the rallying cry, “Jesus is Lord?”

Acts 17:6-7



“ . . . these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also . . . and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, (King) Jesus.” - Acts 17: 6-7

It is a duty of every Christian preacher to examine the gospel he preaches to see if it *conforms* to the gospel that “*turned the world upside down*” in the first century.

Since Jesus burst out of the chains of death to escape the winding grave clothes, men began to realize that since He defeated death, He must be Lord of all.

"From the mount of Olives, the place where in dread conflict His garments were rolled in blood, He has mounted in triumph to His throne." (Charles Spurgeon)

Christians have the hope of a resurrection morning because there was a rising again for Him.

In the Book of Acts Jesus is preached as the hope of sinners. He is referred to as "Savior" two times and "Lord" ninety-two times.

Titles like "King" and "Lord" and "Master" refer to authority.

Because all authority in heaven and earth is given to Him, Christians have *de jure* power to conduct kingdom business here on earth (Matthew 28:18-20).

In the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as "Lord" 747 times. Clearly, the riveting emphasis of apostolic preaching was that *Jesus is the ascended Sovereign*.

In the Old Testament, the name YHWH in Hebrew and LORD in English is used 6,832 times. Sovereignty and authority thunder through the centuries because of His powerful name. It was the LORD who created heaven and earth; the loving King Who gave the law to Israel, and the One whom the prophets obeyed.

Clearly, the core of the OT gospel centered on the hub, "*The LORD reigneth*" (Psalm 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1).

The final message the apostle John left to the world in closing out the canon of Scripture was the trumpet, thundering announcement, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" (Revelation 19:6).

Can you hear the roaring, rumbling, crushing thunder of the LORD's reign?

The modern gospel, however, is NOT about Jesus' thundering authority to split the sprawling cedars of man's pride, but about "fire insurance" against the terrors of hell and how you can prosper by faith.

The gospel that "*turned the world upside down*" did not proclaim health and wealth but a chariot riding king with sword in hand, King Jesus (Acts 17:6-17).

The gospel of the kingdom announced the King had entered history to crush man's enemies with the hammer of His holiness: Satan, sin, and death.

This Victor-King defeated death through his death, burial, and resurrection and was seated at the right hand of God (Acts 2:30-32).

While He is called “*the Savior*” and the “*Christ*,” the gospel that stunned the Mediterranean world was that Jesus is “*the Prince of the kings of earth*” (Revelation 1:5) greater than Herod and greater than Caesar.

He claimed authority “*over all flesh*” at the most in opportune time, hours before His death, and then proved it by His resurrection from the fetters of death (John 17:2).

He commissioned his disciples to go into the nations proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom . . . but not before He assured them that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him (Matthew 28:18-20).

Paul taught that to enter the kingdom of God one had to embrace Jesus as Lord (Roman 10:9); that the whole purpose of His death, burial, and resurrection was that He might be Lord both of the living and the dead (Romans 14:9)

Because He has authority over all men, He calls all men everywhere to repent and bow the knee to His authority (Acts 17:30-31).

If the winds and sea obey Him (Matthew 8:27), He is to be obeyed by all men including kings and statesmen.

In the 17th Century, the State taught citizens to believe in the “crown right of kings.”

In modern times, the State media apparatus teaches government has the golden scepter to rule the world, and those men need to kiss the ring of the finger of some State potentate in order to achieve the socialist utopian agenda of equality, prosperity, and democracy.

But, there is no peace without the Prince of Peace.

The gospel that turned the world upside down and conquered Western Civilization did **not** proclaim government as god, or Caesar as king, or the Roman City State as the hope of the world.

There is no law without a king, and King Jesus has His law. The West seeks to practice *the rule of law v. the king is law*; however, there is no law without a *rex* (See Exodus 20:1-3). Because there’s only one King and one the law, we must work toward is the law that comes from King Jesus. In this sense, Christians believe in THE KING IS LAW or Rex Lex!! Once man recognizes One King, then we can work toward Lex Rex. Selah.

DUX LUX REX LEX Cross. The rough English translation is “my King, my Leader (Commander), my Light, and my Law” in reference, of course, to Jesus Christ. Word order makes little difference in Latin.

Rex, Lex, Lux, Dux is Latin Christian meaning “My King, My Law, My Light, and my Commander: Jesus is Rex (King), Lex (Law) Lux (light), Dux (Leader or Commander).

The gospel that turned the world upside down taught “*another Rex, King Jesus.*”

The Apostolic Declaration that launched the gospel from Jerusalem into the Mediterranean world acted on a commission sealed by Lord’s signet ring procured by His ascension to heaven’s throne:

“We ought to obey God rather than men” – Acts 5:29

The Historic Battle-Cry of the Christian Church became:

“AND HE HATH ON HIS VESTURE AND ON HIS THIGH, A NAME WRITTEN, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” – Revelation 19:16

Notice how the consciousness of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430), refers to Christ as King:

“Let these and similar answers (if any fuller and fitter answers can be found) be given to their enemies by the redeemed family of the Lord Christ, and by the pilgrim city of King Christ ((Augustine, “City of God”).

Do you want to enter the kingdom? Then kiss the signet ring of King Jesus and take your place at his feet.

The gospel that “turned the world upside down” did not shout “Hail Caesar, we who are about to die salute thee,” but that there is another king, King Jesus who is enthroned in the celestial city.

The last time men ceased the truth that there is “*no king, but King Jesus*” a nation was born (1776)!

But, things have changed.

Americans as a whole no longer believe in “*no king but King Jesus.*” Rather, their hope has shifted to a government of men . . . *a government of the people, by the people, and for the politicians.*

Isn’t it time for believers to reflect on the authority of Christ and what the Scripture means when it announces our Lord as “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS?”

Men cannot find life until hope is shifted away from the City of Man to the City of God, from “Hail Caesar” to “Jesus is Lord.”

Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus (acknowledge His authority), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Addendum: Christ as King in regards to Catholic Theology:

Denver Newsroom, Nov 20, 2021 / 13:47 pm (CNA).

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, celebrated this year on Nov. 21, also is referred to as the Feast of Christ the King, Christ the King Sunday, or Reign of Christ Sunday.

While the concept of Jesus Christ being King is as old as the Gospels, the feast is fairly recent in the Roman Catholic calendar.

The feast was introduced in the Western liturgical calendar in 1925 by Pope Pius XI, via the encyclical "Quas Primas." Pope Pius XI was about to close the Jubilee year of 1925 in the context of the growing secularist nationalism that followed the fall of European kingdoms after World War I, and decided to establish the solemnity to point to a king "of whose kingdom there shall be no end."

Surprisingly, *the first parish in the world to be consecrated in honor of Our Lord Christ the King* was established by Pope Pius XI not in Europe, but in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1926.

"The 225 worshippers who attended Our Lord Christ the King's first Mass on December 5, 1926, embodied the essence of what it means to be 'church.' With neither bricks nor mortar to call their own, this gathering of believers placed their faith in Providence and celebrated early liturgies in humble surroundings," reads an account posted on the parish's website. "There was no electricity for the first Eucharist, so the room was illuminated by headlights beamed from parked cars. Pastor Father Edward J. Quinn, a former World War I chaplain, used his Army Mass kit."

The current church, built in the 50's, was designed by famed church architect Edward J. Schulte in what is known as a "Brutalist" style.

Our Lord Christ the King Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1926, an earlier church building became the first church in the world to bear the name *Our Lord Christ the King*. Courtesy of P.J. Daley

Where are the Protestants? Why aren't they proclaiming the gospel of King Jesus?

36. Mary Magdalene and the Gospel

The First to See the Risen Christ

Luke 8:2



“And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils.” - Luke 8:2

Mary Magdalene? Who is she?

Men love the idea that Mary was some kind of siren that lured men to their destruction. For two-thousand years we have been fantasizing about her.

Modern minds erupted with abominations about her being some kind of seductress lover of Jesus. (*The Da Vinci Code*; and, *Jesus Christ Superstar* by Andrew Loyd Webber and Tim Rice).

But, what does the Bible say?

Considering her fame, there are only a handful of verses in the Bible about Mary Magdalene. However, these references to Mary have seized the attention of Christians throughout the ages.

She is everywhere in Christian art — our churches and chapels; on our walls and in our windows; in our paintings and in our art; in our dreams and in our fantasies.

There is even a church in England named *St. Mary Magdalene*.

Why are we so obsessed with her? Even if she isn't any of the things men say she is, who is this woman?

One of the difficulties of understanding Mary Magdalene is that she gets lost as an individual because of all the Marys in the Bible: Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mary the sister of Martha, Mary the mother of James the less, and Mary of Salome. And, there are other Marys like Mary of Egypt.

What do we know about this intriguing woman, and why has she invoked so much attention in the history of art?

Mary the Sinner

Luke 8:2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils

The **first** thing we learn about Mary in the Bible is that she was from Magdala — a busy, grey-wet, cross-roads fishing village in northern Israel on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee — 25 miles from Nazareth — a village that Jesus traveled through during the days of His ministry.

The **second** thing we learn about her is that she, along with other women, became a follower of Jesus.

The **third** fact presented to us is that Mary was a woman possessed with seven Devils.

But, what does this mean?

Did seven devils live inside her . . . or was she addicted to seven deadly sins?

We don't know what this means, but our drooling minds immediately jump to the conclusion she indulged in scarlet sins — sins of the flesh that high voltage women discharge around magnetic men — something shameful, regrettable, and derelict. The Scripture says none of these things about her; yet, our minds drift in this direction.

But unlike so many molten-red beauties throughout history, Mary Magdalene found deliverance through the demon-binding power of Christ.

While there is no way to be sure, many speculate that Mary Magdalene was the scandalous “sinner” who “washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment” (Luke 7:36-50) and, or, Mary who anointed Jesus feet with perfume in (John 12:1 et seq.).

In Christian art, Mary Magdalene is portrayed as a woman with long hair and an alabaster box.

She represents sin-laden women that find forgiveness from Jesus, and who live out a life of thankful repentance in service to Him.

The message in Christian art is no matter how scarlet your sins, there is hope in Christ. He delivers the wretched among us from demonic shackles that enslave us to cardinal passions. Come to Him. Seek His salvation. He forgives. He saves. Do it now.

The **fourth** fact we learn about Mary is not only did she follow Jesus, she joined women who gave to his ministry . . . a fitting mark of a true disciple: “which ministered unto him of their substance.”

Mary the Mourner

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” - Mark 15:34, 40

There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

Mary makes **her second appearance in the Bible at the Golgotha** — the place where Jesus was barbarously crucified.

Mary was no fair-weather Christian. She stays at Jesus' bloody, agonizing, "death bed" shouldering his agony until the end.

This short mention of Mary Magdalene is hardly enough to get excited about, but it inspired hundreds of art works, and millions of prayers.

She emerges as a witness to the darkest moment in the Christian story. She was there!

As the imagination of artists churned with reflection on the agony of our Lord, they let their paints publish their own solemn reverence of this ghastly scene in the face of Mary.

Look down at any picture of the cross, and you will see the artist's rendering of Mary Magdalene elevated to the chief mourner — the most touched by the passing of Christ.

The message in Christian art is that Mary represents the wise, faithful, reflecting Christian — the mourner who visits the house of sorrow rather than the house of feasting — the cross-centered believer reflecting on the death of Christ for all men: "doing this in remembrance of me."

Ecclesiastes 7:2 It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.

Mary, the First Witness of the Resurrection

John 20:1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

John 20:18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

The third mention of Mary Magdalene in the Bible is the most important one of them all.

Having witnessed the horrible death of Jesus at cross, she is mentioned in the Bible as the FIRST WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION.

This privilege of being the first to see the resurrected Christ was not given to Herod or Pilate or to Peter or even Mary the Mother of Jesus, but to Mary Magdalene.

In the Book of John, it is Mary Magdalene and ONLY Mary Magdalene that first encounters the living Christ.

She was the first to see the evidence of the risen Christ — the stone rolled away (John 20:1). She led Peter, the rock, and John the beloved to forensically investigate the material evidence of the resurrection. What they found was not

an empty tomb, but abandoned, intact mummified wrappings that formerly encased a dead body.

She was the first to see the two angels standing in the tomb at the head and feet where Jesus body had rested for three days — the historical fulfillment of the true mercy seat above the ark — the most sacred symbol among the Hebrews (21:12).

She was the first to see and touch the visible, tangible resurrected Savior. According to John, Mary mistook Jesus for a gardener . . . but then, like a spring violet, she bursts forth with the joyful realization that she was face-to-face with the sunshine of the living Christ. He's alive! He's alive! He's alive! How can it be?

Unable to contain her joy she reaches forth to grab Jesus and to never let him go. It was at this time, the Lord gently corrected her:

"Me mou haptou" in Greek.

"noli me tangere" in Latin.

"Touch me not" in English. Interpreted to mean "Mary, you can cease clinging to me for I have not yet ascended to my Father."

She was the first to spread the word to others that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Why a woman? Why Mary?

Some have speculated that Mary was chosen because women are the best gossips in the world . . . but this seems more like male chauvinistic prejudice than the real truth.

The best answer is that Mary was chosen to be the first to see the resurrected Christ because she is most like us — a sinner — a sinner with scarlet sins — a sinner in need of a Savior.

Her story is that Christ saves sinners . . . even the worst of sinners.

Feel ashamed? Come to Christ and find rest for your soul.

37. The Wondrous Love of God

Acts 3:9-26



Before us is a marvelous message by Peter wrapped in the love of God.

Background: the healing of the lame man.

Acts 3:9-10 And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

The Beautiful Gate may be 'the gate between the court of the Gentiles and the court of the women, or between the court of the women and the court of the men' (Lake, Beginnings of Christianity, 5.483). Kirsopp Lake (1872-

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

Peter's address to the mystified audience

12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

Peter confronts the sins of the people directly

13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

Note (1) how directly Peter addresses the sins of the People. He did not side step their sins or do the jitterbug across the stage trying to avoid offending his audience.

