DOCTRINES

AND

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Additional Documents for Transformation Bible Study

Becky **updated 2024**

DOCTRINES/SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

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DOCTRINE

WHAT ARE DOCTRINES?
DO WE NEED TO KNOW DOCTRINE?

The church is in desperate need at this time to learn, understand and teach concerning the doctrines for which many have died, including our Lord.

Our Lord and Savior taught doctrine constantly. He saw the value in working it into the fiber of His followers, so we must guard this teaching as well.

The Sermon on the Mount is a veritable systematic theology; it teaches us who is part of the kingdom of heaven.

As Jesus walked with His disciples, He taught them how the Pharisees had invalidated the law of God. He challenged their blind reverence to those who would put them in spiritual slavery.

Doctrine was extremely important to the mission of our Lord.

Didache Greek for doctrine simply means "teaching or instruction."

Didaskalia Greek for "that which is taught, doctrine."

Generally, *didache* means the substance of teaching and *didaskalia* the act of teaching.

"We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Acts 5:28

Eph. 4:14 states, "We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming."

"Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them." Rom. 16:17

"As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines." 1 Tim.1:3

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

"If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing …" 1 Tim.6:3

"Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict… But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine… not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." Tit. 1:9; 2:1, 10

- For believers today, the importance of doctrine is just as crucial as it was in the times of the early church. Each generation passes to the next a more corrupt version of truth or a more uncontaminated rendering of the gospel. Without sound doctrine, we are at the mercy of those with a superior rhetoric regardless of their virtue and accuracy.

The great safety in studying doctrine is the surety that truth will always substantiate truth in the scriptures. In other words, one teaching will complement and never contradict another teaching. If there appears to be contradiction, there must be an inconsistency in the interpretation because scripture will bear out scripture.

Doctrine protects the believer from error, but there is an error even when one knows sound doctrine that must be avoided. Doctrine must always be combined with practice. When one thinks rightly, his belief must be reflected in his behavior.

The study of doctrine is a lifelong pursuit, not of knowledge but of the Teacher Himself.

HOW TO FIND DOCTRINE

To jump to doctrine without proper observation is to invite faulty interpretation.

After considerable basic observation, now you need to move on to discovering the doctrines within your text. Two opposing errors in regard to doctrine can sideline you. People either think they already know doctrine and they take for granted these truths or people think the doctrines are above them or worse, that doctrines are not useful.

A start with doctrinal (theological) truths is always focused on what you learn about God. You may discover His power, His creative work as Maker, His mercy, His covenant love.

- Record what you see about Who God is. For instance, in **Psalm 95: 3-5**, we see that God is sovereign over all. **Ps. 95: 6** reveals God as our Maker and results in our kneeling before Him.

I mark what I see about God in the right hand column of the text analysis in red.

Later you will have a considerable "library" on the doctrine of God!

- Now move on to mark any doctrines you see about Christ or the Holy Spirit.

- Now mark any ***teachings*** (that's what a doctrine is, remember?) on any other issue the writer of Scripture is discussing. Sin, salvation, faith, brotherly love, sanctification, redemption, forgiveness, knowledge, the Law, miracles, the resurrection, prophecy, etc. – doctrine is everywhere! Find it and learn of your God's ways.

➢ A few points on locating and learning from doctrine

- Do not read more into the text than is there – God does not need any help!
- Ask yourself every time you see God's name mentioned, "What did I learn about God here?"
- As you read the text with focus, ask yourself the 5 WH and you will find many doctrines. Who is this about? Where do they go to worship? When is the Lord returning? Why did David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba lead to murder? (As you study sin, you see that it always grows and corrupts until an end is put to that sin.) How does someone become a Christian?
- Doctrinal truths stand in opposition to the world's view
- Doctrinal truths are your protection against false teaching
- Some doctrinal truths are non-negotiable (the resurrection, Deity of Christ, the cross as the only way to salvation)
- Some doctrines continue to be debated among true believers of differing persuasions (predestination, certain gifts, the role of women in the church). These are important issues but do not break fellowship with fellow believers over these interpretations of Scripture. The enemy loves nothing

more than to cause disunity in a body of believers. If he cannot kill you, he will try and sideline you.

Do not become obsessed with doctrine; but feel free to become obsessed with the God of our doctrinal faith.

He should be our One True Obsession!

A few doctrines you will find in Scripture repeated throughout:

Doctrine of the Church
Doctrine of God
Doctrine of Jesus Christ
Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
Doctrine of Man
Doctrine of the Creation
    Doctrine of the Fall
    Doctrine of Sin
Doctrine of End Times
Doctrine of Grace
Doctrine of Justification
Doctrine of Law
Doctrine of the Resurrection
Doctrine of Sanctification
Doctrine of Satan
Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts

ANGELS

Entire books are written on this topic and do not do justice to the truths of these amazing creatures, so a short article here will only touch on the subject.

Possible topics on angels include: the creation, number, nature, ranks, attributes, fall, appearances, mission and the Lord of Angels.

There are over 300 references to angels in the 66 books of the Bible, so clearly not all will be covered here. But with this high volume of the mention of angelic work, appearances, and activities, it would be difficult to refute the reality of their existence from a Biblical point of view.

- **Creation of Angels**

Psalm 148: 2, 5

"Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His host … Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created."

Job 38: 7 refers to creation when it declares, "When all the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Col. 1: 16 tells us, "For by Him (Christ) all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him."

- **Those who reject angelic activity**

The Sadducees – the highest religious class of Judaism at the time of Christ – rejected the existence of angels, the spirit-world, miracles, the Resurrection and the Biblical writings other than the first five books. Theirs was a completely materialistic view of the world. Only what is seen is real. Do we not hear that mantra today?

"*Angels, with their particular functions and features, meet us at the beginning of the Bible, at its close and almost everywhere in between*." Herbert Lockyer

- **General information on angels – a walk through the OT appearances of angels**

Ps. 103: 20 "Bless the LORD, you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word!

Gen. 3: 24 – "So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life."

In regard to the fallen angels prior to the Fall of Man

2 Pet. 2: 4, "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned but cast them into hell and commanded them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment."

Jude 6, "And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day."

Gen. 16: 10, "Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, 'I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count…Behold, you are with child, and you will bear a son; and you shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.'"

Gen. 21: 17 again an angel appears to Hagar to comfort and encourage her along her way.

Gen. 18 and 19 give the account of three men (who turn out to be angels) who visit Abraham to tell him of Sarah's upcoming pregnancy and then the impending doom of Sodom.

Gen. 22: 11, 15 – angelic presence at the sacrifice of Isaac. It is actually an angel who hinders Abraham from doing harm to the boy.

"But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.'"

Gen. 28: 12, "He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it."

Ex. 3: 2, it was the angel of the LORD who appeared to Moses. "The angel of the LORD appeared to Moses in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed."

Ex. 23: 20, "Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared."

Josh. 5: 13-15, " Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, ' Are you for us or for our adversaries?' He said, 'No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, 'What has my lord to say to his servant?' The captain of the LORD's host said to Joshua, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so."

Judges 2 – an angel spoke to the people at Bochim just before Joshua died.

Judg. 13: 3-5, an angel reveals to the parents of Samson that he will be born.

2 Sam. 24: 16, it was the angel of God who delivered the punishment to David and his people upon David's numbering the people.

1 Kgs. 19: 5-7, an angel brought food to Elijah when he was on the run from Jezebel.

2 Kgs. 19: 35, "Then it happened that night in the camp that the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185, 000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead." Also Isaiah 37: 36

- **Angels long have been the ministers of God's providential government in our lower world.**

It was an angel who slew the firstborn in Egypt in punishment of Pharaoh's pride.

Angels preserved the Hebrew youths from destruction in the fiery furnace – Dan. 3: 25-28.

Angels guarded Daniel when he was thrown into the lion's den. Dan. 6: 22

"Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision." Dan. 8: 16 Again Gabriel appears to him in Da. 9: 21.

In Dan. 12: 5-7, angels give Daniel an understanding of the end times.

Zech. 1: 9-10, "Then I said, 'My lord, what are these?' And the angel who was speaking with me said to me, 'I will show you what these are.' And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered and said, 'These are those whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.'"

Zech. 1: 14, "So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, 'Proclaim, saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion.'"

Zech. 3: 1-6, "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD

rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire? … And the angel of the LORD admonished Joshua."

It is an angel of the LORD who delivers one of the most wonderful messages of all Scripture! Zech. 4: 6 – "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel, saying, 'Not by might not by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts."

Zech. 5: 5-10 Another vision explained by angels.

Zech. 6: 4-5, Then I spoke and said to the angel who was speaking with me, 'What are these, my lord?' The angel replied to me, 'These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the LORD of all the earth.'"

- **Now as we enter the New Testament, there is no shortage of angelic appearances for help, for announcement, for rebuke and for ministering as the Lord desires.**

Prior to the birth of Jesus, an angel appears to Mary (Luke 1: 26-38), to Joseph (Matt. 1: 20-21, 24), to shepherds out in the field (Luke 2: 8-15) and to Zacharias the father of John the Baptist. (Luke 1: 11-20)

Another angel appeared to Joseph when Jesus was a baby sending Him to Egypt to spare Him the destruction which Herod intended. Matt. 2: 13

In Matt. 2: 19, an angel appears to Joseph to tell him to return to Israel after Herod's death.

- **I am especially grateful for the angels in Matt. 4: 11 and for the angel in Luke 22: 43. Matt. 26: 53 tells us, "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"**

An angel appeared and rolled away the stone from the grave. Matt. 28: 2

"His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow."

The angel spoke first to the women at the grave. "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus Who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as he said."

Matt. 28: 5-6

Angels displayed great power on behalf of certain apostles.

Acts 5: 19 Peter and John were released from jail by angels.

Philip was instructed by an angel to speak with the Ethiopian eunuch. Acts 8: 26

An angel spoke to Cornelius the centurion. Acts 10: 3

As Peter was in jail, just after James had been executed, an angel appeared to Peter – his chains fell off – and he led Peter through the streets of Jerusalem opening gates and passing guards as they went. Acts 12: 6-11

An angel prepared Paul for the shipwreck he was to endure. Acts 27: 23

Angels will be judged by the saints.

1 Cor. 6: 3 – "Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?"

Angels are not to be worshiped.

Col. 2: 18 – "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind."

Rev. 22: 8-9 John tells us he fell down before the angel who said to him, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."

- **Is the Work of Angels Finished?**

Angels watch human affairs

1 Cor. 11: 10 – "Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels."

Angels minister to the saints

Heb. 1: 14 – "Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?"

- **Angels are subservient to Christ**

1 Pet. 3: 22- "Who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him."

Heb. 1: 6 – "And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, 'And let all the angels of God worship Him.'"

Angels are prominent in the Book of Revelation. They are continually serving the Redeemer as He controls the earth. The angels are His agents restraining persecution, pouring out wrath on the rebellious, sounding the trumpets of judgment, praising God as He passes judge=ment on Babylon.

Rev. 1: 20; 5: 11-12; 7:1; 12: 7; 14: 18; 16: 5; 19: 17

"For the Christian, the whole weight of the question regarding the existence, reality and activity of angels hinges upon what Christ believed."

When Jesus spoke of angels, it was clear He had regard for them and most certainly believed in their existence.

Matt. 22: 30 Angels are in heaven.

Matt. 25: 41 Some angels are doomed to hell along with Satan.

Matt. 22: 30 Angels are without sex or sensual desires.

Matt. 24: 36 Angels have a high, yet limited intelligence.

Luke 16: 22 Angels bear the saved to heaven.

Matt. 26: 53 Angels are ready to obey their Lord.

Matt. 25: 31 Angels will return with Christ.

Matt. 13: 41, 49 Angels will assist in judgment.

Luke 15: 10 Angels rejoice over the repentant. (Also 1 Cor. 4: 9; Eph. 3: 10)

Luke 12: 8 Angels will hear the confession of Christ's love for His saved ones.

Matt. 18: 10 Angels have a special interest in little children.

1 Pet. 1: 12 –"It was revealed to them (the prophets) that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things into which angels long to look."

Angels are countless in number – 2 Kings 6: 17; Ps. 68: 17; Dan. 7: 9-10; Heb. 12: 22

Angels are given certain powers by God at His discretion – Ps. 104: 4; Heb. 1: 14; Gen. 19: 1, 5

Angels have immense power. – 2 Kgs 19: 35; Ps. 103: 20; Rev. 18: 1, 21

Angels have great wisdom. – 2 Sam. 14: 20; 19: 27; Matt. 24: 36

Angels have great patience. – Num. 22: 22-35

Angels are meek. – 2 Pet. 2: 11; Jude 9

Angels are holy. – Mark 8: 38

Angels are obedient. – Matt. 6: 10

Angels are immortal. – Luke 20: 36

Angels need no rest. – Rev. 4: 8

Angels are subject to God and stand before Him.- Matt. 22: 30; 2 Chron. 18: 18; Rev. 12: 12; 13: 6

Angel means "messenger."

Only three out of the vast host of angels are named:

Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer.

The divisions of the angels are: seraphim, cherubim and archangels.

Revelation, Ephesians, Colossians, Jude and 2 Peter along with Daniel in the OT, give us understanding of the fallen angels.

While the study of angels can be ignored or overemphasized, a balanced approach to these "ministering spirits" is of great value. Angels occupy a large amount of Scripture and their role in our lives and in the ministry of the Lord should be appreciated at the least.

Thank the Lord for His provision of these our fellow servants and strong defenders.

"The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him and rescues them." Ps. 34: 7

ASSURANCE

When a storm is raging outside, there is no better place for a frightened child than in the lap of his father. As the father whispers to the child, "I am here and I will not let anything bad happen to you," the child senses such complete confidence that his fears vanish. The father draws the child close to his chest and the child's little body can be felt to relax in his embrace.

This is the picture I pray you, as the child, will see and know as you read these Scriptures on Assurance.

God is your Father if Jesus is your Lord and Savior. The Father draws you close to His heart and He whispers, "I am here." Our Father does not desire harm to come to us or calamity; His one desire is for His child to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Just as a recipe for a delicious meal includes sweet and bitter ingredients, so our lives will contain sweet and bitter moments. But each has been measured by our loving Father and He will never allow "ingredients" which will destroy us. Remember, His goal is not an easy life – but a holy life, set apart for Him.

This assurance rests on the Father and not on the child. The Father assures the child because of Who the Father is, not because of what the child has done.

- **What Assurance is not**

Assurance is not merely a feeling.

Assurance is not an audible, vocal voice necessarily, but the willingness to take God at His word.

Assurance is not getting everything you ask for or want.

Assurance is not a "get out of jail card" or a promise that you will never see difficulty.

Assurance is not a requirement which God must fulfill; it is offered because of His grace.

Assurance is not partial, but complete.

Assurance is permanent and not temporary, again because of Who issues it.

"*But the tragedy is that while all who are saved have the right to assurance, all do not experience it*." Herbert Lockyer

- **What Assurance Is**

"*The work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence (security) forever*." Is. 32: 17

"*Saving faith directs attention away from self to the Savior. The Bible does not say, 'He that feels good, or feels bad, shall be saved,' but 'he that believes.' We are not left to pump dry hearts and bring up feelings but are to have thoughts wholly occupied with Christ and His finished work on our behalf. We must hasten to say that it is not our experience or even our faith that saves, but Christ alone. He, alone, is the ground of our salvation and certainty. Whatever our changing feelings, our minds must be wholly stayed on the Lord*." Lockyer

"*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life*." 1 John 5: 13

"*But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house – whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end*." Heb. 3: 6

"*For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end."* Heb. 3: 14

"*Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward*." Heb. 10: 35

"*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*." Heb. 11: 1

When we take our eyes off of Jesus, as Peter did, we see the waves and not Him and so …

we begin to sink! Matt. 14: 28-33

- **True assurance is built upon a Scriptural foundation.**

John 6: 37 – *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."*

John 10: 27, 28 – ***"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."***

Read Romans 8: 31-39 and see what He has provided for you.

2 Tim. 1: 12b – "For I know Whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."

Col. 2: 13 – "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions."

Phil. 1: 6 – "For I am confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

1 John 4: 13 – "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."

Col. 2: 2 – "That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself."

"Assurance is an intellectual process whereby the mind is enabled by the Spirit to accept revealed truth, resulting in an emotional state, or a deep soul satisfaction." Lockyer

These Scriptures indicate that it is the purpose of God that believers experience assurance of their life with Him. Doubt breeds all manner of poison to the union with our Father.

- ***"It is the blood of Christ that makes us safe; it is the Word of God that makes us sure." R.A. Torrey***

John 19: 30 – When Jesus said, "It is finished!" He meant it!

Heb. 10: 22 – "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

Heb. 6: 11 – "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end."

1 Pet. 1: 4, 5 – "To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

- ❖ ***Our salvation, of which we are assured, is not a matter of anything less than the power of God. The fact of our salvation rests not in something but in Someone. This produces in us a quiet confidence and assurance.***

Is. 12: 2 – "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation."

- ✓ ***Hindrances to Assurance***

1 John 3: 14; 5:1 tell us of the importance of loving one another.

When we fail to love one another, our assurance is hindered.

Gal. 5: 16 Failure to walk by His Spirit will hinder our assurance.

James 1: 22 Failure to walk in obedience to the Lord's Word results in hindering assurance.

Eph. 2: 13, 14 tells us that Jesus alone is our peace – so any challenge to Christ alone as our peace will hinder our assurance. This assurance must be based solely upon Christ.

1 John 5: 18 tells us of the need to remain holy, set apart for God's use.

When we fail to walk in holiness, our assurance is hindered.

"Holiness is the sap helping to produce the fruit of assurance." Lockyer

The English martyr Latimer said, "When I sit alone, and can have a settled assurance of the state of my soul, and know that God is mine, I can laugh at all troubles and nothing can daunt me."

To be clear in regard to the contrast between assurance and presumption – assurance is a humble confidence and faith in God's Word, whereas presumption originates from self-confidence.

Assurance places all its faith in the accomplishments of God on our behalf.

Presumption places all its faith in his own possessions and attainments.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy." Jude 24

DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT

First of all, why do we even need atonement?

To answer that question we must know what atonement is.

- **WHAT is atonement?**

Reparation for an offense or injury; satisfaction; the reconciliation of God and humankind through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ

- ✓ **Wayne Grudem sees the definition as: "*The atonement is the work Christ did in His life and death to earn our salvation."***

What exactly happened on the cross?

Was it necessary?

"*He who understands the Cross aright … understands the Bible, he understands Jesus Christ*." Emil Brunner

"*The atonement is the crucial doctrine of the faith. Unless we are right here it matters little, or so it seems to me, what we are like elsewhere."* Leon Morris

- **Of all the doctrines, this one shows the organic nature of theology. In other words, we see the various doctrines fitting together in a cohesive fashion, leaning on each other, making one another more understandable.**

The doctrines of the attributes of God, the doctrine of sin, of humanity, of the incarnation, of reconciliation, of redemption, of justification, of salvation, of regeneration, of the righteous wrath of God, all come into clearer focus when the doctrine of atonement has been addressed.

For those who believe there is no need for atonement, they betray their lack of knowledge of a holy God. The righteousness of our holy God demands that the violation to His nature be addressed or paid for.

To adequately inform the reader concerning atonement, we must first acknowledge the character of God.