Note (2) Peter's Gospel — Christ, raised from the dead;

Peter explains the miracle

16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Peter graciously addresses the crowd and their sins

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

The people in the crowd being the very ones who crucified Christ, Peter had every reason to berate, castigate, and excoriate this audience. But, he didn't. Though he was direct, he did not beat the sheep. Giving these "murderers" the benefit of the doubt, Peter graciously attributes their sin to ignorance.

A few weeks earlier when Jesus was arrested in the garden, Peter whipped out his sword and whacked off the right ear of the servant of Caiaphas. But here, Peter is as gentle as a lamb.

18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

Peter shows these people the love of God

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Peter exhorts this fickle crowd to repent . . . and to accept God's gracious offer.

This is the very crowd that pressured Pilate to execute Jesus. God was using Peter to offer these men (and women) his love and forgiveness for viciously and maliciously murdering His Son. What kind of God offers killers absolution and a place in His kingdom? If you can feel the wonder of this offer, you have just felt the love of God.

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

Peter's proof of claim

21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

The phrase "*restitution of all things*" is a reference to the kingdom of God when God will remove sin and restore the natural balance of nature (Isaiah 35:1-2)

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

Peter's message of judgment

23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

Peter not only preached the love of God extending forgiveness to the people, he preaches judgment letting all know that continued rejection of His Son has disturbing, detrimental, destructive consequences.

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Moved by the Spirit, Peter ends his message sharing with the people the love and grace of God which was willing to forgive the very people who murdered his Son.

“Here is love vast as the ocean.” Will you swim in it?

38. The Kingdom of God v. the Gospel of Grace

Acts 29:24-25



The kingdom of God was the major message of Christ.

Matthew 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,

Acts 20:24-25 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

Because the kingdom of God was the major message of Christ, it behooves us to understand it.

Because of the moral bankruptcy of the left, the media focuses on the drama in Washington D.C. as if their buoyancy on the sea of life depends on who captains the ship from the White House.

Christians have a hope expressed in terms of the kingdom of God.

The term “*kingdom*” is a translation of the Greek word *basileia* which refers to dominion, power, rule, or reign of a sovereign over his subjects.

The Christian hope is not in some super-hero in the White House or in some dramatic, cataclysmic end-time dynasty, but in the Lord Jesus Christ Who rules Heaven and Earth.

Christians pray, "*Thy kingdom come.*" When they do so, they are **not** praying for a place or the Second Coming or an establishment of a celestial government in Jerusalem. *They are praying that men might recognize the rule of God and submit to it* (Psalm 2, 72, 110; Revelation 1:5).

Notice in the text above the relationship between Paul preaching the kingdom of God and testifying about the gospel of the grace of God.

The failure of modern preachers to recognize the essential link between the kingdom and grace has diluted the potency of gospel proclamation.

The modern gospel preached in America has separated the kingdom aspect of the gospel from the grace of God creating two gospels: (1) one on how to get to heaven – a gospel of grace preached as a "fire insurance policy;" and, (2) a gospel of the kingdom related to the establishment of an alleged future Davidic kingdom – a gospel of justice.

But, our Lord did not teach two gospels.

He proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God which offers dynamic benefits to men who make a "violent" decision to enter into it by surrendering to His authority (Matthew 11:12).

There is only one gospel.

The Old Testament gospel emphasizes the reign of the LORD God, His law-order, the freedom of men under law from the malice of evildoers, mercy for the weak, and justice for lawbreakers (Psalm 97).

The kingdom message is marked by the grace of God because He redeems sinners, forgives transgressors, and then empowers men to keep His commandments (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 8:1-4).

The ultimate goal of kingdom proclamation is one where nations acknowledge His authority and seek His law-order (Isaiah 2:3; 11:9; Micah 4:2).

He is the **King of the Nations** who judges and saves men (Jeremiah 10:7; 11:3; 31:34). He is the only **Lawgiver** that Christians recognize (James 4:12).

Congress cannot create law. It can recognize God's laws, and it can create statutes for government employees, but it cannot create law for a Christian people; that is, Congress has no authority to regulate Christian law, Christian thought, Christian values, or Church practices (Amendment I)!

The nations and their kings are exhorted to serve the LORD with fear, rejoicing, and trembling. God has a Son, and the nations are commanded to kiss the Son

and to surrender to Him. The destiny of nations is dependent on their acknowledgement of His authority and obedience to His law-order (Psalm 2:11-12; Isaiah 5:24; 30:9-13; Jeremiah 9:13-15; 26:5-6; Matthew 25:32)

The New Testament gospel emphasizes the record of the rule of God entering history in and through the Lord Jesus Christ to defeat man's enemies: Satan, sin, and death (Matthew 4:17; 12:28; John 12:31).

Jesus came to save His people from their sins and to create sons of the kingdom who experience the power of His dominion while conducting their business on earth under His authority. He provided authentic evidence that God reigns by healing the sick, calming storms, and by raising the dead.

All who bow to His rule and authority enter the kingdom, become subjects of the kingdom, and experience the first fruits of kingdom blessings: *justification, regeneration, forgiveness, and eternal life*. These blessings are a gift of grace from the King to all who accept His government over them (Matthew 1:21; John 1:12-13; 3:3, 16, 36; Matthew 12:28; Acts 13:38-39; Romans 10:9-10; Philippians 3:20).

The early Christians lived in the Roman theater with its brutal police force. Yet, they proclaimed there was another king, King Jesus to whom all owe allegiance. And, this is the gospel that turned the world upside down . . . and it's this gospel that brought them into conflict with the Caesars who saw themselves as a god (Acts 17:6-7):

*"And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "**These men who have turned the world upside down** have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." "*

* The need of our time is for believers to engage the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and to call others to enter the kingdom which is marked by the rule of law and grace towards its subjects!

According to Matthew, to enter His kingdom one has to accept his easy yoke and to become students of His law-order. The wonder of kingdom experience is not only justification and regeneration, but empowerment to keep His law (Matthew 11:28-29; Romans 8:1-4; 1 John 5:1-3).

The trademark of a true Christian is one that lives under the jurisdiction of Christ. He is not permitted to be a slave to man's statutes and the fickleness of the world's legislative acts (1 Corinthians 7:22; Colossians 2:20-21).

Because Christians are righteous men, the only way to assail them is to attack their law-order.

It is the proclamation of the authority of Christ in juxtaposition to statutory regulations that so irritates the liberal men hell-bent on creating their own man-made utopia (Psalm 2:1-3).

Daniel 6:5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Because the church as a whole has a feeble understanding of the grit of kingdom authority, believers have plunged into a false gospel of health and wealth, a gospel of self-esteem, and a gospel of lollipop Christianity which offers sugar-love to a sick world camping near the gate of Utopia.

It is time for Christians to grapple with kingdom authority “*in this present evil age*” and to call friends and neighbors to enter the dominions of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, we pray that God would raise up kingdom pastors with kingdom power to call politicians, legislatures, and judges to repent of their rebellion against God’s law-order and to conduct their administrations under the authority of the true King — the risen, reigning Lord Christ (Acts 2:32; Matthew 28:18).

The issue is not whether Jesus is the “Ruler of the kings of the earth,” but whether men will acknowledge His authority to rule over them.

Revelation 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

Luke 19:14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

The practical implications of kingdom living are nothing short of astounding.

First, we must challenge churchmen who pit law against grace. The opposite of law is not grace, but lawlessness. When believers become antinomian, they plunge into excessive tolerance of evil and permissiveness — the opposite of grace. While we are not saved by law, we are saved in order to keep His law.

There is all the difference in the world between being saved by law and being saved and empowered to keep the law.

Second, believers are ordered “*to seek first the kingdom of God*” (Matthew 6:33), and to live their lives under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means the people of God must live as free men — free from the tyranny and reigns of the nanny State composed of officials determined to control every aspect of our lives from cradle to grave — free from the nanny State composed of officials, cops, and judges who will not hesitate to use the power of the state to force their amoral, secular-religious, totalitarian world views down the throats of the Christian population.

If you are **not** in some conflict with the State apparatus regulating your travel, finances, health, and property rights, you simply aren’t exerting your rights as a kingdom citizen.

If the beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-13) mean anything, they mean the mature kingdom citizen will find himself in conflict with the overreaching State and those devoted to the total subjugation of the total man to total government.

Matthew 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is . . .

1 Corinthians 7: 23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

Do want to enter His kingdom, then accept the invitation of the King.

*Come to **me**, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) **Take my yoke upon you**, and **learn** from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

The theological publication “Present’ Truth” in 1972 was later changed to “Verdict Magazine” – Lutheran Reformation Publication.

39. The Gospel v. Pathetic Psychology

Galatians 1:6-8

The Gospel v. Psychology

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel

from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” – Galatians 1:6-8



The gospel is about the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ; psychology is about the ugly world of self.

The gospel takes man out of self and into Christ while psychology encourages man to look into self. Does “Inside Out” by Larry Crabb ring a bell?

The gospel is about learning the history of Christ (I Cor. 15:1-12) while psychology is about taking an historical archaeological journey into one’s past.

The gospel is about a man confessing his sins while psychology is about confessing one’s wounds.

The gospel teaches a man to accept the blame for his actions while psychology seeks to help a victim find “blame points” for his behavior.

The gospel is about God forgiving sinners, while psychology is about forgiving self.

The gospel teaches that men are sinners (predators) while psychology teaches men are victims.

The gospel is about man’s need for justification (Romans 3-5), while psychology is about inner healing and finding self-esteem.

The gospel teaches that we are sinners in need of a Savior while psychology is about how men have been wounded by others and need inner healing.

The gospel demands men confess their sinfulness and repent; psychology demands men confess how they were victimized and to confess the abuser.

The gospel teaches that man’s problems are generic to humanity because of sin while psychology teaches that man’s problems are unique and related to one’s personal experience.

The gospel blames bad behavior on the sinner; psychology blames bad behavior on parents.

The gospel teaches men to honor their parents; psychology teaches children to blame their parents.

The gospel frees a man from his own guilt; psychology enslaves a man to guilt by blaming others for his bad behavior.

When God asked Adam what he had done Adam responded, “The woman which thou gavest me. . . “

The gospel teaches a man to beat his breast and say, “God be merciful to me a sinner” and so be justified by God (Lk. 18:13); psychology teaches a man to “I

am a good person who has been victimized by sinners" to be justified before men.

The gospel, like the Serpent in the wilderness, teaches man to look away from his sins, his wounds, and his snake-bit potent to the crucified/risen Christ, while psychology encourages the sinner to look at his wounds and inspect the extent of damage done by the poison working in his soul. That everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life -- John 6:40.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else -- Isaiah 45:22.

"Look at Christ and be impressed; look inside and be distressed."

The gospel is about justifying the sinner; psychology is about justifying sin.

The gospel is about justifying the sinner before God; psychology is about how to fix the sinner so he can find acceptance with God.

The gospel is about faith in the accomplishments of Christ; psychology is about the accomplishments of man to better himself.

The gospel is about the doing and dying of Christ on behalf of the sinner; psychology is about what the victim needs to do on behalf of himself.

The gospel is about the love of Christ; psychology is about how men can love and forgive themselves (2 Tim. 3:1-6).

The gospel is about healing the predator/sinner so he stops sinning against God's law; psychology is about healing the victim so he can feel good about himself.

The gospel is about reconciling a man to God's law; psychology is about reconciling a man to his own feelings.

The gospel turns a sinner into a saint; psychology turns a sinner into a victim.

The gospel helps a man to deal with his own weakness by finding elements of the gospel that minister to that need; psychology is about exploring a man's messed-up inner self to help him rearrange the chairs on a sinking Titanic of Adamic ruin.

The gospel is about the New Adam and his accomplishments; psychology is about exploring the old Adam and his failures.

The gospel offers power to the one who believes the gospel; psychology offers good feelings to those who are able to blame others for their problems.

The gospel frees a man to live a life of self-less love; psychology enslaves a man to the endless maze within his own soul. Falling down" the rabbit hole" of psychology, Alice goes in and in and in and in and in to self.

The gospel says you're not O.K. and that you need a Savior; psychology says your O.K., I'm O.K., we're all O.K.

The gospel changes a man when he beholds Christ; psychology offers change by looking at one's inner pain. See 2 Corinthians 3:18 on how one changes.

And the list continues on and on and on because psychology takes you in and in and in and in and in and in and in.

The gospel is the good news that Jesus is the Son of God who entered history to die on the cross for our sins, to overcome death to be our Savior and Lord.

Psychology is the false gospel of the secular world that gives a sedative to men poisoned with sin.

40. Nicodemus and Regeneration

John 3



Nicodemus was intrigued by Christ (John 3:1-36), but he lacked saving faith.

When Nicodemus came by night to our Lord, Jesus informed Nicodemus that a man must be born again before He can enter the Kingdom of God.

Jesus pressed eight truths upon Nicodemus: the futility of religion ("the ruler of the Jews"); and, the unity of revelation ("Do not marvel that..."); and, the necessity of regeneration ("You must be born again"); and, the agent of regeneration ("and the Spirit"); and, the mission of the Son ("to be lifted up"); and, the necessity of faith in Christ ("believeth in Him"); and, the present condemnation of unbelieving men ("condemned already"); and, the release from condemnation of believing men; and, the possibility of experiencing eternal life, the first fruits of the Age to come.

The word "*born again*" comes from the Greek word *gennao*, which means "to be born" or "to bring forth from the womb."

The phrase "*kingdom of God*" is critical to interpreting this passage correctly.

The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God. It also refers to the "Age to come" as well as its present aspects. The Age to come is the rule of Christ, the age where He rules and life reigns, the age of regeneration. If men want to enter into the life of the Age to come, they need partake of that life now!

Those who have kingdom "life" have accepted the authority of Christ and His Law-word. When a man changes governments and rearranges his affairs under the authority of Christ; i.e., he is born again. Those who have been born again have accepted Christ and yielded to His authority now, in this life.

Christ used the terms "*flesh*" and "*spirit*:" the flesh is "**all that man is apart from God.**" The Spirit is the "*life of God.*" To enter the Kingdom, a man must possess the life of the Spirit.

The new birth is a mystery:

There is no command to go and be born of the Spirit.

The word "*spirit*" is the word "wind."

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "*thou knowest not what is the way of the wind.*" This is Jesus style of saying that regeneration is not under the control of man. It is a work of the Spirit. New life is a gift of God. Man can do nothing to bring about the life of the Spirit. New life belongs to the Kingdom of God. It is a gift from the Eschaton sovereignly bestowed to those who desire to participate in the life of the Age to come. There is nothing a man can do to be born again. The new birth remains a mystery . . . but those that have it seem to hunger to know Christ in a deeper, more significant way. They love the Word of God and seem to hang around others who study the Bible.

The key to the new birth is not to look inside the heart at all your sin, but to look at Christ, the Serpent, lifted up to provide healing for your soul:

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him" – John 3:14-15.

Inspect the cross and God may be pleased to give you the life of the kingdom.

41. Bad News; Good News

Ephesians 2:1-10

First, the Bad News

Paul makes man look in the mirror and exposes all the warts and pimples of human history.



Man is Dead

"You were dead in your trespasses and sins,"

By "*dead*," Paul is not saying that man is going to die, but that he is spiritually dead right now. The term "*being dead*" is not a future tense, but a present participle. Unsaved, unregenerate men **are** living in a state of death to God; i.e., natural men "cut off" from the living God. Like a corpse, dead men are unresponsive to God. Like a corpse that cannot not respond to grilled steak at a BBQ cook-off, an unsaved man cannot respond to the feast prepared in the kingdom of God. Just as you can't feed a corpse, you can't feed a dead man the Word of God. Corpses do not visit restaurants. The dead do not like to be in church.

The problem with man is not poverty or a lack of education, but sinners who are cut off from God. The problem is not that man is a victim, or socially deprived, or that he has a "wounded child within," or that he has low self-esteem, but that he is not right with God. He is dead in "trespasses" and "sins."

The word *trespass* means a crossing over, an over-stepping into that which is off limits. A trespass is like a man walking into an area where a sign reads, "Military Personnel Only!" When the Bible says, "Thou shall not" and one does it anyway, this is a trespass. It is biting into the forbidden fruit.

The term, "*sins*" comes from the Greek word *harmatia*, which means to "fall short." Like an arrow that falls short of the target, we fall short of the positive commands of God. Whenever the Creator commands something positive like "keep the Sabbath day holy" or "honor your father and mother" and we do not do it, this is *harmatia* (sin). Did you notice the plural? Man is not guilty of a sin or a trespass, but sins and trespasses.

The preposition "*in*" can be translated "*by*." It is because of man's trespasses and sin that he is separated from God: "But your iniquities have made a separation (division) between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear" (Is. 59:2).

Have you heard the joke, "Who is buried in Alexander the Grape's tomb?" Answer: Alexander the raisin. Likewise, men are like raisins in a coffin to God.

Man is not sick. He is as dead as mule's breath. He does not need resuscitation; He needs resurrection. He does not need counseling, he needs saving.

Man is Disobedient

"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" (2:2).

The second problem with mankind is that he walks according to the course of this world. The term "*course*" comes from the Greek word "*aeon*." In the New Testament scheme of history, there are two ages: "this age" and "*the age to come*" (Eph. 1:21). The term "*world*" is the word "*cosmos*" which means, "the arrangement of a thing." We get the word "cosmetology" and "cosmopolitan" come from this word. This present aeon is arranged under a despot spirit called "*the prince of the power of the air*" that causes men to rebel against God. Note the following arrangement of this age:

This is an evil age: "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world (aeon), according to the will of God and our Father" (Galatians 1:4).

This is an age that resists God's Word:

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world (aeon), and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22).

This is an age under the authority of Satan:

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world (aeon) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." - 2Corinthians. 4:3-4

Satan is the "*god of This age*". We are not presented with a dualism between God and Satan, or a dualism between good and evil. The problem is stated as blindness to the gospel. Satan blinds men. He does not just pull them down under the sea of immorality. The root of evil is ignorance of the gospel, blindness, darkness, and unbelief

Man is Depraved

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3).

The verse above informs us of more bad news about mankind: man is depraved. Man is not born good or neutral. He is born with a bent toward sensual indulgence.

The word "*conversation*" can be translated "behavior" or "dwelling place." Man is at home in the sewer of human lusts. The term "flesh" refers to the carnal desires of the body. Men enjoy pillow fellowship; that is, instead of getting up in the morning to have fellowship with God, they prefer fellowship with the pillow.

Men enjoy steak and lobster. Instead of pursuing the meat of the Word, people bore us with conversation about their latest meal of steak at the lake. People love food.

There is even a channel called, "The Food Channel." Like toothpaste, men try to squeeze all the pleasure they can out of life. These "lusts of the flesh" include man's intoxication with sexuality. Sex is the theme of so many movies. Advertisers have learned that sex sells everything from breath mints to cars. These digital images feed our fleshly ambitions. Every woman it seems wants to be a "James Bond Woman," and every man wants to be the Italian stallion of the battalion.

Modern man is like a drunk staggering with lusts.

Grape-colored phrases like "if it feels good, do it," or "obey your thirsts" and "follow your feelings" and "to your own self be true," expose the fact that man is intoxicated with the wine of self-indulgence.

Note the term "*and mind.*" People not only indulge the flesh, but the mind. Sizzling on the griddle of pornography, the persistent viewing of glossy playmates by men and women produce generations with gonorrhea of the mind.

Note the phrase, "*we too.*" Paul was a rabbinical Pharisee. He includes himself in the list of those who lived in the flesh. He indicts not only himself but all Jews as ones practicing the will of the flesh and mind. How offensive this statement must have been to the first century Israelite!

Man is Dammed

"And were by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3).

The term "*children of wrath*" could be translated "*objects of wrath.*" The genitive "*wrath*" limits the noun "*children.*" There is no article before the word children. Jews and Gentiles are included in this family of condemned. The court is in session, the case is tried, and the verdict is in. Men are condemned, dammed, and doomed to eternal destruction. Like Canaanites awaiting Joshua's sword, men and women are view as prisoners on death row awaiting execution.

There used to be a store in Santa Fe called, "The Dog Store." On one plaque, they show a hilarious picture of the various sections of a dog brain: "chase the cat", "fetch the ball," "bark at strangers," "tug the rope," "lick the face," etc. The point is that a dog does dog-things because he is a dog. Likewise, the point of this section is that sinners do sinful things because they are sinners: "steak, eat!" and "pillow, sleep!" and "woman, sex!" and "money, buy!" or "T.V., Watch!"

This is the bad news: All mankind is dead, disobedient, depraved, and dammed.

Second, the Good News

2:4 "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ . . ."

Did you notice the term "*but*"? There is a contrast between the bad news and the good news.

Have you ever been to the dog pound and seen all those cute little barking dogs on death row waiting to be gassed to death? The only way they can be saved from a morbid fate is if good people will go to the pound, choose a dog, and take it home. This is what God has done for you and me. He chose us (Ephesians 1:3,4), forgave us (Ephesians 1:7), and saved us (Ephesians 1:5; 2:4,5).

While I was in Israel, I was visiting a cemetery on the southern side of Jerusalem. One grave stood out above all others. Over 100 rocks were placed on a crypt. As I read the inscription on the stone, it read, "Oskar Schindler." Here was truly a great man who saved over a thousand Jews from the gas chamber by employing them in his factories during Nazi occupation. Steven Spielberg's film, "Schindler's List," brought to light the courage of Oskar Schindler. Since that time, hundreds have visited the cemetery to honor this man by placing a rock on his crypt. But, so many of these Jews are blind to the love of God who sent His Son to die for them.

(Note the movie Schindler's list is not pure fact. Much of it is Jewish propaganda. You will need to study the facts to discern the fabrications.)

Why did God send the Savior? Not because men are rich in virtue, but because He is rich in mercy; Not because we are lovable, but because of His great love. The word "*even*" creates a contrast between our old miserable, dead state and our new, living position as alive in Christ. The verb "making us alive" refers to being taken off death row and given a new chance at life in Christ.

Gary Preston tells the story of a man who walked into a telegraphy office to apply for a job. Ahead of him were six applicants. While filling out the forms, he heard the Morris code ticking away in the back ground. Suddenly, without completing his forms, he got up and went into see the interviewer of the company. Within a few minutes the young man emerged from the inner office escorted by the interviewer, who announced to the other applicants,

"Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, but the job has been filled by this young man." The other applicants began grumbling to each other, and then one spoke up, "Wait a minute—I don't understand. He was the last one to come in, and we never even got a chance to be interviewed. Yet he got the job. That's not fair." The employer responded, "All the time you've been sitting here, the telegraph has been ticking out the

following message in Morse code: 'If you understand this message, then come right in. The job is yours.' None of you heard it or understood it. This young man did. So the job is his."

Do you hear the bad news? Did you hear the good news? God's love is calling to the dead, the disobedient, the depraved, and the damned. You don't need to get better to be saved! "If you understand the message of the gospel, then come right in!"

42. God's Surpassing Love

Ephesians 2:4-10



Next to the Bible, the most read and translated story is Don Quixote.

Having read so many stories of chivalry, an old, country bumkin, down on his luck, imagines himself to be glorious knight, a righter of wrongs, a dispenser of justice, and a defender of beautiful maidens.

He ordains a dim-witted local farmer as his squire (Sancho Panza) and heads off into the world to fulfill his mission. In his make-believe world, Don Quixote jousts with giants which end up being windmills. He scatters an advancing army, which end up being a flock of sheep.

Next, he spies a castle, which turns out to be a tavern. In his "castle", he meets Alonza, a bar maid, who is really the tavern slut. But, in Don Quixote's mind she is Dulcinea, his lady, the fairest of the fair: "Oh Dulcinea de Tobosa, day of my night, glory of my suffering, true North and compass of every path I take, guiding star of my fate . . ." Surprised by the rough treatment Alonza receives from lusty men, Don Quixote defends her honor.

Quite frankly, Alonza is puzzled by all Quixote's kindness, goodness, and worshipful respect for her.

But, is the gospel of Christ no more than a make believe love story like Don Quixote and Alonza?

Love is the most noble of all themes. "Love makes the world go around."

Without it, every day is a moonless night. With it, every day is as bright as a thousand suns.

It has been said that those who deserve love the least, need it the most. Having discussed the doomed fate of the dead, the disobedient, and depraved (Eph. 2:1-3), we now come to the marvelous revelation of the love of God to those who need it the most. Let's inspect the love of God revealed in this section.

Take a detailed look at salvation and grasp the love of God revealed in Christ.

Inspection of the love of God

2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

Notice the initiating acts of God. The personal noun "God" in verse four is in the emphatic position in this long sentence. The substantive "God" is the subject of the main verbs: "He being rich," "He loved," "He made alive," "He raised up," "He made sit together," and "He might show." God initiates love because He is a God of love. He loves, not because mankind is lovable (2:1-2), but because He is love. In fact, Paul contrasts His delightful love with man's deplorable condition (2:1-3).

The adjective used to describe the God of the Bible is "rich." It means "abounding in wealth." Today, we use the term "super rich." We can shout, "God is a gazillionaire in mercy!!" And, "his mercies are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:23)! Consider, every morning the glorious sunbeams of God's mercies warm the faces of God's children.

The English word "great" comes from the Greek word *polus*. It is translated "much," and amplifies the previous thought. The prefix "poly" comes from this word, and poly refers to something "excessive." "Our God is the excessive gazillionaire in mercy!!"

Notice the object of action of these verbs. The pronoun "us" (hems) is an accusative. The accusative narrows the action of the verb. "God loves _____(What? Who?)."

He loves us—the people in chapter 2:1-3 who were dead in trespasses and sins. He made us alive! He raised us up! He made us sit! God's love has an object. It is not the world that experiences this love, but believers—God's chosen people (1:3, 4). God's love is not like a river overflowing its banks. It is like mighty canal directing the water of life toward thirsty fields.

2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together (sun) with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together (sun) in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

Notice the aspects of Christ's history mentioned in this section. Paul refers to Christ's resurrection, ascension, and session. These aspects of Christ's history refer to His victory and authority. Having defeated death, He is sitting on the

throne of God as Christ and Lord above all principalities and powers (Eph. 1:20-22).

Notice the “*sun*” verbs in this section: The main verbs have a *sun* prefix attached to them: “***made alive with***” (*sunezōpoiēsen*), “*raised up with,*” (*sunēgeiren*), and “*sit together with*” (*sunekathisen*). The “*sun*” (*syn*) prefixes refer to the precious truth of the believer’s identification with the history of Christ.

The phrase “*in Christ*” is directly mentioned or inferred to over six times in chapter 2:4-10. We are co-resurrected, co-ascended, and co-seated with Christ; that is, we share in the marvelous benefits of the victorious history of Christ. His victory is our victory! His reward is our reward! His acceptance is our acceptance!

Have you ever had bills to pay while waiting for money to be deposited in the bank? Finally, your banker calls and lets you know that your deposit was safely credited to your account and that you can now write checks on the account. Your life is safely deposited in the history of Christ and you can now write checks on that account. God’s love has identified you with the wealth and glory of Christ.

Notice the phrase, “***by grace you are being saved***” in 2:5. It is used twice in this section (2:5 and 2:8). In verse eight, the verb “are being saved” is in the indicative mood, the mood of reality. The verb is a perfect participle indicating a present perfected state, which has resulted from God’s past action. The emphasis is upon the result. God’s work in our lives results in a present salvation; that is, “*you are now, and continue to be being saved.*”

2:7 That in the ages to come He might (hina) show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Notice the instrumental case in verse eight: “***By grace***” is in the emphatic position in the sentence placing the emphasis upon grace. The Greek phrase the *gar chariti* is a feminine instrumental noun translated by grace. Interestingly, “we are being saved” is in the middle of the sentence. “***Grace***” begins the sentence and the gift of “***gift***” ends the sentence. Praise the Lord, we are hemmed in by grace!