- **The attributes of God could take a lifetime to consider.**

But we will mention the key ones involved with the atonement.

God is first of all holy. Everything about God is holy.

His love is holy; His anger is holy; His words are holy; His actions are holy; His reasoning is holy; His motives are holy.

God is the Most Holy One – His name is holy. (Psalm 71: 22; 78: 41; 89: 18)

"*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His Glory*." Is. 6: 3

As His children we are called likewise to be holy. Ex. 19: 4-6

In the New Testament, we are told, "*Pursue peace with all men. And the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord*." Heb. 12: 14

"Sanctification" is the Greek word *hagiasmos* which comes from *hagios* (holy). This word means "set apart, consecrated, made for a particular purpose."

Our God is holy and He calls His people to be holy.

- ✓ **We are not holy. Here is the dilemma.**

- ➢ **For those who argue that the atonement was not necessary because God's love is stronger than sin, we direct them to this argument concerning the holiness of God. To hold that God's love could summarily dismiss the charge against sin, reveals a lack of understanding of the HOLY LOVE of God.**

"God is not only perfectly holy, but the source and pattern of holiness: He is the origin and the upholder of the moral order of the universe. He must be just. The Judge of all the earth must do right. Therefore it was impossible by the necessities of His own being that He should deal lightly with sin, and compromise the claims of holiness. If sin could be forgiven at all, it must be on some basis which would vindicate the holy law of God, which is not a mere code, but the moral order of the whole creation. But such vindication must be extremely costly. But costly to whom? Not to the forgiven sinner, for there could be no price asked from him for his forgiveness; both because the cost is fat beyond his reach, and because God loves to give and not to sell. Therefore God Himself undertook to pay a cost, to offer a sacrifice, so tremendous

that the gravity of His condemnation of sin should be absolutely beyond question even as He forgave it, while at the same time the Love which impelled Him to pay the price would be ther wonder of angels, and would call forth the worshipping gratitude of the redeemed sinner…

***He suffered, not only awful physical anguish, but also the unthinkable spiritual horror of becoming identified with the sin to which He was infinitely opposed*.**" **H. E. Guillebaud <u>Why the Cross?</u>**

- **WHY is there a need for an atonement? Because God is holy and we are not!**

Therefore, it becomes clear that our holy God must choose between maintaining His holiness and abandoning His love for His unholy children or the opposite – abandon His holiness to preserve His sinful children.

God, being the Creator, was able to create a solution; He became both just and the justifier. "***For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*.**" **Rom. 3: 26**

We have asked the WHAT question – What is atonement?

We have asked the WHY question – Why do we need atonement?

- **Now we must ask the WHO question.**

Who can atone for us bringing us back into fellowship with the Holy Father?

All throughout the Old Testament sacrifices were made in order to appease the wrath of God against the unholiness of man.

These sacrifices (many mentioned throughout the book of Leviticus) were a shadow pointing to the fulfillment which could only come with a truly blameless sacrifice. "*Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them."* Heb. 10: 8

"***For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified… Now where there is forgiveness for these things, there is no longer any offering for sin*.**" **Heb. 10: 14, 18**

WHO is this that can take away the sin of the rebellious child?

"*Then I said, 'Behold, I have come in the scroll of the book it is written of Me, to do Your will, O God.'*" Heb. 10: 7

"*It is an actual fact that the death of our Lord upon the cross is mentioned directly 175 times in the New Testament and indirectly many more times*." Martyn Lloyd Jones

We must have a clear understanding of what exactly took place on the cross. Was it an example to follow as some have said?

Did the disciples understand what happened as Christ suffered on the cross?

John 1: 29 tells us, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world*."

***"Jesus suffered the penalty of the broken law vicariously, as the substitute for His people*." Lloyd Jones**

1 Cor. 5: 7 says, "*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*."

Gal. 1: 4, "*Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father*."

"*Neither by the blood of goats and claves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us… How much more will the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*" Heb. 9:12, 14

***"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit*." 1 Pet. 3: 18**

"*Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*." Matt. 20: 28

1 Tim. 2: 5, 6 "*For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time*."

"*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation*." 2 Cor. 5: 19

For the careful observer, you have seen other questions answered in the above verses.

HOW is atonement made?

WHERE is atonement made?

WHEN is atonement made?

- **If you re-read the above verses with each of these questions in mind, you will see that HOW is answered in the sacrifice which Jesus makes. We are no longer under the curse of our own sin.**

He has paid the price which we owed our holy God.

He was our Substitute to face the consequence of our sin.

"*He has been made sin for us. God has imputed our sins to Christ. He has punished then in Christ and now He does not impute our sins to us but imputes to us the righteousness of His own Son*." Lloyd Jones

- **WHERE is answered at the cross. This is crucial to our faith to know how very much depended on that cross and what exactly was gained there.**

Our Lord gained our forgiveness and our buying back from the clutches of death. We no longer BELONG to the enemy of our souls. We BELONG to God. "*For He rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His believe Son, in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*." Col. 1: 13, 14

"*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace*." Eph. 1: 6

"*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' – in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*." Gal. 3: 13, 14

- **WHEN is also answered in these many verses – Atonement took place WHEN Jesus offered Himself in our place. He took the penalty which was assigned to us.**

This is why many times you will see the expression: *penal substitution* or *vicarious atonement*.

Jesus was our representative. He took our place.

"*It would not have been right for the restoration of human nature to be left undone, and … it could not have been done unless man paid what was owing to God for sin. But the debt was so great that, while man alone owed it, only God could pay it, so that the same person must be both man and God. Thus it was necessary for God to take manhood into the unity of His Person, so that he who in his own nature ought to pay and could not should be in a person who could … The life of this man was so sublime, so precious, that it can suffice to pay what is owing for the sins of the whole world, and infinitely more.*" Anselm (translated by Eugene Fairweather)

Certain Scriptures teach us that it was in God's mind and plan before the foundation of the world – there is an eternal aspect to what happened on the cross on Calvary's hill.

Acts 2: 23: "*Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*."

"*But with precious blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you*."

1 Pet. 1: 19, 20

"*The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* …" Rev. 13: 8

- **Some question the absolute necessity for the atonement.**

To that, I remind them, Would God, the Eternal Father, ever have submitted His beloved Son to endure the horror of BECOMING SIN AND FACING SEPARATION FROM HIM unless it was absolutely necessary?

"*There is a sense in which it can be said that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who has ever tasted death in all its bitterness and horror*." Lloyd Jones

"*But we do see Him Who was made for a little while lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone*." Heb. 2: 9

- **There are many other arguments concerning the doctrine of atonement.**

Why would there be so much confusion concerning this truth?

This is a crucial biblical teaching that must be understood and taught so that the believer can walk in full forgiveness and righteousness which emanates from our Lord alone.

I will list a few of the arguments and see which ones you can refute based on the verses within this article.

- **It is unjust of God to punish someone who is innocent.**
- **The moral influence theory – the cross was a display of God's love intended to elicit from man a believing response.**
- **The ransom theory – the death of Jesus was to pay Satan his due.**
- **The commercial or satisfaction theory – God's honor must be satisfied. (Anselm)**
- **The governmental theory – God sent His Son to the cross that man might know how serious sin is.**
- **The example of Christ – the cross occurred so believers would likewise live a sacrificial life.**
- **The mystical theory – by dying upon the cross Christ removed sin, so our Lord's death purged human nature of sin.**
- **Vicarious repentance theory – man is incapable of repentance so Christ on the cross offered repentance on man's behalf.**

"*There is no greater fallacy than the argument that goes from men to God. It is a very common error today. People are constantly arguing like that – if this is true of us, they say, how much more so of God? As if God were in series with us! The truth is, of course, that we are in sin and all our ideas are wrong; our conception of love is more wrong than anything else and if we begin to think of God's love in terms of what <u>we</u> do and what <u>we</u> think, then – I say it with reverence – God help us!*" Lloyd Jones

It would be a great exercise for you to go through these false concepts of atonement and refute each one based on the Scriptures here and others. You must become comfortable and knowledgeable about handling the Scriptures – so here is an opportunity to do that!

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

"*A primary cause of the confusion within the Christian Church today is its lack of a valid authority… The Bible is authoritative because it is not the words of mere humans, though humans were the channels by which it came to us, but it is the direct result of the 'breathing-out' of God*." J. M. Boice

"The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God." **Wayne Grudem**

"*The divine Logos is the mediating agent in all revelation. This mediated Word is conveyed in rational-verbal form and is scripturally given…God, Who reveals Himself in His intelligible Word, is also personally and powerfully present in His Word, either in creation or preservation, grace or judgment. His Word defines and expresses His sovereign power and the dependence of everything else on His will*." Carl F.H. Henry

The major teachings of the Bible can be summed up in the following four categories:

1. **The authority of Scripture**
2. **The clarity of Scripture**
3. **The necessity of Scripture**
4. **The sufficiency of Scripture**

We will discuss the first point in this doctrine.

"*Thus saith the Lord*" is a way in the Old Testament of showing that these are the words of the Lord. This parallels the contemporary edicts of kings. When a king would issue a proclamation, his words could not be challenged or questioned but had to be obeyed.

"*It has been noted that in the Pentateuch alone the words "the LORD said" occur almost eight hundred times and that the words "Thus saith the Lord' are a recurring refrain throughout the prophets."* James Montgomery Boice

When a prophet spoke on behalf of God, he possessed the authority of the Sovereign God.

Many passages throughout the Old Testament attest the valid offerings of His called prophets.

1 Kings 14: 18. "*All Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through His servant Ahijah the prophet*."

2 Kings 9: 36, "*Therefore they returned and told him. And he said, 'This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel.'"*

Jer. 37: 2, *"But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the LORD which He spoke through Jeremiah the prophet."*

In the New Testament, we see Matt. 1: 21-23, saying, "'*She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which translated means, 'God with us.'*"

This is a case of the New Testament functioning as a commentary on the Old Testament. The New Testament gives validity and weight to the Old.