Notice the phrase, “***the gift of God.***” Questions have arisen among Bible scholars as to what is meant by “***gift of God.***” Is faith the gift or is something else the gift?

Consider the following facts:

The term "*faith*" (*pisteōs*) is a feminine noun. The prepositional phrase "*through faith*" (*dia pisteōs*) is not a genitive which describes and defines, but an ABLATIVE OF MEANS meaning "from" or "by;" that is, the ablative addresses the impersonal means used in producing the action of the main verb "*are being saved*" (*este sesōsmenoi*). It should be translated, by faith or out of faith or through faith you are being saved. Faith is not a feeling or a virtue in the heart, but a trust that looks to Christ's doing and dying outside of ourselves as the hope of salvation. The phrase, "*and that*" (*kai touto*) is a neuter, demonstrative pronoun. Interestingly, the feminine form, *taute*, is not used. Because "*kai touto*" is neuter, it must refer to the whole process of salvation and not particularly to faith, which is a feminine noun. "*This*" (*touto*) modifies the term "*gift*" (*doron*). The phrase, "*gift of God*" (*Theo to doron*) is also a neuter, nominative noun. It cannot refer to "*faith*" which is a feminine noun. "*The gift*" (*to doron*) is related to and referenced by the neuter, demonstrative pronoun "*this*" (*touto*). "*This gift*" refers to the whole process of salvation and not to any particular aspect of salvation such as faith.

Thus, "*The gift*" referred to in Ephesians 2:8, 9 does not refer to any particular aspect of salvation like "faith," but to the whole process of salvation. All of salvation (justification, regeneration, reconciliation, sanctification, etc.) including faith is a gift of God.

Notice the attributes of God. He is "*rich in mercy*," has "*much love*," has "*surpassing riches of grace*," and possesses "*kindness*" toward us. The word "*exceeding*" or "*surpassing*" (2:7) means "*to throw beyond*." Champion javelin throwers in Greek athletic games that threw the winning mark in the contest were said to have surpassed the other competitors. In saving you and me, God out threw the claims of law; out threw the claims of Satan upon us; and, out threw even our own hopes and expectations. Who ever thought we would be loved so richly?

2:9-10 *Not of works, lest (hina) any man should boast. For we are his workmanship (poiēma), created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Notice the two uses of "*works*" in verse nine and ten. *We are not saved by works, but unto good works.* There is nothing we can do to be saved, but there is much we can do after we are saved.

Christians do not work for salvation, but they do good works after being saved. They serve Christ because they have salvation. *Works are aesthetic, not requisite;* that is, they do not produce salvation or add to salvation. Good works are like the garnish on a French platter. They beautify the dinner, but are not meant for consumption. Good works are not meritorious, nor do they add to the work of Christ. Good works do not save us, but they do beautify us. A proper

view of works leads to humble service: *“lest any man should boast”* (2:9) in order that we may walk in works prepared beforehand.

Notice the term “workmanship” (*poiēma*). The word *“poem”* is derived from this word. Let us hum with joy over our salvation.

Do you see the word *“created?”* You are God’s new creation, the first fruits of a new humanity, i.e. citizens of the *“new Israel”* (2:12-22). Think about it. Your life is a poem created by God for His enjoyment. There is a new race among men—a race not united by physical characteristics, but a born-again humanity united by shared spiritual blessings in Christ (1:3-7).

Notice there are two hina clauses in this section (2:7; 2:10). A hina clause shows purpose or result. In verse seven, you are saved so that in the ages to come God might use you to illustrate the glories of His surpassing grace. In verse ten, you are saved so that you may perform good works. Think of it! You are a trophy of God’s grace assigned the holy purpose of being his poem on earth.

Notice the historical context of salvation. The context of the gospel is the history of Christ; i.e., His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, and His session at the right hand of God (2:4-7).

All religions except Christianity are deeply rooted in mythology, introspection, and the cycles of nature. The Christian faith did not grow out of philosophical speculations or mystical religious experiences or the movement of the stars. It is grounded on fact – real history.

Today, shallow thinkers de-historicize the gospel. Liberals tend to see the birth of Christ and the resurrection as an awakening of faith or the birth of good will or some religious encounter with God rather than real history!!

Today emotional feelers internalize the gospel and emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts at the expense of proclaiming the victorious history of Christ. Among Catholics, Pentecostals, Charismatics, and the Third Wave Movement, the gospel sounds suspiciously like the proclamation of *“the great acts of God in my experience.”*

The early gospel preachers did NOT preach their experience—a subjective gospel—but the history of Christ! Today many are seeking some mystical, personal religious encounter with God to vindicate their faith. Whole touchy-feely congregations come together each Sunday to hear the Spirit and to feel the love of God and to experience some encounter with Christ. Is this the gospel of the New Testament? Absolutely NOT! The focus is not on us, but upon the accomplishments of the Savior!

We must remember the Spirit does not give anyone knowledge of God in private experience superseding the knowledge of God given in Christ and His historical death, burial, and resurrection.

Our gospel is founded on the Jesus of holy history. While our gospel touches hearts, our gospel is an objective gospel that announces a salvation based on something outside our personal experience that has already happened in history at the cross. Our standing before God both now and in the future is based on a concrete historical facts totally outside our own experience. Christian experience is not a pillar of the faith, but a byproduct of something much more fundamental—the holy history of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Our position is perfect; our experience is defective. Our joy is in His victory, not in our achievements.

Notice the eschatological framework of the gospel. Terms like “*this age*” (1:21), “*the one to come*” (1:21), “*this age (aeon)*” (2:2), and “*ages to come*” (2:7) “*eternal life*” relate to the kingdom of God (5:3); that is, the Eschaton. Great concepts revealed in Scripture like “*the Final Judgment*” and “*Salvation*” and “*the kingdom of God*” are eschatological concepts that await the consummation of history. The Eschaton was revealed in and through His ministry when He said, “*The kingdom of God is at hand*” or “*has arrived*” (*engiken*) in Mark 1:15. C.H. Dodd was correct when he argued that *engiken* has the same force *ephthasen* (“*has come*”) in Luke 11:20. The kingdom of God is not a single event but comes in stages.

The Last Judgment is an end-of-the-world event. But, an eschatological judgment occurred in history when God sent His Son to the cross. Judgment dawned and God took action to deal with sin. The judgment reserved for sinners in the Eschaton was thrust into the experience of Christ at Calvary so effectively that Paul could say, “*There is no condemnation for those in Christ*” (Rom. 8:1).

The eschatological salvation reserved for God’s people at the consummation of history has been thrust into the present life of believers for believers to enjoy now in advance of the eschatological revelation of the kingdom of God.

The Spiritual blessings mentioned in Ephesians one, are eschatological blessings. The gospel we preach is **not** something that prepares men for the Eschaton. It **is** the Eschaton. The salvic blessings of the Eschaton like “*justification,*” “*forgiveness,*” “*eternal life,*” and the “*Holy Spirit*” has a present dimension and can be claimed and enjoyed now in advance of the cataclysmic end of history.

Notice the legal context of the gospel. Terms like “*justification*” (Rom. 3:24) “*children of wrath,*” “*earnest,*” “*principalities,*” “*powers,*” “*mights,*” “*transgressions,*” “*holy and blameless,*” “*forgiveness,*” “*not of works,*” and

“salvation” are juridical in nature (Eph. 1-2). Every human need is meager compared to man’s mighty need be justified before the bar of eternal justice. God calls men to judgment and holds them accountable for their actions. Unless justice is satisfied, there is no release from the claims of the Court. Until holy justice is satisfied, the human heart cannot rest.

It is LEGALISM to believe that one can be justified in God’s court by one’s good works. Legalism is not legal. Legalism is a false presumption that one is saved by his own merits. The person who thinks he can be acquitted because of his imperfect deeds is doing what is illegal (Eph. 2:9). The law condemns him because he has fallen short (*harmatia*) of the court’s holy standards (2:1). However, in Christ’s doing and dying the law has been fulfilled and the bar of justice satisfied.

The gospel teaches us that when God saves men, he does so justly. If God is satisfied with Christ, then the claims of law are satisfied by virtue of one’s faith and identification with the holy history of Christ. The human heart finds perfect rest from the voice of condemnation shouting within, not because of some subjective religious experiences, but because his faith grasps the forensic work of Christ for man on the cross.

Because Christ met the claims of divine justice and because we are in Christ, we have assurance that our debt of sin is discharged and that we are “*holy and blameless*” before Him in love (Ephesians 1: 4).

Application of the Love of God

What does all this mean and how does it apply to our lives?

DON QUIXOTE, the rest of the story.

Meanwhile, back at home Don Quixote’s family is quite concerned about his actions. His prospective son-in-law, Dr. Carrasco, sets out to rescue Don Quixote from his delusions in the guise of another knight, the “Knight of Mirrors.” Since the mirror does not lie, Don Quixote awakens from his fantasy and returns to being a sick, old man.

But, reality does not have the final word. Alonza has been touched by Don Quixote’s madness. That someone could actually see her as pure and noble changes her whole perspective about life. She begins to feel she is Dulcinea and leaves her wayward life. She determines to visit Don Quixote. When she enters the house, the whole demeanor and spirit of Don Quixote changes. Together, facing death, the two of them dare to dream the impossible and live out their lives in complete happiness.

The story of Don Quixote is a fairy tale that reveals the power of unreal, positive thinking in the lives of two people. The good news of the gospel is that

it is revealed in the indicative mood, the mood of reality. God is not a heavenly Don Quixote. He is the just Judge who set out to remove sin and to give men a holy standing in His court. By virtue of the doing and dying of Christ, the Judge now sees Christians as pure and noble. United with his resurrection, ascension, and session, believers have become a new creation with a new position before God. If you are a believer, you are seen as “holy and blameless” in Him. Alonza was so touched by the noble treatment of Don Quixote, she gave up her tavern life to pursue a relationship with her knight in shining armor. How touched are you about the Lord’s surpassing grace shed upon you? You will become what your faith can grasp about the surpassing love of God.

43. The Cross is the Power of God

1 Corinthians 1:18



Men are in search of power.

It has been said, “knowledge is power.” But, in the following text, power is deeply associated with the cross. The power of God is not connected with worldly-knowledge, money, education, the Zodiac, rhetoric, or one’s personal experiences.

Let’s take a look at the text and context so we can stand under the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching (logos) of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power (dunamis) of God.

Want power? Remember the cross: *cruci dum spiro fido.*

“**Preaching**” can be literally translated, “*the word (logos) of the cross.*” It is contrasted with “*wisdom (sophia) of words*” in verse 17, and the “*wisdom of the wise*” in verse 19 which is associated with eloquence, rhetoric, higher-education, diction, and the skills of oration.

The verbs “**perish**” and “**saved**” are both present, active participles that should be translated “those that are perishing” and “those that are being saved.” The apostle does NOT contrast two states, but two processes among men that are being witnessed in the course of life. There are those who reject the *logos* of the cross and are perishing and there are those who hear and believe the *logos* of the cross who are being saved away from sin to holiness.

These conditions are not fixed states either now or in the future, but two plays happening in the theater of hearts which have not reached the final scene before the curtain comes down; that is, the conditions manifest in the present are incomplete.

That God saves men from sin by the cross is “foolishness” (*moria*) to those who are presently perishing. We get the word “moron” from the Greek word for foolish. Many of those who graduate from U of A (University of Arrogance) with Ph.ds consider students of the cross as morons . . . but these sophisticated graduates are the ones who are perishing.

But, to those who embrace the cross . . . are saved (past tense) – Romans 8:24 “*We were saved*” as a present state – Ephesians 2:5 “*You have been saved*” *are being saved*” (a process) – 1 Corinthians 15:2 “*Ye are being saved*” and, *will be saved*” (future tense) – Romans 10:9 “*Thou shall be saved.*”

Life has many ups and downs, twists and turns, but the cross is an historical fact that results in salvation for those who believe. The verb-tenses of salvation are there so that none might despair (“*You have been saved*”); and so, that none might presume (“*You are being saved*”).

The sickness of soul and the perils that threaten life, flow from the central fact of man’s sin and rebellion from God. (MacLaren)

So serious is the energy of sin in men that God sent His Son, **not** to provide a good example for them, but to die on the cross to save sinners. There is no other way that deeply flawed people could enter the kingdom.

When men believe, they are saved from the penalty of sin (past), the power of sin (present), and will be saved from the presence of sin (future).

The Power that saves sinners from sin is the cross . . . moronic to some . . . but power to others.

The antithesis of “*foolishness*” is the cross.

The cross is the power of God . . .

- It is the power of God because it is the “bargaining table” where the debtor party can meet with the creditor party to negotiate a settlement of debt; a bankers “*bench*” (bar) where sinners can settle their debts to the holy Judge who commands men to be holy as he is holy (Leviticus 20:7; 1 Peter 1:16);
- It is the power of God because the precious blood of Christ shed at the cross is the currency that was paid to discharge the debt . . . for, “life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11);
- It is the power of God because it honors the free will of man. Either man can accept God’s gracious payment of debt by Christ at the cross, or the man can pay the debt with his own currency;

- It is the power of God because God executed his plan to save sinners by making Christ to be the substitute Lamb to pay for the sins of condemned men;
- It is the power of God because Christ is the perfect, innocent Lamb that satisfied the claims of Divine holiness, justice, and law;
- It is the power of God because God is satisfied (propitiated) with Christ's substitutionary work at the cross for sinners;
- It is the power of God because we are happy, satisfied beneficiaries of Christ's substitutionary work;
- It is the power of God because God punished Christ for our sin so that we would never have to be punished for our sins. If Christ has paid for our sins, there is nothing for us to pay for!
- It is the power of God because God took the sins of men who lived in the past and placed them on Christ in 32 AD; and, God took the sins of men not yet born and placed them on the Savior-Lamb in 32 AD;
- It is the power of God because in Christ's death at the cross and resurrection from the grave, He solved man's fundamental problem – death;
- It is the power of God because it fulfills the hope of sinners; the hope of being forgiven; of being in a right standing with God (justification); of being reconciled to God; of living forever with God in His kingdom; of power to break away from defiling habits and to live righteously;
- The cross is the power of God because Christians through the centuries testify to its saving power and effect for good in their own soul;

Example of the Power of God

Consider verse one in this chapter:

1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

Q: Who is Sosthenes?

Acts 18: 12, 17 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

A: Sothenes was the stubborn, contumacious Ruler of the government-corporation Synagogue in Corinth who played his role in arresting Paul, hauling him to Gallio's court, to have the apostle tried and condemned to death. The case was so frivolous and without merits, Gallio dismissed the case *sua sponte*. When Sosthenes exhibited contempt for the court, the judge ordered

the bailiffs to drive the man out of the courtroom. On the way out of the district court constables abused their powers and literally beat some sense into the man outside the courtroom chambers.

When Sosthenes considered his shameful behavior and combined it with Paul's message on the cross, Sosthenes believed. After he was baptized, he traveled to Ephesus to reconcile with Paul. With reconciliation complete, Paul hired Sosthenes to be his amanuensis in order to write his epistle to the church in Corinth. (see Acts 18). Oh, the wonders of the cross and the power of God!!

Power does not come from knowledge about the world, but from knowledge associated with the cross — a knowledge that saves even the most hostile-sinners like Sosthenes.

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido

44. Christ, the Wisdom of God

1 Corinthians 1:24

"Christ, the wisdom of God . . ." - 1 Corinthians 1:24.



Need wisdom?

Men are in search of wisdom. From the monks in Tibet to the erudite schools of Harvard, men seek the illusive virtue we call wisdom.

However, the Bible tells us that Christ is the wisdom of God.

His crucifixion and resurrection from the dead made philosophers out of every man (Chrysostom).

Christ is so simple to understand, a child can be instructed by him. So profound, doctors have to have all the pistons in their little brain firing to explore His universe of hope. Christ is so deep the intellects of history have yet to touch the depths. His is a bottomless sea and a shoreless ocean that "*passeth all understanding.*"

The Greeks dedicate *mid-Pentacostarion* as a time to reflect on Christ as the *Hagia Sophia*.

He that would be wise would do well to navigate his craft in the revelation of His Word to explore Christ on the sea of Holy Scripture.

CHRIST IS THE WISDOM OF GOD OUTSIDE OF HISTORY

In his wisdom, He created the heavens and the earth—the heavens with all its billions of galaxies, molecular clouds, and luminescent hydrogen stars—the earth with its burning lava core and cool crust of rock and undulating seas of water hovered over by an atmosphere of oxygen and nitrogen perfectly adapted for life.

"For this heaven, great as it is, not only was made by Him, but made with ease; and that boundless earth, too, was brought into being even as if it had been nothing." (Chrysostom)

Who understands the depth of the science behind planetary nebula or supernovas and white dwarfs? These glowing gas furnaces spiraling at supersonic speeds in a global dome traveling to nowhere challenge the greatest intellects. According to reports from NASA, scientists have sent the Hubble craft into space in search of another planet fit for life with stunning disappointment. Only this little blue dot, if it is indeed a sphere, has all the conditions necessary for human existence!

Proverbs 8:27 "When he prepared the heavens, I (wisdom) was there . . ."

It is Christ our Lord that scattered the sunbeams and anchored the pillars of the earth in a universe of nothing. Oh, how our hearts burst with joy knowing that the Creator was here—on earth—on this planet reconciling the world to Himself.

Before the world was made, Christ died for sinners.

Before Adam sinned there was the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Before sin's wretched virus infected humanity, the Lamb's blood that makes men white as snow was spilled at the cross.

Before the first star was formed, He planned the temple, the Levitical priesthood, the sacrificial system, his entrance into history as the way of salvation, the cross, the resurrection and the new heavens and the new earth. He is the Lamb of God, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the door of the Sheep, the Great Shepherd, the way, the truth, and the life—the great "I AM"—man's everlasting hope as the "resurrection and the life."

John 11:26 "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

CHRIST IS THE WISDOM OF GOD WITHIN HISTORY

In his childhood, Christ confounded doctors. He sunk the warships of criticism launched at him by the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians. Spellbound crowds surrounded him like honey bees seeking the nectar of truth dripping from his lips. Prostitutes, tax collectors, and soldiers chained themselves to his eloquence.

Here is the perfect man Who never swore; never complained; never shouted. He was never silent when he should have spoken or speaking when He should have been silent. There was no question he did not answer and no answer He did not question; He unraveled mysteries and He also locked them in parables.

In Christ, truth was installed on a throne and wickedness sentenced to a scaffold. Kings searched for him but He preferred the company of fishermen and children.

One word from his lips caused Lazarus to rise from the grave. One touch cleansed a leper; cured a fever in Peter's mother-in-law; resolved a chronic discharge blood in a woman afflicted for twelve years; opened the eyes of the blind; unlocked the ears of the deaf and the mouth of the mute; and turned a funeral into a celebration. His teaching shed light on Moses; was deeper than Plato; greater than Solomon; more binding than a Supreme Court. He is Christ, the Wisdom of God.

CHRIST IS THE WISDOM OF GOD OVER HISTORY

He sits at the right hand of God ruling as the unseen, unsung King of the nations. All of history moves toward the kingdom of God wherein He conquers hearts; dispenses mercy; orders justice; and, wages war against the forces of evil.

In love and truth, He commands an army of volunteers that wage war against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness and their miscreants in the political and commercial system.`

"all things are working together for good to those who love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28)

With the sword of truth He cast down arguments and everything that exalts itself above the knowledge of God. His judgment begins with the house of God wherein he purifies hearts, refines sinners, and perfects good deeds. He does it without wealth or empowering lust or bolstering the pride of men.

He can take doubters like C.S. Lewis, Lew Wallis, Simon Greenleaf, and Lee Strobel and turn them into champions of the faith. He took Saul, the "chief of sinners" and turned him to Christianity's greatest theologian . . . and he can take you and me, unravel the knots, and glorify God through these vessels of clay.

Need wisdom? Christ is the wisdom of God.

45. Christ, Our Greatest Treasure

2 Corinthians 4:3-7



Feeling poor? Consider the Apostle's glorious announcement:

2 Corinthians 4:3-7 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: . . . For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Paul announces that Christians possess a great treasure.

A treasure, according to Webster's is "*wealth . . . something of great value esteemed rare or precious.*"

This treasure is "*the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" as possessed by the Apostle and all believers who know the gospel.

Ellicott informs us that "*it was the practice of Eastern kings, who stored up their treasures of gold and silver, to fill jars of earthenware (clay pots) with coin or bullion;*" that is, this treasure is contained in our frail bodies made of dust — of which the apostle calls an earthen "vessel" — a frail, weak body made of dust.

This treasure is the glorious gospel of grace believed and received by every Christian — a gospel regarding the person and work of Christ that cleanses, forgives, justifies, redeems, and sanctifies the believing man— a gospel that saves a man from eternal judgment — a gospel that purifies and beautifies the inner man — a gospel of incalculable wealth and value.

Like all treasures, this treasure is hid under the lies and distortions of history because Satan has blinded the minds of them that believe not (4:4).

A treasure within that must overcome (*nike*) enemies within: "*the corruption of nature, the prejudice of education, the love of false religion, unbelief, the love of sin, and of the world.*" (Benson)

A treasure within that must overcome (*nike*) enemies without: "*the contradiction of philosophers, of heathen, Jewish, or Christian priests and magistrates; of sinners of all descriptions; persecutions from Jews and Gentiles, and the carnal part of mankind*

in every age; reproaches, spoiling of goods, imprisonments, racks, tortures, and martyrdoms” (Benson).

A treasure that was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

A treasure with greatness of power “*that can only be estimated by the greatness of the obstacles which it had to remove, and by the greatness of the effects which it then produced” (Macknight).*

8 We are troubled (pressed) on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed (without resources), but not in despair;

9 Persecuted (made to flee), but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Feeling rich?

Except Christ and you will be wise . . . and rich.

46. The Five Solas

Ephesians 2:8-9



Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

The contest between God and man, Cain and Abel, the true Gospel and a fake gospel rages on. It has many titles: Calvinism v. Armenianism, Reformation Theology v. Catholic Theology, Christianity v. Judaism.

Whether this battle is couched in terms between Armenians and Calvinists or Catholics and the Reformers, the cause of the conflict is always the same.

Is the work of Christ at Calvary sufficient to save a man or must man add something to the sacrifice to activate salvation?

There is something about man that just can't accept the pure grace of God. Mankind seems hardboiled on substituting beans for blood (Genesis 4) . . .

building steps up to God's altar (Exodus 20:26). . . offering strange fire to God (Leviticus 10:1-2) . . . wearing wool and sweating with the sacrifice (Ezekiel 44:18) . . . adding a catalyst to ignite grace . . . synergizing his own works with the works of Christ to claim salvation.

It is the duty of Christians to call Lazarus forth and to unwrap the living from the grave clothes and to strip away the fig leaves belonging to Adam's race. We need to do all we can to prevent ourselves from exchanging our birthright for a mess of porridge.

The stumbling block on the road to Zion seems to be over the word "alone."

The Roman Catholic Church has always believed, and still do, that men are justified by grace through faith in Christ. What Rome does not believe is that justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone. According to Rome, faith must be activated through love; faith must produce works that please God; and, that man must change in order to be accepted by God. How much change, nobody knows.

Biblical Christians insist that Christ is the Great Savior that saves man from his sins (Matthew 1:21); that salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9). He is not the greater Helper that assist men to produce life changes that causes God to accept man.

Those Pretenders wearing the figs leaves of Adam include in part Catholics, Arminians, Amish, Mennonites, General Baptists, Free Will Baptists, First Christian Churches, the Churches of Christ, the Seventh-day Adventist Churches, the Nazarenes, the Salvation Army, and the Wesleyan Methodists. We would call them all "good people."

It is this word "alone" that seems to start a bar room brawl. The word "alone" in Latin is the word *sola*. The emphasis on *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Fide*, *Solus Christus*, *Sola Gratia*, and *Sola Dei Gloria* ignited the fires of the Reformation.

Dr. James White states the conflict so well, "The issue has never been the necessity of grace. It has always been the sufficiency of grace!"

The great question is and always has been about sufficiency. Catholics insist Calvary is necessary for justification; but, but the Reformers insisted that faith in the cross is sufficient for man's salvation.

Let's take a look closer look at the Five Solas:

Sola Scriptura:

Biblically educated Christians insist the Holy Scriptures are sufficient for faith and practice. The Pretenders believe that "all truth is God's truth;" that the Christian can rely upon the canons of the church, dreams, voices, revelations,

religious experiences, psychology, and academic disciplines to build up a holy faith that pleases God.

The Reformers said no to these adhesions and insisted that Scripture alone is the inspired Word of God and the infallible rule of faith for the Church of Jesus Christ. Religious experiences and feelings are not to be trusted (Isaiah 8:19-20; 2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Solo Christo or Solus Christus:

Biblically taught believers understand that Christ is the Savior, the only Savior, and that men are saved by the doing and dying of Christ; that faith in His life and death is all that is needed for a man to gain acceptance before God; that no amount of change or assistance from another can save the soul. It is not Christ plus something else. His blood alone cleanses the moral leper. He “is the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the Father” except through Him (John 14:6; Matthew 1:21; Romans 5:8; I Peter 1:18-20; 2:24;).

The Pretenders insist that man is not totally fallen; that he can lift himself up by his own bootstraps; that he can open his own dead mind, blind eyes, and deaf ears to God; that prayers to Mary the “Mother of God,” the holy saints “that hear us” assist in man’s salvation; that the indwelling, regenerating Spirit of God that changes one’s character is necessary in order to effect justification.

European people in the 16th century were drowning in a sea of idols trying to swim toward islands dedicated to minor deities called “the saints.”

Even the young Luther, in 1505, in the midst of the thunderstorm that threatened his life, prayed to Saint Anne. As a lightning bolt struck just feet away from him, in fear of his life, he shouted, “Save me Saint Anne and I will become a monk.” Saint Anne being the patron saint of miners, it seemed natural to him to pray to her to save him from impending death. But, his studies in the Scripture lead him to see Solus Christus and this delivered him from all the idols offered by Rome.

Sola Fide:

The Biblical mind believes a faith that looks outside of self to Christ and His work at Calvary is sufficient to save the soul. Like snake-bitten Israelites that had to take their eyes off their wounds, off their snake-bite potent, and off their snake-bite doctors and look at the brazen serpent in the middle of the camp to be healed, so the Christian looks away from all the Pretenders to Christ and Christ alone for salvation (Numbers 21; John 3:14).

While faith in Christ regenerates the soul, that change never becomes the basis of being justified by God. The believer has an anchor of soul in heaven that assure him that the faithfulness of Christ is totally sufficient to save his soul (Romans 3:21-22; 4:1-5; 5:1; Hebrews 6:9).

The Pretenders seem quite busy erecting religious-industrial plants that manufacture traditions of men, human philosophies, high priest psychologists, clerical absolution, penances, indulgences, pilgrimages, prayer to the saints, rosaries, and charitable causes to assist man in his search for salvation. The Reformers threw these practices in the trash bin insisting on “Faith alone” as the means of salvation. It was not faith in the heart producing love that saved man, but faith in Christ and His work at Calvary that saved the soul.

Yes, men must believe in Christ to be saved; but, it is God that causes the blind man to see and the deaf man to hear. It is God that unchains the will from the shackles of sin freeing it to choose Christ.