When Matthew wrote this (above) he was functioning as the mouthpiece of the Lord, restating what the Lord had already prophesied through another mouthpiece – Isaiah.

"*In the New Testament, a number of passages indicate that all of the Old Testament writings are thought of as God's words.*

***2 Tim. 3: 16 says, 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.' Here 'Scripture' (graphe) must refer to the Old Testament written Scripture, for that is what the word graphe refers to in every one of its fifty-one occurrences in the New Testament*."**

Grudem

2 Pet. 1: 21 says, "*No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."*

***"Similarly, Peter teaches that the writers of the Bible were borne along in their writing to produce the words which God intended to be recorded. They wrote as people, but as people moved by the Holy Spirit. The result was the revelation of God*." Boice**

Remember, when tempted by the devil (Matt. 4: 1-11), Jesus made use of the Scriptures (Deuteronomy), to refute and unmask the enemy's lies.

The power of the Scriptures is undeniable! They are filled with the very voice of God.

"*Till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished*." Matt. 5: 18

"*The only basis for the law's imperishable quality is that it is actually divine. The reason it will not pass away is that it is the Word of the true, living and eternal God*." Boice

Acts 2: 16-17 says*, "But this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be in the last days,' says God, 'that I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams.'"*

- ✓ **Here we see that words of Scripture are said to be spoken by the Holy Spirit.**

Many other passages say the same thing.

Luke 1: 70; 24: 25; John 5: 45-47; Acts 3: 18, 21; 4: 25; 13: 47; 28: 25; Rom. 1: 1; 3: 2; 9: 17; 1 Cor. 9: 8-10; Heb. 1: 1-2, 6-7

"When Paul referred to God-breathed (2 Tim. 3: 16) in regard to Scripture, he saw the Old Testament as words from God. For every word of the Old

***Testament, God is the One Who spoke (and still speaks) it, although God used human agents to write these words down."* Grudem**

Jesus clearly regarded Moses as the author of the first five books of the Bible.

Speaking of Ex. 3:6, Jesus says, "*But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I AM the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*?'"

The division of the Jewish Bible is different than the Christian Bible.

1. **Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**
2. **Prophets:**
   a. **Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Sam., 1 and 2 Kings**
   b. **Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Book of the Twelve**
3. **Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah. And 1 and 2 Chronicles**

This is referred to as the *Tanakh.* Torah (the Teachings or the Law), Nevi'im (the Prophets) and Ketuv'im (the Writings).

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS AUTHORITATIVE WORD

God must be "proved" by means other than human because He is so completely other than we are. A divine method of revelation is required to produce a divine understanding of Who God is.

"*As individuals study the Bible, God speaks to them in their study and transforms them by the truths they find there… The Bible is the living voice of God. The living God speaks through its pages*." Boice

"*The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned*." 1 Cor. 2: 14

As far as the arguments for the authority of God's word being a circular argument, this "*does not make its use invalid, for all arguments for an absolute authority must ultimately appeal to that authority for proof: otherwise the authority would not be an absolute or highest authority. This problem is not unique to the Christian who is arguing for the authority of the Bible. Everyone either implicitly or explicitly uses some kind of circular argument when defending his or her ultimate authority for belief*." Grudem

So where does this inability to think correctly come from?

Sin is ultimately irrational and sin makes us think irrationally about God. We have become brain damaged since the Fall. The efforts of the Lord through the Bible and the Holy Spirit is to restore to us some semblance of truth in our thinking.

But because sin distorts man's perception of reality, humans run from the light which shines within the Scriptures.

Apart from the Holy Spirit, there is NO understanding of the truths within Scripture.

"*Sanctify them in the truth; You word is truth." John 17: 17*

***"We are to think of the Bible as the ultimate standard of truth, the reference point by which every other claim to truthfulness is to be measured*." Grudem**

"*The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact."*

This is the common definition of the inerrancy of Scripture.

This definition means that the Bible always tells the truth, and that it always tells the truth concerning everything it talks about. It does not mean that the Bible tells us every fact there is to know about any one subject. Grudem

When the Bible speaks of the sun rising and the rain falling this is acceptable because from the perspective of the speaker this is what has occurred.

SO HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

"Somewhat comparably, just as the Holy Spirit came upon the virgin Mary so that she conceived the human Son of God in her womb, so also did the Holy Spirit come upon the brain cells of Moses, David, the prophets, the evangelists, Paul and the other biblical writers, so that they brought forth from their minds those books which constitute our Bible. Their writings bear the marks of human personality. They differ in style. Yet the ultimate source is divine, and the touch of the human does not stamp them with error any more than the womb of May imparted sin to the Savior." Boice

"*Indeed there would be no special revelation for us at all had not God chosen prophets and apostles and charged them to transmit His Word in the form not only of oral proclamation but of letter and book*." Carl Henry

HOW WERE ANCIENT BOOKS MADE

The materials used for making books were varied.

- **In almost every culture the earliest material on which writing has been discovered is stone. Hammurabi (c. 1750 B.C.) set up his stele, a stone monument, so that anyone could read his 250 laws.**

Hebrew ancient writing also was on stone: the Gezer Calendar (a kind of poem dealing with agricultural activities) and the Siloam Inscription (a writing detailing the successful completion of the tunnel of Hezekiah). And of course the Ten Commandments were written on stone.

- **Clay was also a common material used for writing.**

Refer to: Ezekiel 4: 1

"*The moist clay was made into tablets, then written upon and baked in an oven or allowed to dry in the sun*." Neil R. Lightfoot

Clay tablets are the method used for several chronicles of kings mentioned in the Old Testament.

- **Wood and wax are other methods of recording valuable information.**

Refer to: Num. 17: 2-3; Ezek. 37: 16-17

The Romans called a tablet bound together a "codex."

- **Metal was used for a writing surface as well.**

Ex. 28: 36

- **Ostraca, or potsherds, were used for writing mostly everyday things, like lists. One such sherd has been found that contains the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.**

  The people of Athens would write names of those chosen to be banished on ostraca and hence the word "ostracized."

- **Papyrus which was lighter and more flexible than any other material to this point became the mode of choice over time.**

  "*Pliny lived in the first century A.D. and has left an important account of how strips of papyrus were transformed into 'paper.'"* Lightfoot

  The term *biblos* was a Greek substitute for papyrus.

  Later *biblos* came to mean "book."

- **Leather and parchment came to be used for writing as well.**

  Paul speaks of this in 2 Tim. 4: 13

The scroll was the common product for reading.

Over time the scroll was traded in for the Codex - a book with leaves, in the modern sense instead of rolling out and rolling in the written passage.

At first the codex was of papyrus and then of parchment.

"*The Christians were the first to make extensive use of the codex."* Lightfoot

✓ There are three languages used in the Bible.

Hebrew and a little Aramaic in the Old Testament.

Greek and a little Aramaic in the New Testament.

The New Testament books were primarily written on papyrus sheets which tend to deteriorate with constant use. "*So not long after the New Testament was written, the original autographs perished*." Lightfoot

Early Christians were prompted to make copies of these divinely authoritative documents. Copies of the New Testament in Greek are known as "manuscripts."

New Testament manuscripts are of two types: uncials (written in capital letters) and miniscules (a smaller writing and more like cursive writing.

The miniscules did not appear until the ninth century and thereby are of less value.

The most important copies of the Scriptures are the oldest ones.

The oldest are: the Vatican, the Sinaitic and the Alexandrian Manuscripts.

"*They date back to A.D. 300-450.*" Lightfoot

The Vatican Manuscript is fourth century and known as the most important witness of the text of the New Testament. This document contains almost all of the Old and New Testaments in Greek.

The Sinaitic Manuscript is the earliest complete copy of the New Testament know to exist.

There are other uncials, there are many miniscules (most from the ninth centuries and later).

"*Manuscripts of the New Testament date back to the fourth century, and a good number of the papyri reach back even farther*." Lightfoot

As concerns the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Aleppo Codex is considered the first in rank.

The Leningrad Codex is also held in high repute.

The process of transcribing the holy Scriptures which the Jewish scribe practiced was intense and meticulous. There were constant guidelines in place which insured minimal or really no errors. Copies found with any error at all were buried or destroyed.

"*The Massoretes, who go back to about A.D. 500, succeeded the earlier scribes*."

Lightfoot

The Massoretes had methods which would guarantee the finished product.

Intricate procedures of counting would eliminate scribal slips.

"*They numbered the verses, words, and letters of each book. They counted the number of times each letter was used in each book*." Lightfoot

Then they would meticulously count and recount.

In March of 1948 a miraculous discovery was made concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls. These old copies have made the validation of our current Scriptures very solid.

Qumran, where the documents were found, was inhabited from the second century B.C. to the first century A.D. So this tells us the age of these materials.

Since 1948, more scrolls have been discovered. In all about eight thousand scrolls have been found, including many other fragments – thousands, in fact!

"*The vast majority of the manuscripts found near the Dead Sea are closely akin to or are virtually identical with the Massoretic Text*." Lightfoot

This is to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the Lord in His oversight to guarantee that the scribal errors were not an issue for the authority of Scripture.

"*The most important materials in the establishing of a text are those that are found in the original language of the text…. Nevertheless, additional materials often can cast much light on the text.*" Lightfoot

The Septuagint, for example, is valuable for our understanding even though the translation is not exactly word for word from the Hebrew.

The **Septuagint** (from the Latin: *septuāgintā* literally "seventy", often abbreviated as or **LXX** and sometimes called the **Greek Old Testament**) is the earliest extant Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures from the original Hebrew. It is estimated that the first five books of the Old Testament, known as the Torah or Pentateuch, were translated in the mid-3rd century BCE and the remaining texts were translated in the 2nd century BCE. Considered the primary Greek translation of the Old Testament, it is

quoted a number of times in the New Testament particularly in the Pauline epistles, by the Apostolic Fathers, and later by the Greek Church Fathers.