Recently, a firefighter saved a wild rabbit from dying in a fire in Los Angeles and the media honored his compassion (12/7/2017). Was he unjust for not saving all the rabbits? If we used Armenian thinking, we would condemn the firefighter because he didn’t save the whole herd. Likewise, God is not unjust for saving some and not saving others.

Do not hear what is not being said. Sola fide is not faith in faith. The Christian man is not a fideist that believes without proof. Man is depraved. Sin has impacted all of his being, but sin does not make a man nonhuman or strip away his ability to look at the evidence and separate fact from fantasy. There is no room in true Christianity for blind faith or credulity. We follow the facts and the rules of logic. The Christian faith is grounded on the historical fact that Jesus died for our sins and literally, tangibly, physically rose from the grave. He is risen.

The song “He lives” reads, “You ask me how I know He lives: He lives within my heart!” But, this is solid R.C. theology.

Biblical theology says, “You ask me how I know He lives, because eyewitnesses of his resurrection wrote what they saw, heard, felt, and touched for us to investigate and believe;” that is, “because the Bible told me so” (1 John 1:1-4).

Sola Gratia:

The Reformers insisted that God provided all that was necessary to save believing men. They concluded that salvation was totally by grace apart from any contribution by man. They called it “sola gratia.” They insisted that man was saved entirely by works – His works – by faith (a point of trust) in the doing (positive righteousness) and dying of Christ (payment for sin).

Sola Gratia was so important to the Reformers, they saw it as the pivotal truth that separated the true gospel from all the false gospels circulating in Europe.

The question is this: Is grace able to save or is it merely an aide with man’s will being the final deciding factor?

The first use of grace is in Genesis 6:8 and the last use of the term is found in Revelation 22:21; that is, God's grace is the grand theme and conclusion of the Christian faith.

The Reformers preached grace – a grace that actually saves the soul. *Sola gratia* meant “grace at the start, grace to the end, grace in the middle, grace without fail, grace without mixture, grace without addition, grace that allows no boasting, grace that precludes all glorying but in the Lord” (Reformation Theology).

Our primary text states:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

The Savior's work is summed up under the term “*grace*.” Grace “*alone*” saves the soul. Faith is the way man receives salvation. The verb “have been saved” (*sesosmenoi*) is a perfect passive participle. The perfect informs us of a past action with present results; that is, that the grace of God saved the soul; that the believer was saved, is saved, and is now in a state of enjoying that salvation. The passive voice informs us the subject of the sentence (you) is acted on by the passive verb. Grace saves the believing man!

It is here that we must understand the difference between *monergism* and *synergism* regarding salvation.

Monergism, which comes from a compound Greek word “*mono*” which means “*alone*” and “*ergism*” that means “*to work*.” Thus, “*to work alone*,” is the view that God alone affects our salvation. *Synergism* means “*to work together*.” It refers to cooperation between two or more agents to produce the combined effect of salvation that could not be achieved by the sum of their individual efforts.

All the Reformers were *monergists*, believing that God's grace is the provider of salvation even enabling the blind to see and the deaf to hear so they can receive His salvation. Catholics and Armenians are *synergists* believing man must do something to merit God's salvation. These Pretenders believe grace is necessary for salvation; that it is one of the ingredients that bakes a happy cake, but they can't seem to grasp the sufficiency of grace; that *sola gratia* saves the soul.

Thus, the reformed mind sees the doctrines of Armenians as a toll road leading pilgrims back to Rome.

These two views were heavily debated in the early 17th century when followers of Arminius published The Five Articles of the Remonstrance (FAR), a document stating where their theology differed from that of Calvin and his followers. See the Synod of Dort: Calvinism v. Armenianism

The pivotal point in this debate is between the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election vs. the Arminian doctrine of conditional election.

If one believes election is unconditional, then one will tend toward a *monergistic* view of salvation. Conversely, if one holds to a view that election is based on God's foreknowledge of who would believe in Him, then one tends toward the *synergistic* view.

We see this tension in the early church. At the Jerusalem counsel in Acts 15:24 where a Jewish synergistic sect within the church sought to subvert souls, "saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment" (24).

Notice three important words:

The word "*subvert*" (*anaskeuazo*) means "to pack up baggage and to carry it to another place;" that is, these Judaizers sought to haul immature Christians back to the nest of Judaism.

The word "*must*" implies a necessity. The apostles believed in the necessity of faith (Acts 16:30). These Judaizers believe in another necessity besides the cross – that circumcision needed to synergize with grace to affect salvation.

Next, notice the word "*freely*" (*dorean*) in Romans 3:24 "Being justified freely (*dorean*) by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "*Freely*" is the same word translated "without cause" in John 15:25 – "*they hated him without cause (dorean).*"

Pretenders don't believe in free grace. They insist man must do something to cause God to save the man. They insist there must be another cause that saves man outside of Calvary – a cause within man.

Pretenders look for a cause in man why God saves the man. The Reformers saw the cause of salvation resting in in God alone. He loves us not because of who we are or what we do, but because of Who He is – a God of love (1 John 4:7ff).

"So then, it is not of him who wills or of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy," Romans 9:16.

"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace," Romans 11:6.

Moreover, in the Catholic mind it is grace in the heart that saves man. Their emphasis, therefore, is upon change and transformation and being born again. The Reformers insisted the locus of grace was at Calvary . . . not the human heart. (See the Locus of Grace)

Moreover, Catholics stumbled over the fact that God justifies the wicked when the wicked man seeks protection at the cross (Romans 4:5). In the Catholic mind, God can only justify the righteous. Only after the man is made righteous

did God justify the man; that is, regeneration became the basis of justification. Not so with the reformers. Regeneration was important to Reformers, but not the reason God saves the man. Justification precedes regeneration; God declares a man right with God first (justification), and then proceeds to make the man

Thus, *sola gratia* for *solie Deo gloria* became the rallying cry of the Reformers who sought to extract themselves from all the idols, formulas, and catalyst offered by Rome.

Soli Deo gloria (“glory to God alone”):

Because Catholics lit thousands of candles to Mary and prayed to a plethora of dead saints in their search for salvation, people needed to be awakened to the massive confusion caused by Medieval Catholicism. The Reformers rediscovered the true gospel and taught *sola Scriptura, solus Christus, sola Fide, and sola Gratia* glorified God and not man.

God will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 48:11). In advocating the true Gospel of Grace man receives the benefits of salvation, but God gets all the glory . . . “*that we might be to the praise of His glory*” (Ephesians 1:12).

While we are saved unto good works, but not saved by our good works. Saved by grace, all service to Christ is rendered graciously and thankfully. Service does not save us, but it does beautify us. It is esthetic, not pragmatic.

Yes, Christians should obey Christ. Yes, Christians are committed to God’s law-order. But, there is all the difference in the world between being saved by the law and being saved in order to keep the law.

(A side note needs to be added. The Five Solas apply to the judicial wonder of justification wherein a man is declared righteous and treated as such by the Court; that is, the day a man sees and believes that Christ is his substitute, Savior, and Lamb.

Sanctification, on the other hand, follows one’s justification (Romans 3-5). It is a lifelong process of becoming holy in word and deed. In sanctification, a man cooperates with God in the pursuit of holiness (Romans 6-8; 12-16). There is nothing substitutionary about sanctification. It is not “let go” and “let God.” Justification rests on the work of God for man alone; sanctification requires the regenerate man’s effort to be holy while he seeks the power of the Spirit to be holy. The Reformers separated justification from sanctification and insisted that sanctification is not the basis of justification. The Catholic counter-reformation could not separate justification from sanctification. Thus, sanctification (being made holy) became the foundation of justification (the hope of being declared holy some day). The question that could not be answered was, “How holy does a man have to be to be declared just before God? The Reformers, of course, saw Christ as their righteousness.).

Thus, Biblical minds advance to the Five Solas because the Lord and the Lord alone is exalted in the progress of redemption. Arminians side with Rome seeking a place for man on the Victor's Stand. While they bow a knee to Christ, the Reformers fell on both knees before their Champion. The Pretenders use Him as a crutch; those who understand sola Gratia see Christ as their whole wheel chair.

47. The Mystery of Godliness

Six Part of the Gospel Held Up by the Pillar of Truth

1 Timothy 3:15-16



“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” – 1 Timothy 3:15-16

Paul identifies six parts of the “*mystery of godliness*” held up by the Pillar of Truth.

Therefore, this brief seeks to answer the question, “**What is the mystery of godliness?**”

Without Controversy

The word “*controversy*” comes from the Greek word *homologoumenos* which means to perceive, understand, grasp, observe, and see.

We get the word *homoletics* (studies on how to preach) from this term. It works as an adverb modifying the being-verb “is” meaning undeniably, certainly.

The word “*without controversy*” acts like our English legal terms “notwithstanding,” “undeniable,” “indisputable,” “irrefutable,” or “unassailable.”

That is to say, any argument contrary to what he is about to state admits no dispute and has no standing. Metaphorically speaking Paul is saying, “you can take what I am about to say to the bank. It is as true as true can get.”

Great is the mystery

The Greek word “*mystery*” (*musterion*) does not refer to something difficult or impossible to understand.

Rather, it informs us of something hidden or concealed in the Old Testament that has manifested itself to mankind, namely, the arrival of the Christ in history.

Great (Mega)

While we use the term “*great*” frequently, very few things are really great! But, GREAT is the mystery of godliness.

The Greek word for “*great*” is *mega*. A superlative adjective, it identifies the wonder and superior quality of a thing. We use this Greek word as a prefix to many English terms: *megabyte*, *megawatt*, *megastar*, *megabuck*, *megavolt*, *megolomanica*, *megaflop*, and many more.

Keep this word in mind as the apostle reveals six facts about the indivisible MEGA mysteries of godliness that form the pillar of truth (3:25).

Godliness

The term “*godliness*” refers in a general sense to the heart of the gospel, the eye of God, true religion, piety, and sanctification.

The term “*godly*” usually refers to acts of piety or to being God-like in habits and character. But, this is not the stress of the word “*godliness*” in this text. In this passage “*godliness*” (*eusebeia*) is a noun and not an adjective; a fact, and not a fantasy; a reality and not a theory; the absolute gospel and not a nice story; the God-man, and not a myth;

Having listed the character qualities that should mark pastors and deacons, the apostle is not referring to the Christian’s duty to be godly in verse 16. Rather, he shows us the Source of Godliness by using the genitive case. Paul points to a person in history — Someone Who actually existed — Someone Who is our Banner for righteous living. Any other Model is idolatry.

Paul takes us on a journey to the core of Divine concerns, the invasion of the kingdom of God into history through the Son, “the real McCoy,” the prototype of godliness, the source and display of God-like attributes, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Savior is **not** like *Theos*; He is *Theos*. He does **not** resemble God; He is very God of God!!

John 1:1, 14 “In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word was with God (Theos), and the Word (logos) was God (Theos) . . . and the Word (logos) was made flesh and dwelt (skenoō = tabernacled) among us and we beheld his

glory, the glory as of the only begotten (monogenes = one of a kind) of the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 10:30 "I and my Father are one ."

(Note: The word "one" in this text is a nominative, neuter, adjectival pronoun. The text does not refer to our Lord being one in personality with the Father, but having the same substance as Father, being very God of God as a spiritual being— the neuter referring to substance and not personality. No other being in the universe can make this claim, but with Christ, the claim came with proof of claim.)

Thus, the core of "godliness" in this text is not about our duty to perfect holiness, but about the marvelous history of Christ: His incarnation, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of the Father — the pillar of the gospel — that God was among us in the Person of His Son. Great is the mystery of Theos becoming anthropos — something more significant in history than alleged encounters of a third kind.

SIX HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE MEGA MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

The six verbs in this section are all aorist passives ending with the same sound (*theta*, eta — the "uh" sound). They form a rhythmic cadence like a military hymn.

You can almost hear the apostle pounding a railroad spike at the beginning of each stroke while he sings the wonders of this mega mystery: *ephanerotha* (bam), *edikiotha* (bam), *ophtha* (bam), *echaruchtha* (bam), *episteutha* (bam), and *anelamphtha* (bam).

When it comes to godliness, the best among us are like the solar panels on a Mars Rover covered with dust, but Jesus? The Son does not shine as example of Godliness. He IS the essence of Godliness. He does not mirror the sunlight of holiness, the nucleus of holiness that lights the cosmos burns eternally within the Core of the Savior. He IS to mankind what the Sun is to God's creation.

Theos was in Christ and Christ was Theos in His birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and present exalted reign at the right hand of God.

(1) The first fact regarding this mega mystery is the incarnation of Christ — the day that God became a man.

"God was manifest in the flesh" (KJV) or the alternative, *"Who was manifest in the flesh"* or *"He was manifest in the flesh"* (ESV and others).

Because **the first rule of interpretation** is to "secure the text," we must diverge here to wrestle with a textual problem. The KJV translated the text as "God was

manifest in the flesh” while the NASB and ESV and others translate the text as “Who” or “He was manifest in the flesh.”

Without bogging the reader down in the detail of textual criticism, the reader should know that the original Greek was written in Uncial letters (uppercase without space between words). Over time, ancient manuscripts wore out and developed smears and smudges. This is the case here. Moreover, translators often abbreviated words like Θς for Θεος Theos, “God”

Earlier manuscripts use the term “He who was manifest” and not “God was manifest.” However, we must consider the theology surrounding the textual variance. John is very clear the “Word (logos) was with God (Theos) and was God (Theos) . . . and that the “logos became flesh” (John 1:1, 14). Because Jesus is Theos, I tend to sustain the legitimacy of the KJV translation, “Theos was manifest in the flesh . . .” But, in comparing ancient texts, the proper translation appears to be, “He was manifest in the flesh” (Robertson, Metzger, Aland and Aland).

Getting past the textual variance, let’s move on to the truth of this passage.

The GREAT mystery is that God / Elohim / the LORD of the Old Testament became a man; that is, Theos appeared on earth, in space and time, as a living, breathing, flesh and blood human being — a man (*anthropos*) called “*the Christ*.”