The Greek translation was in circulation among the Alexandrian Jews who were fluent in Greek, the common language in Egypt at the time, but not in Hebrew. Separated from the Hebrew canon in Rabbinic Judaism, translations of the Torah into Greek by early Jewish scribes have survived as rare fragments only.

The full title in Ancient Greek: Ἡ τῶν Ἑβδομήκοντα μετάφρασις, literally "The Translation of the Seventy", derives from the traditional story recorded in the Letter of Aristeas that the Septuagint was translated at the request of Ptolemy II Philadelphus by 70 or 72 Jewish scholars (6 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel) who independently translated identical versions of the entire Hebrew canon.

The Septuagint should not be confused with other Greek versions of the Old Testament, most of which did not survive except as fragments (some parts of these being known from Origen's Hexapla, a comparison of six translations in adjacent columns, now almost wholly lost). Of these, the most important are those by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion.

Notes from Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint

"*The Septuagint will always hold interest among Christians. For a while it was the only Bible for the early Church. It was the text most often quoted by the apostles and inspired writers of the New Testament. Paul, for example, did not write peasant Greek or soldier Greek but wrote as a man with the Septuagint in his blood*." Lightfoot

But Can We Trust the Scriptures?

The testimony of Jesus bears witness to the authority of Scripture.

The Bible makes claims itself that the words it contains are reliable.

There is a superiority in doctrine and ethics in the Bible compared to all other books.

The power of the Bible has been evidenced in the changed lives of those who submit to its truths. The Bible changes us!

The extraordinary unity of a book written over 1500 years by over forty different authors, composed of sixty-six parts is unparalleled. This unity is one more evidence that there is truly only One Author!

The biblical writers would not have claimed divine origin for a book which they knew was their own which would eventually cost them their lives through execution.

The Bible is uncommonly accurate as well. As we progress in time, more and more accuracy is revealed concerning the Bible's attestations.

"*Ancient documents from Dura, Ras Shamra, Egypt and the Dead Sea have thrown light on biblical reliability. Recently Tell Mardikh in northwest Syria… Thus far, fifteen thousand tablets dating from approximately 2300 B.C. (two to five hundred years before Abraham) have been discovered. In them are hundreds of names ... Their very existence already tends to verify the Old Testament narratives*." Boice

Another reason the Scriptures can be trusted is the fulfilment of prophecy.

No other faith has as much fulfilled prophecy.

The Word of God is extraordinary in its preservation down through the centuries. Many have tried to destroy God's message of truth – yet Bibles are more accessible and available now than ever before.

"*The struggle against the authority of the Bible is therefore inseparable from the struggle against divine authority, even as the struggle for the authority of the Bible is a struggle for transcendent authority and against any transcendent authority higher than God*." Carl Henry

"**If the Bible had been only the thoughts and work of human beings, it would have been eliminated long ago in the face of such opposition, as other books have been. BUT IT HAS ENDURED!**" Boice

- ✓ Some have referred to the Inerrancy of Scripture or the Infallibility of Scripture, but the Authority of Scripture is to be preferred on numerous counts. God has authority in our lives because His Word speaks His thoughts to us. This term keeps the focus on God since He alone is the Author not only of His Word but of His children.

"*If the Bible is the Word of God, as Jesus taught, it must for this reason alone be entirely trustworthy, for God is a God of truth*." Boice

Jesus Himself said, "*You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to Me … Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope. If you believed Moses, you*

would believe Me, for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" John 5: 39, 45-47

Also note Luke 24: 25-27. Jesus here speaks to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus. He explains fully Who He is based on the Old Testament Scriptures.

Bishop Ryle of England: "Give me the plenary, verbal theory of biblical inspiration with all its difficulties, rather than the doubt. I accept the difficulties and humbly wait for their solution. But while I wait, I am standing on the rock."

God's hand can be clearly seen in the fact that Greek was the language spoken throughout the known world at the time of the New Testament Bible. The apostles and later early missionaries went throughout the world carrying the gospel by word of mouth and in written form. Greek was the common language of the day and all people knew it. This assured that those carrying the gospel message could indeed be understood by human language as the Spirit made truth evident.

"*To know God we must be taught from the Bible by the Holy Spirit. It is only then that a full awareness of the nature of the Bible and its authority is borne home upon our minds and hearts, and we find ourselves taking a firm stand upon that cherished revelation*." Boice

- **The internal witness of the Spirit must not be omitted as one of the greatest testimonies to the authority of Scripture.**

Not only was the Holy Spirit active in the writing of the biblical books, He is also active in revealing the truth of the Bible to the minds of those who read it today.

The Bible addresses spiritual themes and so the activity of the Holy Spirit is required for understanding. This is not a human book alone, but a divine one.

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Eph. 1: 18

So we must pray as we approach this Holy Book and ask the very Spirit of God to illuminate our way to understand Who He is and what He is saying to us.

God has not given us the Spirit to make diligent study unnecessary; the Spirit has been given to cause His Word to transform us into the image of His Son!

"*We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed in us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit*." 1. Cor. 2: 12-1

Additional notes on the Canon

NOTES ON THE CANON

OLD TESTAMENT CANON

The earliest collection of the written words of God was the Ten Commandments – this forms the beginning of the Biblical canon.

Ex. 31:18; 32:16; Deut. 4:13

The writings in the Old Testament continue until approximately 435 B.C. with the prophet Malachi.

Within the Biblical account, numerous references are made to God's instructions to those He entrusted with His message … His word. Ex. 2:3,7; 3:10; 4:10-16; Jer. 1:9; 15:14,16; 30:2; 36:4; Hag. 1:1; Mal. 1:1

Jesus and New Testament authors quote various parts of the Old Testament Scripture as divinely authoritative over 295 times. Acts 1:16 ("the Holy Spirit foretold")

NEW TESTAMENT CANON

The collected writings of the New Testament canon involved a slow process which was substantially completed by A.D. 175(except for a few books whose authorship was disputed).

Various church councils which pronounced upon the canon were merely stating publicly what had been widely accepted by the consciousness of the church for some time.

Reasons for developing the canon included the fact that heretics such as Marcion were developing their own canons. Also the fact that the apostles were slowly passing away from the scene, demonstrated the need for some records that would be recognized as authoritative.

Writers of the Scriptures referred to each other's writings as part of the Scriptures. 2 Pet. 3:2, 16; 1 Tim. 6:2-4(reference to doctrines to be followed as directive from the Lord)

Marks of apostolicity – rules used to determine which books entered the canon

- Was it written by an apostle or one closely associated with an apostle
- Did the book have the capacity to edify when read publicly
- Did the book agree with the rule of faith

Muratorian Canon discovered in Milan in 18th century dates from around 180 AD

Athanasius, in his Easter letter of 367 to the churches under his jurisdiction, listed as canonical the same 27 books we have now.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Before we begin with the teaching regarding the Body of Christ as the Church, it is wise to consider the actual body of Christ.

Who was Christ before He took on flesh and blood?

We should meditate on this frequently.

Consider this: Heb. 10: 5 "Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me."

The Father prepared a body for the Son of God to take on. Before that, He was adored constantly in heaven by the heavenly host.

John Piper writes: **He existed before the incarnation.**

Jesus Christ existed before he was made man at the incarnation. Jesus himself made the claim, so stunning — and even offensive to first-century Jewish sentiments, so offensive that "they picked up stones to throw at him" — when he said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58–59).

True as it was, this jarring reality didn't go over much better in John 6. "'What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?' . . . After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him" (John 6:62, 66).

"Unlike every other human birth, Christmas is not a beginning, but a becoming. Christ was not created; he came."

But those who were given eyes to see the glory didn't turn back; their number would eventually include Paul and the author of Hebrews. Melchizedek, who lived a thousand years before Jesus, resembled the Son of God by "having neither beginning of days nor end of life" (Hebrews 7:3). And Israel's wilderness generation "drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). Beyond that, four New Testament refrains join the chorus that the person of Christ existed long before that first Christmas.

He Came

Mark's Gospel opens under the banner of Jesus as Yahweh himself come to earth (Mark 1:1–3). He came from outside the created realm, into our world, to bring God's long-promised rescue. "The Son of Man *came* . . . to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28; also Mark 10:45 and Luke 19:10). In John, the language of coming, as in John 6:62, is *descending*. "The Son of Man *descended* from heaven" (John 3:13). Mere humans don't descend; they begin.

Again, Paul and Hebrews follow in the Gospel wake. "Christ *came* into the world" (Hebrews 10:5), and in one of the most terse and potent gospel summaries, "Christ Jesus *came* into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). Related to coming is *manifestation*. "He was *manifested* in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but *was made manifest* in the last times for the sake of you" (1 Peter 1:20).

He Became

On its own, "becoming" wouldn't necessitate preexistence. The key is to ask what he was before he became. He was divinely rich and became humanly poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). He was in "the form of God," then took "the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:6–7). One who was infinitely high, because he was God, became a little lower than the angels, because he became man (Hebrews 2:9).

His "becoming" was not a ceasing to be what he had been previously, but a "taking on" (Philippians 2:7) of human flesh and blood. The fully divine Son added full humanity to his person.

He Was Sent

Prophets were *sent* without preexisting, but not so with God's own Son. He was sent from outside the world of flesh, into it, to redeem his people. The context is fundamentally different when we're talking about sending the eternal Son, rather than mere human messengers.

In the parable of the tenants, the owner of the vineyard, at long last, sent his "beloved son" (Mark 12:6), decisively distinct in relationship from the other servants he had sent prior. "When the fullness of time had come," Paul writes in Galatians 4:4, "God sent forth his Son, born of woman." God didn't take an already born human and send him forth; he sent forth his own divine Son to be human. Likewise, in the sacrifice of his Son, God did what we non-preexistent humans could not do for ourselves: "By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3)."

Before we ever see Jesus as a human baby, we must realize that He has always existed.

Before time and space, He existed.

The Supremacy of God's Son

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, Hebrews 1:1–3

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Col. 1: 17, 18

And He put all things in subjection under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church. **Eph. 1: 22**

But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him Who is the head, even Christ, from Whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. **Eph. 4: 15, 16**

4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, **5** so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. **Romans 12: 4, 5**

A body you have prepared for Me. **Heb. 10: 5-9**

Christ accepted taking on a human body, being limited and restricted as He never experienced before the incarnation. He is still and will always be housed in this body now.

"To put it in the apostle John's language, the Word *became* flesh (John 1:14). His humanity isn't a costume. The eternal divine Son didn't simply make a cameo in the created world. He forever joined our humanity to his divinity and for all eternity will be fully God *and fully man*.

Jesus didn't shed his human skin. He still has a body—a "glorious body," a perfected human body, a body like we haven't yet experienced but one day will experience when he transforms us.'

https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/jesus-is-still-human

In becoming Man, Jesus accepted His future identification with us forever.

His was no temporary costume change. He is committed fully to His human status … for us.

So, when we say, we are the body of Christ, we are making a statement not so much about us as about Him. If He can make this great and eternal sacrifice, can we likewise not sacrifice a little – just for this short time?

We are the body of Christ because of Who He is.

"This image emphasizes that the church is the locus of Christ's activity now just as was His physical body during His earthly ministry."

Christian Theology, Millard Erickson

Within the body, each member is in connection to the other. One is not above the other or below. Each member needs the other and is needed by the other. This dependence is a strong cause of the unity which the Lord desires as stated in **John 17**.

When we disregard or harm another member of the body, we are harming ourselves.

To engage in destructive attitudes, words, or actions against a fellow believer is to do harm to oneself.

Do we really believe this?

Our actions would say we do not believe this.

The body of Christ thrives on wholesome fellowship. This fellowship is only as healthy as each individual part of the body. Our individual responsibility is to manage our own spiritual health and also to minister in true and sincere concern for the others of the body. This requires a constant communing with the Lord so He can check our attitudes and thoughts before a problem erupts.

Is Jesus alive?

Careful how you answer this.

If you say, "Yes." Then how do you back that up?

If He is alive, He has an influence. What is His influence? How does He influence?

His influence is through His Body, just as it was as He walked the earth 2, 000 years ago.
The amazing thing is that He told us:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." John 14: 12

Now how can that be? He is Jesus!

Yes, He is Jesus and if you believe that He still lives, then you MUST believe that He lives within you!

You and I are the Body of Christ!

This means so much more than we have complacently accepted.

This means, as we read the Gospel accounts and we see Jesus ministering, we are called to minister.

Does this mean we will raise people from the dead?

I don't know. Maybe, if that's what God wants to do through you!

Be an available vessel and stand back and watch what He can do!

Believe big!! Or why believe?

The Body of Christ is far more amazing and glorious than we have allowed ourselves to accept.

Stop settling and see Jesus for Who He truly is: the Resurrected Lord of Life!

Who Is Jesus?

He is Faithful and True. Rev. 19: 11

He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Rev. 19: 16

He is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. Is. 9: 6

He is the Alpha and Omega – the Beginning and the End. Rev. 21: 6; 1: 8

He is the Mediator of a Better Covenant enacted on better promises. Heb. 8

He is the High Priest of the good things to come Heb. 9: 11

He is the merciful and faithful High Priest. Heb. 2: 17

He is a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb. 7

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (pre-eminent one) of all creation. Col. 1: 15

He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. Col. 1: 17

He is the Head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. Col. 1: 18

In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form. Col. 2: 9

He is the Chief Shepherd; the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. 1 Pet. 2: 25; 5: 4

He is the Cornerstone 1 Pet. 2: 6; Eph. 2: 20

He is the Author and Perfecter of your faith. Heb. 12: 2

He is the Captain of your salvation. Heb. 2: 10

He is our Forerunner, entering into heaven. Heb. 6: 20

He is our Great High Priest, Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, Heb. 4: 14

He is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Heb. 3: 1

He is the Heir of all things. Heb. 1: 2

He is the Holy One. Acts 3: 14

He is the Word. John 1: 1

He is the Word made flesh. John 1: 14

He has explained the Father. John 1: 18

He is the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the earth, Who takes away the sin of the world. John 1: 29; Rev. 13: 8

He is the Messiah – the Anointed One – the Son of the Living God. Matt. 16: 16

He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Rev. 5: 5

He is the Light of the World, the Living Bread, the Living Water, The Resurrection and the Life, the Good Shepherd, the Gate, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Vine. Gospel of John

He is the Son of God and the Son of David. Matt. 1

He is the Root of David. Rev. 22: 16

He is the King. Zech. 9:9

He is the King of the ages. 1 Tim. 1: 17

He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. 1 Tim. 6: 15; Phil. 2: 10

He is the Lord of glory. 1 Cor. 2: 8

He is the Morning Star. Rev. 22: 16

He is a Nazarene. Matt. 2: 23

He is the Prince of Life. Acts 3: 15

He is our Rock. 1 Cor. 10: 4

He is our Savior. Luke 2: 11

And So Much More …..

This is Jesus, do you know Him as such?

If this is Jesus and we are His Body, then what are we doing?

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST INTENDS HER TO BE

The Church is not a club.
The Church is not a group of people joined around a list of rules.
The Church is not the Kingdom of God.
The Church is not a building.
The Church is not located on a particular street with a particular denomination attached to it.

Ask five people what "church" means and you will get five different answers.

So how do we come to an accurate, biblical, God-honoring understanding of this crucial word?

- **So what is the Church?**

When answering the "what is?" question, it is usually helpful to develop a ***definition.***

One of the clearest definitions usually comes from the original language of the word.

Here the word in the New Testament Greek is most times: *ekklesia.*

Ekklesia

This word can refer to an individual church or a group of churches

It can refer to all believers in a given city: **Acts 8: 1; 13: 1**

Paul Coenen tells us that "*In Acts too, as in Paul, the **ekklesia** is ultimately one. Admittedly, it appears only as it gathers in particular places (**Acts 14: 27**). But it always implies the totality*."

Luke never uses *ekklesia* in his Gospel but employs the word 24 times in **Acts**. This is significant as it indicates Luke's belief that the Church was not actually present until the period covered in Acts.

Paul uses the word *ekklesia* more than any New Testament author.

- The Church is universal in nature. **Matt. 16: 18; Eph. 1: 22-23**

Also **1 Cor. 10: 32; 11: 22; 12: 28; Col. 1: 18, 24**

"*The Church includes all persons anywhere in the world who are savingly related to Christ. It also includes all who have lived and been part of His body, and all who will live and be part of His body*." Erickson

Old Testament words are:

Qahal – stems from a word meaning "to assemble" **Deut. 9: 10; 10: 4; 23:1-3**

'edah – refers to the people, particularly as "gathered before the tent of meeting." That the term first occurs in **Exodus 12: 3,** suggests that the *"congregation of Israel came into being with the command to celebrate the Passover and leave Egypt... qahal is the ceremonial expression for the assembly that results from the covenant."* Millard Erickson Christian Theology

In the Old Testament, God chose a particular people; He did not choose an existing nation but instead, he created a people for His own. **Ex. 15: 16** calls the people of Israel, "Your people … the people whom You have purchased."

Did you ever wonder "What was the big deal with Abraham and Sarai being barren for so long?"

When God raised up a people of His own He did not adopt an existing nation as His own but He brought into being a totally new people. Through a miraculous conception and birth (Isaac) God created the Hebrew nation!

"*For Israel the covenant was the Abrahamic covenant; for the church it is the new covenant wrought and established by Christ*." **2 Cor. 3: 3-18**

Biblical Images of the Church

The Bible uses a number of images to describe the Church.

The temple of the Holy Spirit

The body of Christ

The Bride of Christ

One of the problems with understanding the Church is our problem with understanding God.

We are more interested in what God does than with Who God is. What is God like?

In regard to the Church, this carries over to our understanding of the Church. We are more aware of the mission of the Church than the identity of the Church. Because the Church is dynamic, we must seek to understand and come to terms with the true identity of the Church. Following with our discussion of what the Church is not – the Church is not static.

We are forever seeing the Church adapting, reaching people with the same message (the gospel) but with ever changing methods. Language is dynamic and if you use a word that meant something 30 years ago that now is a divisive word, you can quickly see the dynamic nature of words! The same is true of the Church. What may have been effective and poignant 30 years ago, may no longer have any impact. We must be sensitive to the growing and changing world in order to be a dynamic Church. This does not mean that we sacrifice or compromise the essentials of our faith. But just as Jesus adapted His parables to the people to whom He spoke, we must adapt to our surroundings as well. We must not be lazy and do what we have always done.

What distinguishes the Church as the Church?

What qualifies the Church to be called the Church?

The Visible Church and the Invisible Church

The Visible Church is made up of the people who profess belief in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. They are aligned within a particular group of professing believers, participating in the sacraments instituted by our Lord.

The Invisible Church is made up of those known by God to be His own.

Must a Christian Be a Part of the Visible Church?

Acts 2: 47 would indicate that assembling together with other believers is the early standard of the Church. Yet there is never any indication that salvation is dependent on connectedness with a group of believers**. Acts 2: 37; 16: 30** tell us what is necessary in regard to faith: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

So in these instances, we see the precedence of the invisible Church. In other words, the faith of each individual person qualifies them for entrance into the family of God, not membership in a church.