Forget alien sightings and invasions. Nothing in history compares to that day when Theos entered history in and through the Son in Bethlehem around 2 BC.

That Theos appeared in a human body with a human nature is the MEGA TRUTH of the gospel. This fact became the pillar of the gospel, and the theme of Renaissance Christmas Art and historical Christmas carols.

(2) The second fact regarding this mega mystery is that Christ was “justified in the Spirit . . .”

The legal, court-room word “*justified*” means “*to declare righteous,*” or “*to declare authentic, genuine, or real.*” In law, we demand verification, confirmation, validation, authentication, endorsement, and certification of all kinds of truth claims, real estate transactions, and money matters involving controversy.

What could be more controversial than Jesus is God, born of a virgin, died for our sins, and rose from the dead?

Any megalomaniac can claim to be God, but where is the evidence?

Pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act (5 USCS 556 (d)) the proponent of a rule or order has the burden of proof.

Hearsay, wishes, hopes, presumption, theory, and opinion are not accepted as facts in a court of law.

Rule 301. Presumptions in Civil Cases Generally

In a civil case, unless a federal statute or these rules provide otherwise, the party against whom a presumption is directed has the burden of producing evidence to rebut the presumption. But this rule does not shift the burden of persuasion, which remains on the party who has it originally.

Our Lord not only claimed to be God, He provided proof of claim with strict proof of claim — even infallible proof of claim (Acts 1:3).

His miracles were His credentials. Only God can turn water into wine, heal the sick, and walk on water. Out of death, the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead vindicating His claim that He is God, that He is Lord over the grave.

Over 500 witnesses testified to a real, tangible, historical encounter with the living Christ. Thus, the phrase “justified in the Spirit” announces lawyer-like verification for Divine assertions.

That Jesus is God is an absurdity . . . without substantial proof of claim. The miracles of our Lord and especially His resurrection from the dead is the Spirit’s proof of claim — His legal verification that Christ is indeed Theos, very God of God, in human flesh.

Romans 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

C.S. Lewis, the great English literary genius said it like this,

*“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, *Mere Christianity**

(3) The third fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “seen of angels . . .”

Can you think of anything on this earth that might be of interest to angels?

To my knowledge, I’ve never encountered an angel. And, I can’t think of anything in American politics that would attract angels: WWI, WWII, 9-11?

But, the day that God became a man excited the angelic mind. The incarnation was like the Super Bowl of history and every angel wanted a ticket to the main event.

So GREAT was the Divine visitation to earth, Angels fell from skies like falling stars with wonderment and power to assist Christ in the grandeur and glory of His advent, temptations, ministry, crucifixion, and guardianship of His tomb. See: Luke 2:9-13; Luke 22:43; Luke 24:4; Hebrews 1:6; Matthew 4:11; John 20:11-12.

The modern mind would do well to take an interest in that which captures the attention of angels.

(4) The fourth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “Preached unto the Gentiles . . .”

The Apostle places preaching of the historicity of Christ among the “*great*” (*mega*) things which constituted the “*mystery*” of Divine truth.

By preaching, the Apostle is not referring to well-prepared sermons, but the factual reporting of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ with conviction and confidence as the newsworthy event in the hostile climate of the first century. This “preaching” was the opposite of fake news by the fake media as it was characterized by formality, gravity, and authority (Strong).

Consider the adversarial environment in which these historical events took place. It would have been natural for the early disciples to go sub silentio and remain mute. But, they didn't. The only ones remaining silent were the hostile witnesses (the Pharisees). The disciples possessed a conviction that what they saw and heard was as real as a smile that brightens your day. They could not help but proclaim the facts of Christ's victorious history. That these fantastic claims were preached at all was a miracle of miracles. After all, you could get jailed, stoned, or crucified for preaching a message that challenged the authority of Caesar. Stephen comes to mind (Acts 6:1ff; 4:12; 17:6-7).

Second, the message was not only preached to Jews, it was preached to all the nations hugging the Mediterranean — the world jury hearing the facts of the Case.

Before our Lord's advent, a wall of partition divided the Jewish and Gentile world. In Christ's gospel, we find that the playing field for salvation was leveled for Jews and Greeks, rich and poor, men and women, slaves and free men. What Jewish man in his right mind would extend this gospel of hope to Gentiles? None, unless the message had been justified by the Spirit.

No wonder Paul listed the preaching of this gospel as a mega event in the first century! See Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 1:26-27; Colossians 4:3.

(5) The fifth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “believed on in the world . . .”

Jesus said to his disciples, “*You are my witnesses . . .*” (Acts 1:8) . . . and, witnesses must be cross-examined and directly interrogated to test the credibility of the witness and the truth of his testimony.

The gospel message was not preached in “safe zones” or “free speech cages” in back alleys or in government-approved amphitheatres. It was preached to juries in the market places of the Roman world *mano a mano* among Jews and Greeks competent to judge faith claims and to cross-examine the witnesses.

The Apostles announced the hope of salvation among the Gentiles. . . . and the reasonable, serious Romans and Greeks examined the evidence for the resurrection of Christ and believed the gospel.

While extraordinary claims demand proof of claim, they do not demand extraordinary evidence. These disciples used the same rules of evidence that we use today. What did you see? What did you hear? What did you feel and touch? (1 John 1:1-3).

The early disciples considered themselves witnesses of the Christ event. They were not fideists who believed faith operated apart from facts and reason. Thomas said he would NOT believe until he could place his fingers in the wounds of Christ. Thomas was not being an ornery doubter or skeptic. He was a normal, empirical man who rejected the fantastic and hearsay regarding a resurrected human being. The burden of proof rested on the claimant and he refused to believe until he could personally verify the claim with his five senses (John 20:24-29).

The Apostle identifies faith (“believed”) in this incredible message as something remarkable among pragmatic, coherent, thinking men prone to shun outrageous claims. Belief in this mystery shows the accuracy of the testimonies and the power of the truth to convince the most skeptical but honest mind.

(6) The sixth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “received up into glory.”

Concerning the ascension, Paul identifies it as the punctuation mark of the great mega mystery of all time.

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus was taken up into heaven in the sight of his disciples. His ascension and session at the right hand of the Father as the exalted Christ ended the earthly history of our Lord.

While the story provides a nice ending to an incredible event, people do not normally levitate off the earth without some modern rocket-propulsion system.

Even though such an event is highly improbable, the witnesses said this is the way Jesus left earth (Acts 1-2:30-32).

Thus, the ascension of Christ and His session at the right hand of God not only concludes the historical account of the great mystery of godliness, the Bible it as a kingly coronation where the triumphant Savior receives a golden crown. Having accomplished eternal redemption for all mankind, He now sits on the eternal throne as “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

With this good news, you don't want to be a person who is absorbed in science fiction, extraterrestrials, and alien-invasion theories to annihilate the human race only to miss THE ONE, TRUE, HISTORICALLY, VERIFIABLE VISITATION of Theos in history in and through His Son. Forget aliens! Investigate the Christ event!

The context of this passage is the previous verse:

1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Every Christian church has the potential to be a “*pillar and ground of the truth.*”

Paul anticipated a delay in his visit to Timothy, and informs him of his purpose in writing his letter: “*that thou mayest know,*” a hina clause with a subjunctive holding out the possibility that Timothy and his readers might come to a full knowledge on how men “*ought*” (*de*) to behave themselves “*in the house of God.*”

The “*house of God*” would be a church gathering, not a church building. A true church doesn't practice social distancing. Healthy Christians don't self-quarantine.

The word “*conduct*” or “*behave*” comes from the Greek word *anestrepo* which means to “*turn upside down*” or “*turn up and down.*”

Christianity has a code of conduct which is accurately portrayed in chapter 3:1-14. A true believer changes his ways, his dress, his attitudes, his demeanor, and his habits when he or she takes up the cross to follow Christ.

Paul established Christian ethics consistent with the law of the LORD God (Romans 13:10).

He commands believers to put off the old and put on the new in Ephesians 4:21-24.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul orders men to remove their headwear and for women to veil themselves when meeting in the house of God to remember the headship

and history of Christ and the cross (1 Corinthians 11) – an ordinance of the true church.

In 1 Timothy, faithful men are exhorted to pray with clean hands (2:8); and, women are commanded to dress modestly and take on the role of a student.

In chapter three, the apostle lists the virtues that must mark elders and deacons in pursuit of Divine interests.

In chapter four, Paul exhorts Timothy to avoid (Jewish) myths (fake history) and to train himself in godliness (4:7). If Godly commands like these were put into practice, it would turn the average American church upside down . . . or is that “right side up?”

If you want to be Godly, don’t look in and in and in. Forget New Age meditations influenced by Eastern philosophy, mysticism, yoga, Hinduism and Buddhism. Rather, look at the glory of our Lord.

“But we all, with open face beholding (present middle participle) as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed (*metamorphoo*) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Change comes to our values and perceptions when we see and treasure the mystery of godliness of the Lord Jesus.

Believe the gospel and be saved; reject this gospel and be lost.

48. Blood, the Currency of the Spirit World

Understanding the Blood in the Gospel of Christ

Hebrews 9:22



Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Blood is the currency of the spirit-world.

The difference between Talmudic Judaism, Islam, the pantheistic

cults, and Christianity is that Christianity teaches that blood, not good deeds, is the currency that must be paid to redeem the soul.

Christianity is a bloody religion through and through. In ancient Israel, blood flowed like a river from the temple into the Kidron Valley. Hundreds of thousands of lambs, birds, goats, and bulls spilled their blood at the site.

From the animals killed to provide clothing for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) to the death of Christ (John 18-19), the Scripture teaches one fundamental truth: Blood must be shed to pay for sin! Blood must be on the altar to gain acceptance before the LORD God of the Bible. God is just, and He cannot ignore, whitewash, avoid, overlook, or turn a blind eye to transgressions against His law. Blood is the only currency received by the Great Spirit in exchange for the soul.

Modern man with his love of money and psychological gimmicks fall short of achieving his spiritual ambitions because he fails to grasp that blood is the only lawful tender accepted between spirits and mortals. Talmudic Jews substitute prayer for propitiatory blood sacrifice. Muslims practice the five pillars of Islam: faith, prayer, alms giving, fasting, and treks to Mecca. Hindus believe *karma marga* (works) is the way of salvation.

Humanly speaking, blood is a powerful subject.

There is something in all of us that causes us to react to blood. The sight of that bright red fluid -- whether it was coming from an enemy or friend or yourself -- provokes fear and awe. Hemophobia is the fear of blood. Blood is associated with such powerful concepts that some people can't stand the sight of it. Many faint at the sight of a bloody scene.

Blood is life. Blood is power and vitality -- when you push yourself, your heart pounds and your pulse races as your blood rushes to supply oxygen to exhausted cells. A woman bleeds during her menstrual cycle, there's blood at childbirth. A drop of blood is your human signature. Your blood contains DNA and not only identifies your individual characteristics, but your entire family history. If you donate blood you might be saving someone's life. Blood banks are the first aid of life. Transfusion saves lives.



Genesis 9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood:

Even in the French Quarter of New Orleans where Voodoo Queens practice love spells and curses, necromancers understand that to summon the gods of the underworld, blood must be mixed with frog hairs

and toenails to attract the spirits.

Blood magic is the use of a few drops of blood, usually your own, to summon the gods of power. Even ancient Egyptians understood that mediation between the goat-gods and man required blood—lots of blood. Drinking blood, washing in blood, and sprinkling blood on symbolic objects guaranteed the Grand Zombi access to demonic powers.

Blood is associated with death on the battlefield, the slaughter of animals, cycles of fertility, and pagan rituals wherein occultist bath in blood or offer blood up to spirits of power.

But, modern man seems oblivious to the necessity of blood redemption.

The only legal tender Americans understand are worthless FRNs and Citibank Credit Cards. “Money” is the American religion. After all, every dollar boasts it is backed by “the full faith and credit” of the U.S. government--a bankrupt corporation at that! To Americans, FRNs can buy anything, even favors with God. In love with gold-platinum credit cards, BMWs, and dollar bills, the average U.S. citizen hopes to gain power by spending himself into debt, by devoting himself to yoga exercises, and by using psychedelic drugs to engage the spirit world.

In the month of May 2018, Breitbart News reported that people were leaving Illinois in droves because of high taxes. “So, how is the state’s legislature reacting to the tens of thousands of constituents leaving every year over high taxes? Well, legislators are proposing a massive tax hike, naturally.”

Even in the Christian community, people pray the rosary, offer money in exchange for spiritual favors, and practice oil anointing in hopes of contracting for power in the spirit world. But, why would a spirit be interested in gold or silver or those worthless green FRNs with

of dead presidents?

Will Americans wake up and realize that blood is the currency of the spirit world; that only by blood can men escape the penalties of their naked arrogance, shameful lusts, and outbursts of anger?

Gold and silver are of no interest to the Eternal Spirit . . . but blood?

The Great Spirit is attracted to blood . . . the blood of Abel's lamb . . . and the shed blood of Abel . . . and most importantly, the blood of Christ.

Notice that blood speaks to the Almighty; that blood is of utmost interest to the Great Spirit; that blood speaks a message.

Genesis 4:10 "And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

Hebrews 12:24 "the blood of Jesus speaketh better things than that of Abel."

The blood of Abel's lamb cried out for pardon; the blood of Abel cried out for vengeance upon his murderer. The blood of Christ cries out "forgiveness" for trusting sinners.

Which raises the question: How can a transgressor appease the offended Spirit he has neglected all his life? How can a proud miscreant who has plunged into sensuality, fornication, and abominable idolatries be reconciled with his Creator?

The Bible from beginning to the end drills in one truth. Blood has to be brought to the altar. Blood is the only currency recognized in the spirit world. Blood is the only consideration accepted for a contract. The rituals of religion won't do. Feeling sorry for your wicked deeds can't buy spit. Saying "I'm sorry" to an offended Spirit will get you thrown into hell.