Membership in a visible church is no guarantee of justification in God's sight. Yet, God has clearly encouraged the assembling together of believers. From this assembly, the Church is strengthened and humbled. God has chosen the "belonging" of one another to be the basis for growth and ministry for individuals and for communities of believers.

Read the Parable of the weeds amid the wheat (**Matt. 13: 24-43**) and you will see that the Lord instructs us to abide with all professed disciples. He tells us that He knows those who are His and we are to leave this to Him to reveal at the proper time. **2 Tim. 2: 19**

"*Christianity is a corporate matter, and the Christian life can be fully realized only in relationship to others*." Erickson

Eph. 5: 32 – Christ and the Church are a great mystery.

The Church makes known the manifold wisdom of God. **Eph. 3: 10**

The Church will glorify Christ to all generations **Eph. 3: 21**

The Church is subject to Christ. **5: 24**

The Church will be presented before Christ. **5: 27**

Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her. **5: 25**

Specifically the image of Christ and His Church, His Bride emphasizes that the Church is the locus of Christ's activity now just as was His physical body when He ministered on earth.

"*The image of the body of Christ also speaks of the interconnectedness between all the persons who make up the Church*." Erickson

Col. 2: 9-10 makes it clear that Christ is Lord of the Church.

Just as a human body functions as a unit of one, so the Body of Christ must strive to maintain a balanced, healthy unison with all parts. When the human body is not functioning well, even in one area, the body is weakened and less effective overall. So the Body of Christ is to be characterized by genuine fellowship – not a club mentality but an intimate understanding of one another and the interrelatedness of a shared life.

How Do You Know When the Body of Christ is Doing Well?

When Christ left His disciples, He told them that the Holy Spirit would come to them and equip them. Today we know when the Body of Christ is well by the fruit of the Spirit being evident in the midst of His people: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. When these fruit are present, the Body is well. **Gal. 5: 22, 23**

When you examine the sermon of Peter in **Acts 2,** it is not a marvel of homiletical perfection. What did occur at Pentecost was ***the power of the Holy Spirit*** in conjunction with Peter's willingness to be the Lord's instrument***, the Lord's continuing heartbeat***.

The Church was brought into being to carry on the ministry of the Lord which is to do what He did on earth as though He were still here.

The purpose of the Church must follow the biblical template which is to equip the saints as they go about their lives in the world. Without proper training in righteousness, disciples of Christ will be ill equipped and likely succumb to the world's pitfalls. Believers in the early Church would gather together to worship and be edified; then they would go forth to reach the lost in the world.

- **Unity within the Church**

Read John 10: 16; 17: 21, 23 and see the importance our Lord places on unity among His followers.

Paul also writes a great deal on this subject. 1 Cor. 1: 2, 10, 13; Eph. 4: 3, 4-6, 12, 13; Phil. 2: 2

Eph. 4: 4 "There is one body."

"*Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior*." **Eph. 5: 23**

- **Purity is Crucial to the Church**

Eph. 5: 25- 27 says that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the Church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."

- **True and False Churches**

What constitutes a True Church?

The marks of the Church which the Lord instituted are born out of His own ministry.

The Lord instituted the sacraments of baptism and communion (Lord's Supper). A true church will observe these practices.

The Augsburg Confession (1530) defines the church as**,** *"the congregation of saints in which the gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered***."**

The true church will focus on worship **(Col. 3: 16; Eph. 5: 16-19),** equipping the saints **(Col. 1: 28; Eph. 4: 12-13**), and reaching out to the lost (**Matt. 28: 18-20; Luke 6: 35-36).**

It is the Holy Spirit Who provides power for the Church. **Acts 1:8**

The True Church will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit as described in **Gal. 5: 22, 23.**

"*The purity of the church is its degree of freedom from wrong doctrine and conduct, and its degree of conformity to God's revealed will for the church."*

Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology

The factors that contribute to a pure Church, according to Wayne Grudem, are the following:

1. **Biblical doctrine**
2. **Proper use of the sacraments**
3. **Right use of church discipline**
4. **Genuine worship**
5. **Effective prayer**
6. **Effective witness**
7. **Effective fellowship**
8. **Biblical church government**
9. **Spiritual power in ministry**
10. **Personal holiness of life among members**
11. **Care for the poor**
12. **Love for Christ**

- **False Churches**

Churches that teach a gospel of works-righteousness are false churches. **Gal. 3: 1-6; Rom. 3: 23-26**

Churches that are man-centered and not God- centered are humanistic and follow philosophy instead of the Lord. **Col. 2: 4, 8 -12, 22, 23; 1 Cor. 1: 18-31; Eph. 4: 14-16**

Rev. 2: 9; 3:9 exposes the "synagogue of Satan."

Titus 1: 10, 11 speaks of silencing the rebellious deceivers who upset believers.

2 Tim. 3: 1-8 gives a list of false ones to be avoided by the true believer.

Jude 19 declares those who cause divisions to be worldly minded and devoid of the Spirit.

Matt. 13: 24-43 shows us that the weeds live among the true wheat.

Matt. 25: 31-46 gives us the teaching from Christ on the sheep and the goats.

Jesus was well aware of the false ones following Him for their various reasons. But we are reminded that "the Lord knows those who are His." 2 Tim. 2: 19

Is the Church the Same as the Kingdom of God?

1. The Church is not the kingdom.
2. The kingdom creates the Church.
3. The Church witnesses to the kingdom.
4. The Church is the instrument of the kingdom.
5. The Church is the custodian of the kingdom.

"*The Church is a manifestation of the kingdom or reign of God, the form it takes on earth in our time… The kingdom can be found wherever God rules in human hearts. But more than that, it is found wherever His will is done."* Erickson

For example, the angels are a part of God's kingdom since they are responsive to His will. Yet they have never been a part of His Church.

Ultimately, the kingdom is to be thought of as the reign of God.

The Gospel is Central to the Church

In the letters of Paul, we see that he viewed the gospel as centering on Jesus Christ and what God has done through Him. The main points of the gospel are the fact that Jesus is the Son of God yet fully man, He died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead, appeared to many and will return to administer judgment to the world.

Many of the letters in the Scriptures are written to refute error in the teaching of the newly planted churches. For instance, the church at Galatia was falling into works religion. They were beginning to follow a false gospel message. Justification by faith alone was being supplanted and reliance on what a human can offer God was gaining ground as the means of salvation.

- ***What gospel do you believe?***

Just any gospel message will not do!

2 Tim. 1: 9, 10 "*Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, Who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*."

Church Government

Which type of governing system is biblical?

"*There is so much variation in the descriptions of the New Testament churches that we cannot discover an authoritative pattern. We must therefore turn to the principles we find in the New Testament, and attempt to construct our governmental system upon them*." Erickson

But as you approach the Scriptures, in particular **Acts** and the letters of the apostles Peter and Paul, you will find some organization within the local church. In particular, deacons, elders, overseers, pastors, shepherds and prophets are mentioned. Also in Romans, Ephesians, 1 Corinthians and 1 Peter the gifts within the Body of Christ are spread out among the believers – not one single leader possesses all the gifts.

Also the issue of ***church discipline*** is addressed in several places**: 1 Cor. 5: 1-13; Matt. 18: 17**

Some structure is needed as we see in Scripture that God is a God of order. **1 Cor. 14: 33**

Two Critical Rites within the Church

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the sacraments in which professing believers participate.

- **Baptism**

The mode of baptism has been discussed for many centuries. Some churches follow the idea of baptism which is far more than a symbol. Others see baptism as an act of obedience in which they follow the example of their Lord. Some see baptism as the New Testament equivalent of circumcision – a sign of the covenant seal comparable to the Old Testament identification as belonging to God. Immersion or sprinkling/ believers or infants/ symbolic or saving, all of these viewpoints must be substantiated by Scripture and not by tradition.

Review the following Scriptures prayerfully before you establish your views of baptism.

Matt. 28: 18-20

Rom. 6: 1-11

Col. 2: 11-12

Titus 3: 5

1 Pet. 3: 18-22

Heb. 9: 13, 14

- The Lord's intent from the beginning, with circumcision and with baptism, has been a conversion of the heart, not the flesh.

Deut. 10: 16; 30: 6; Jer. 4: 4; 9: 25, 26; Rom. 2: 29; Col. 2: 11, 12

- **The Lord's Supper**

This was a rite established by the Lord Himself. **Matt. 26: 26-28; Mark 14: 22-24; Luke 22: 19-20; 1 Cor. 11: 23-29**

Why would Jesus ask His followers to remember Him by using this practice?

The observance of this special meal was a form of proclamation. This repeated action declares the observer's belief in the death and resurrection of their Lord and also the return of the Coming King and Judge. It is very important to the message of our faith that we remember His return. But by focusing on the event of His next appearing, we are ushered into a sense of reverence and urgency. Reverence, because He is King of kings and Lord of lords; urgency, because when He comes again, He will come as Judge. By observing the Lord's Supper, we are reminded of His death which freed us from sin and His return which will mean eternal destruction for those outside of His covenant.

As to who participates in the Lord's Supper, we need to reflect the ordinance as it was originally implemented. Those who followed Jesus in faith were part of this observance. This meal was not offered to the crowds of people who came to Jesus.

"*Rather the Last Supper was shared within the intimate gathering of those most fully committed to Christ***."** Erickson

Also read 1 Cor. 10: 15-17.

The subject of the Church is a life-long pursuit. These few pages are a small glimpse into the "mystery" of the Church. How privileged we are to share in this amazing and holy family!

Ponder the truths of the Church and you will catch a glimpse of the plan the Lord has had all along. The Church – the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the Temple of God – the reason the Lord ever came to earth to claim His inheritance!