Cain was a farmer. Cain's offered vegetables to God and was rejected. Abel was a shepherd. Abel offered the blood of a lamb and found acceptance (Genesis 4).

From this account we learn there are only two religions in the world--(1) the religion of beans, beets, and broccoli--a religion of works; and (2) the religion of blood redemption. Judaism, Islam, and the pantheistic faiths are based on the belief that one's good deeds commend a man to God; that is, they follow the way of Cain and practice a vegetable religion. Christianity is based on the blood sacrifice of the Son of which all the Levitical sacrifices are a type.

The only tender accepted for ransom is blood . . . and a very special kind of blood--innocent blood, pure blood, and sinless blood! Is there such a rare treasure as this? Yes, there is!

In His grace and mercy, the great Spirit offered the blood of His Son as currency for redemption: "knowing that you were ransomed from the corruptible ways inherited from your forefathers, not with worthless things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or defect" - 1 Peter 1:19.

Therefore, if you are trusting in your miserable money or worthless religious rituals or feeble beliefs that you are not that bad of a person, flee to the cross and lay hold of the horns on the altar. Plead the blood of Christ might be applied as payment for your sins. "Under stand" ("stand under") the blood of the Lamb and its authority. It is the only currency accepted in the spirit world.

This is our gospel.

49. The Celestial City

A contrast between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion

Hebrews 12:18-29



Before us is a beautiful contrast between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion, Moses and Christ, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, between ancient Jerusalem below and the New Jerusalem above.

This passage is preceded by the command "*Looking diligently*" at Christ so "*that no man would fall short of the grace of God.*" Grace is contrasted with bitterness, and the faithful believer is contrasted with faithless Esau (12:13-17).

To release the effects of grace and in order to avoid being like Esau who received strict justice – a type of Mt. Sinai, the author of Hebrews reminds his Jewish brethren of their superior calling to Mt. Zion – the Heavenly City with its rivers of grace.

Mt. Sinai

Hebrews 12:18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

Paul contrasts the believer's calling in the gospel to Mt. Zion, the City of the living God, with the calling of Israel to Mt. Sinai in the wilderness – where strict justice under the law caused knees to shake and bones to rattle.

Mt. Sinai posted seven warning signs. Everything about this mountain said, "*Stay Away! You're gonna die if you come any closer.*" To impress upon the people the deadly holiness of God and the deadly neglect of men, God appealed to the five senses of men: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste.

(1) *mount that might be touched*: For a period of time the Most High God made Mt. Sinai his home. He invited Israel to the basin of the mountain to meet with Him. But, the mountain was marked off with barriers to prevent man and animal from trespassing on holy ground. Trespassers that infringed upon on these barriers and touched the mountain were instantly executed without mercy. That is, Israel was called to meet God, but at a safe distance.

(2) *burned with fire*: One unique characteristic of this mountain was that its peak blazed with fire. The flames on the Mt. Sinai warned the people not to come any closer lest they be consumed by the scorching heat.

(3) *blackness* (*gnophos*) and

(4) *darkness* (*skotos*) were bad omens that communicated something foreboding, mysterious, uncertain, and dangerous. This thick darkness warned the people to stay away.

(5) *and tempest* (*thuella*): The violent winds and earthquakes on this trembling, volcanic mountain divined death and destruction.

19 *And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:*

(6) *the sound of a trumpet*: in case people were rock-headed, their meeting with Elohim was formerly announced by the blast of a trumpet — a shofar (ram's horn) with up and down trills — a public siren warning the people to stay off this mountain and seek shelter at a safe distance away.

(7) *voice of words*: God proclaimed this warning to the people through Moses:

“the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. . . . the people cannot come ups to Mount Sinai . . . whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death “(Exodus 19).

20 *For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:*

The verb “*endure*” (*phero*) means “to bear” or “to carry.” Negated by the adverb “*not*,” it expresses the fact the people could not cope with such a severe command. Under this rule of God's government, transgressing men and animals faced certain death.

21 *And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)*

Hearing the warnings, even Moses trembled with fear. If the holiest man in Israel quaked with fear, how much more should apostate Jews have fear because they want to return to Mt. Sinai?

Why would a Jew forsake the warmth and sunshine of the gospel, and return to the dark, volcanic justice of Mt Sinai where sure death awaits the transgressor? Yet, this was the predicament the writer addressed.

Mt. Zion

22 *But (alla) ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,*

23 *To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

“*ye*” introduces the believers.

“ye are come” is presented as an absolute fact (perfect tense in the indicative mood).

“You are come” is followed by a series of seven dative indirect objects (spiritual realities): to Mt. Zion (*kai*) . . . the city . . . Jerusalem, to myriads of angels, to the festive gathering (*kai*) church, to Theos the Judge of all men, to spirits made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to sprinkled blood. The seven dative-topics are contrasted with the seven austere descriptions of Mt. Sinai in 18-21.

The verb *“come”* (drawing near) corresponds to those who believed the gospel – a contrast to those at Sinai who drew near but remained afar off. In both cases, men sought God. Moses mediated matters between God and man, but our Lord’s mediation actually brings men to God. In contrast to the weakness at Mt. Sinai, consider the strength of the gospel which calls men –

(1) *“to Mt. Zion, the City of the Living God:”* Mt Sinai below was a dark shadow of Mt. Zion above. God once made a temporary home on Sinai, but Zion above is the eternal home of the Living God. Mt. Sinai promised death; Mt Zion promises life. Mt. Sinai was a lonely, dark, blazing mountain threatening trespassers with doom; Mt. Zion is a city bursting with life – a city that promises eternal life to all who knock at its gates.

and to Heavenly Jerusalem. Mt. Sinai was a visible, earthly, hostile mountain where God temporally made His home; Mt Zion is a welcoming, invisible, heavenly Mountain where Heavenly Jerusalem stands as the Queen of cities.

(2) *“to an innumerable company of angels;”*

Believers are said to have come to the celestial city which is composed of myriads of angels and the festive assembly of perfected spirits –

to myriads of angels sent to earth to perform the will of God . . . servants of God that assisted the saints in their work on earth.

(3) *“to the festival and church of the firstborn:”* The word *“general”* comes from the Greek word *panegurizo* which means *festive gathering* – (See Isaiah 66:10). A metonym-synonym associated with the ecclesia; that is, this is the celebratory church triumphant.

Mt. Sinai was a barren, lonely place with no mention of angels or people. There were no communicants or assisting angels at Sinai; but, Heavenly Jerusalem is described as a glorious city filled with servant-angels and the festive ecclesia (fem. dative) of perfected believers; that is, the church triumphant composed of Old and New Testament saints and the church militant which has not yet entered the holy gates of the eternal city.

"of the Firstborn:" that is, the beloved Son. The title firstborn does not refer to a birth in time, but to the favored status of the Son of God — our Savior and Mediator (See Exodus 4:22).

"which are written in heaven:" and to God represents the permanent registry of the citizens and the perpetuity of this favored status in this eternal, Heavenly City. *"It is written"* infers authority, permanence, and imperishability.

(4) *"and to God the Judge of all:"* Israel came to their Judge at Sinai. Because they lacked a Savior, even the holiest man among them despaired of hope (Isaiah 6). Moses mediated between the LORD and the people, but our Mediator actually brings men to Theos. Believers are accepted by this Judge due to the doing and dying of the Son who is the Savior of all men. Sinai brought fear; Heavenly Zion extends the olive branch of peace.

(5) *"and to the spirits of just men made perfect:"* or having been made perfect — an accomplished fact (perfect passive ptc.).

Sinai exposed the wretchedness of sinful man and threatened trespassers with certain death if they touched the mountain. But, Mt. Zion not only welcomes believing sinners through the gospel, it makes them perfect by offering forgiveness, and by granting them a permanent status (justification) because of their faith in the Son (Romans 5:1).

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

(6) *"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant"* is in contrast to Moses and the rigorousness of the Old Covenant.

Standing between the phrase *"just men made perfect,"* and *"refuse not Him that speaketh,"* is *"Jesus"* our mediator. Through the gospel believers are qualified to enter into the presence of this holy God through the mediation of the Son: God's Representative to men; and, man's Representative to the Father. The new covenant of grace is contrasted with the old covenant of works.

(7) *"and to the blood of sprinkling:"* The old covenant was ratified by blood (Exodus 24), and the new covenant was ratified by the precious blood of the Lamb, the prized currency of the spirit-world.

"that speaketh better things than that of Abel" teaches us that the blood of the Old Covenant typified by the blood of Abel cried out for vengeance; but the blood of Christ cries out *"forgiven," "fulfilled," "paid in full,"* and *"accepted in the Beloved."*

Blood shed for sin under the Old Covenant temporarily covered sins enabling the Lord to tolerate sinners; but, the blood of Christ permanently removes sins as far as east is from the west qualifying us to enter the kingdom. Blood shed

under the Old Covenant did not assure anyone of a permanent relationship with the LORD, but the blood of Christ secures the believer's eternal redemption and permanent status in the Eternal City built by God (Hebrews 9:12).

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

Use of the term "*escape*" (*ekpheugo*) implies danger. It is the same word used in Hebrews 2:3. Terms like "*shake*" and "*shook*" (12:26) are foreshocks of the coming catastrophe. Rejecting Christ leaves the unbeliever in deep peril.

This is a warning to the wobbling, indecisive audience considering the choice between Sinai and Zion.

The word "*refuse*" (*paraiteomai*) means "to deprecate" (disapprove) and it is used twice in this text as a reference to Exodus 20:19 – "*And they said unto Moses, 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'*" What a terrible thing it must be to repeat the sin of the people at Sinai after hearing the call of the gospel!

The tone and manner of giving the law was designed to impress all hearts with the solemn risk of disobedience wherein one can lose his precious all. Even though the people feared and disapproved of God's words, their contempt did NOT void His Word or nullify their duty to obey Him. Their disdain did not save them from the obligation to obey. Nor could their fecklessness cause them to escape the duties of the Law or the terrible penalties which awaited all transgressors.

The lesson is clear: He is the Creator, we are His creatures. He is the Prosecutor and the Judge; we are the defendant party. He is sovereign, we are His subjects; He is the Lawgiver, we are those under law. Our demurs and dallying consent does not dissolve our liability to the Lawgiver.

"much more shall not we escape" raises a question to which no man has an answer: "*How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation*" (Hebrews 2:2-3)? The one who rejects the gift of grace will perish under the duties of law.

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

When God spoke at Mt. Sinai, the mountain trembled. When God speaks at the end of history, not only will the earth shake, but the stars in the heavens will fall. Men cannot escape their duty to God, nor can any escape judgment. There are hard, maximum duties under the Covenant at Sinai, and there are gifts of salvation to all who accept the Covenant of Grace. Which one do you want?

27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

The rumbles, fire, and darkness at Mt. Sinai were merely foreshocks of the coming judgment on the earth. The shaking acts like a sieve that retains the good and discards the bad.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

The main message of Christ was the kingdom of God; that is, He came in the middle of history, not to condemn mankind, but to offer men the blessings of the kingdom in advance of the final judgment. In the gospel, Christ offers men the benefits of the kingdom in a first fruits way to those who surrender to His authority. Though the kingdom is an irresistible force, it does not compel men to submit to it. The “*rule of God*” must be received freely without compulsion. *The gospel of the kingdom* does not coerce men to yield to its authority. It is a gospel of grace that must be received willingly and thankfully. *Those under grace serve, not to be accepted, but because they are accepted.*

Serving God should be the goal of every man, but the kind of service implied is “*sacred service.*” This “*acceptable*” service is defined by two Greek genitives of association: *reverence and godly fear* — terms opposed to that which is careless and casual.

“let us have grace” (εχωμεν χαριν) may be properly rendered, let us hold fast grace; for it is as necessary to retain it as it is to obtain it” (Benson).

It is a warning against the sin of presumption. Yes, men are saved by grace and must continue in grace lest they be swept away from thankful service by a whirlwind of passion. Moreover, all service is balanced with thankfulness and fear — thankfulness for His Mercy and fear of displeasing His Majesty.

Carefully consider the following effects of grace:

I am not on probation: I am not out on parole. I am not in danger of losing my freedom because freedom is not conditioned upon my performance. Grace once extended to me will not be retracted because of me. God knows all about me. He loves me, not because of Who I am, but because of Who He is — a God of love. His grace is not bestowed because of human merit, nor is it withdrawn because of human failure. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. (Think Grace) Whereby we may serve God acceptably (*euairestos*) with reverence (*aidos*) and godly fear (*deous*): Those under grace are motivated to please Him (*euairestos*) and to serve Him out of a deep sense of humility (*aidos*) coupled with a sense of fear of displeasing Him (*deous*). Even if I give God my very best,

I am still unworthy of His grace. His grace is independent of me, and it is not dependent on what I do or do not do. Service must spring from a grateful heart or it is not grace. I now serve the Lord with humility, not because I am better than other people, but because His love has not been withdrawn because of my many failures. Service is not a necessity for me. It is a great privilege for me. By the grace of God I have a ministry. (Think Grace!)

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

This is a quote from Deuteronomy 4:24 — a solemn warning against idolatry and rejection of the gospel.

The God of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament. The God that commanded men to obey His law under the Old Covenant is the God who commands obedience to the faith in the New Covenant. Though believers are warmed by the sunbeams of His love in the age of gospel proclamation, they know that He still possesses the volcanic power so stunningly displayed at Sinai. God is not so just He cannot forgive men through Christ, nor is He so loving that he cannot punish those who reject His Son.

The One that punished His Son for our disobedience to law is the One who provides salvation to men through Christ's obedience to law. You can either rely on your dogged determination to obey God's law for salvation (Romans 2:1-12), or you can rely on the doing and dying of Christ for your salvation (Romans 4-5). Those that camp at Mt. Sinai (including Jews) will die for their transgressions; but, those (believers in Christ) that camp at Mt. Zion experience life and peace.

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