"*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Rev. 21: 1-4

COVENANT

Berith: cutting (Hebrew)

Diatheke: disposition, covenant, testament or will (Greek)

According to Unger's Bible Dictionary, a covenant is a compact between man and man; either between tribes or nations; or between individuals in which each party bound himself to fulfill certain conditions, and was promised certain advantages; also it refers to a compact between God and man. As man is not in the position of an independent covenanting party, such a covenant is not strictly a mutual compact, but a promise on the part of God to arrange His providences for the welfare of those who should render Him obedience.

There are many covenants mentioned in the Bible: with Noah, with Abraham, with David, with Israel and the new covenant. Covenants were usually sealed with an oath and confirmed by the sacrifice of an animal which depicted the future of either party if they were to break the covenant. At times a covenant meal was involved or the giving of salt.

Covenant is more than a contract. "Contract" suggests negotiation and terms, has generally to do with goods or services, and is task oriented. "Covenant," while it is not without terms, is a bonding between two persons that has a mutual relationship as its goal. At stake is intimacy and loyalty. The intimacy factor is pinpointed in the covenant formula: "You will be my people, and I will be your God." The loyalty exponent is explicit in the command, "Obey." The charge that Israel has not obeyed is repeated more than thirty times in Jeremiah chapters **7, 11, 26, and 42.**

- Covenants in Scripture are solemn agreements, negotiated or unilaterally imposed; that bind the parties to each other in permanent defined relationships, with specific promises, claims and obligations on both sides (i.e., the marriage covenant).

When God makes a covenant with His creatures, He alone establishes its terms, as His covenant with Noah and every living creature shows (**Gen. 9:9**).

God's covenant rests on His promise, as is clear from His covenant with Abraham. Abraham heeded God's call because he believed God's promise; it was his faith in the promise that was credited to him for righteousness (**Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:18-22**).

- God's covenant with Israel at Sinai is in the form of the ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties. These are covenants imposed unilaterally by a powerful king on a vassal king and a servant people.
  Although the covenant at Sinai required obedience to God's laws under the threat of His curse, it was continuation of the covenant of grace (**Ex. 3:15; Deut. 7:7, 8; 9:5**). The gracious promise of God's covenant was further defined through the types and shadows of the law given to Moses.

God's covenant with Israel was preparation for the coming of God Himself, in the person of His Son, to fulfill all His promises, and to give substance to the shadows cast by the types (**Is. 40:10; Mal. 3:1; John 1:14; Heb. 7-10**). Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, offered Himself as the true and final sacrifice for sin. He obeyed the law perfectly, and as the Second

Adam, He became the Inheritor, with those united with Him by faith, of all the covenant blessings of grace and fellowship with God in His renewed creation. The temporary Old Testament arrangement for imparting those blessings became obsolete when what they anticipated was realized. **Heb. 7-10**

Signs

Signs are involved with different covenants. With Noah, the rainbow was a sign of God's promise to Noah. Circumcision was the sign God used when instituting the covenant with Abraham. God designated the Sabbath day as the everlasting sign between Israel and God.

"But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My Sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD Who sanctified you.'" **Ex. 31:13**

Today, among believers and even non-believers, marriage is a covenant agreement in which rings are the token sign of the pledge of faithful commitment and constant love.

In the new covenant, there are two signs of the relationship: baptism and the covenant meal.

These were established by Jesus. "While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.'"

Matt. 26:26-28

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" **Matt. 28:18-20**

How important are these signs? What is the worth of these signs?

The signs are only as trustworthy as the Person standing behind the value of the sign.

As in the case of wedding rings, the rings themselves do not magically effect the transformation of the two people entering into matrimony.

The signs of God's covenant agreements are only as true as He is Himself. Is God willing to stand behind His covenant promises? A look at the history of Israel and human history in general will give evidence to God's commitment to His promises and covenant agreements: **both the blessings and the curses.**

Grudem: *a covenant is an unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of their relationship*. Note the term "divinely imposed." This term is crucial because it reveals the fact that man can never negotiate with God or change the terms of the covenant; he can only accept the covenant requirements or reject them. To emphasize this truth, the writers of Scripture use the term *diatheke* in the New Testament and also in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. The common Greek word used when referring to a mutual contract agreement is *syntheke*.

Diatheke – to set out in order; to dispose in a certain order; in Classical Greek it always meant the disposition which a person makes of his property in prospect of death.

Specifically, in regard to God, a solemn disposition, institution or apportionment of God to man

The idea of a *synthēkē* in Greek culture was an agreement between equal partners, an agreement with the consent of peers. The Jewish translators wanted to maintain that the covenants that God makes with His people are made between a superior and a subordinate, not between two equal parties. So, the word *synthēkē* was rejected.

Although the actual word "covenant" is not seen in the Genesis account with Adam, The essential parts of the covenant are all there – a clear definition of who is involved, binding provisions that delineate the conditions of the relationship between the two parties, the blessings in the event of obedience. **Hos. 6:7**, indicates an understanding by the prophet of a covenant agreement between Adam and God.

We experience death because the covenant between God and man was violated.

The crucial covenant with God seen in the Old Testament is between God and Abram.

In **Gen. 12:2, 3,** God says to Abram, "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Gen. 15:18 (read entire chapter for context) tells us that, "On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.'"

This is the covenant upon which the entire covenant system is founded.

Hesed

Throughout Scripture there is a covenant term which reveals the heart of God toward those with whom He is in covenant relationship. That term is "*hesed*."

"*Hesed*" is the consistent, ever-faithful, relentless, lavish, ever pursuing, one-way love of God for His own people.

Michael Card states,

"*Hesed*" is a Hebrew word that describes the indescribable, that defines the un-definable. Put simply, *hesed* is the defining characteristic of God in the Old Testament.

The classic text for clearly stating the importance of this term is **Psalm 136.** Here the psalmist uses this word twenty-six times to proclaim God's eternal kindness, love and goodness to His people. In this psalm, God's faithful actions toward His people to protect, perfect, provide, deliver and redeem them is the focus of the rehearsal of all His miraculous works. All that God has done to act on behalf of His people is founded upon His great covenant love, His "hesed."

"*The entire span of creation to God's redemption, preservation, and permanent establishment is touched upon in this psalm. It all happened, is happening, and will continue to happen because of the Lord's covenant faithfulness and kindness*."

The Complete Word Study Dictionary Old Testament

"*God's "hesed" was not basically mercy, but loyalty to His covenant obligations, a loyalty which the Israelites should also show*." Nelson Glueck

"*Hesed" denotes free acts of rescue or deliverance which in prophetic usage includes faithfulness*. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

Some scholars have viewed God's "hesed" in the Old Testament as the preview to the announcement in the New Testament that "God is love."

"Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, Who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments… Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers**." Deut. 7:9, 12**

"He said, 'O LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness to Your servants who walk before You with all their heart.'" **1 Kgs. 8:23**

"I said, 'I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, Who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments."

Neh. 1:5 (Daniel says almost the same thing in **Dan. 9:4**)

"Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, Who keeps covenant and lovingkindness. Do not let all the hardship seem insignificant before You, which has come upon us, our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers and on all Your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria to this day. However, You are just in all that has come upon us; for You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly." **Neh. 9:32, 33**

"All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies… The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant." **Ps. 25:10, 14**

"Gather My godly ones to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice…But to the wicked God says, 'What right have you to tell of My statutes and to take My covenant in your mouth?'" **Ps. 50:5, 16**

- Just a quick look at **Psalm 136** reveals that God's "hesed" is everlasting.

"My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him." **Ps. 89:28**

"He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant." **Ps. 105:8-10**

Some covenants were to be everlasting and some were to serve a purpose for a time.

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

"Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares the LORD GOD…" Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. Thus, I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD."

Ez. 16:8, 60, 62

"I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD Who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever." **Ez. 37:26-28**

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, Whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in Whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts**. Mal. 3:1**

"And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people…to show mercy toward our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father." **Lk. 1:67-73**

The new covenant was inaugurated by Christ. He was the mediator of this new covenant and it was better than the prior covenant which was referred to as the covenant of the law.

"It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" **Acts 3:25**

"And so, all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'" **Rom. 11:26, 27**

"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear." **Heb. 8:6, 13**

What if you are not in covenant with God?

"Because you have said, 'We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have made a pact. The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by, for we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception." **Is. 28:15**

"Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" **Heb. 10:28, 29**

The central element of all of God's covenants with His people has been, "I will be their God, and they will be My people." (Jer. 31:33; 2 Cor. 6:16)

- The goal of God's covenant dealings is, as it has always been, the gathering and sanctifying of the covenant people "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages (**Rev. 7:9**), who will one day inhabit the New Jerusalem in a new world order (**Rev. 21:3**). Here the covenant relationship will find its fullest expression – "they will be His people and God Himself will be with them as their God." (**Rev. 21:3; Gen. 17:7; Ex. 29:45, 46**). Toward this goal God's shaping of world events still moves.

The covenant framework embraces the entire economy of God's sovereign grace. Covenanting with God in response to His covenanting with us should be a regular devotional exercise for all believers, both in private and at the Lord's Table. An understanding of the covenant of grace guides us through and helps us to appreciate all the wonders of God's redeeming love.

"*Do you want something to keep you close to God? Something that will give you confidence that you are never without Him? Then you're searching for God's covenant, His undying promise... God's covenants provide the foundation and structure for life."*

Covenants, O. Palmer Robertson

If you are in covenant relationship with Almighty God, there will be evidence of this truth. You will resemble your Father. The family likeness will be evident in your life. Your identity is wrapped up in Who He is and how you can express your great love for Him. It is interesting that the terms describing covenant have to do with cutting (Hebrew) and wills (Greek). There must be a "cutting away" of the dead flesh that cries out to be pampered, indulged and spoiled. For the follower of Christ, the marriage begins with a funeral. There must be a death to self-will and a birth to living for the will of God. **This is the covenant life**.

Let this be our prayer:

"Now the God of peace, Who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." **Heb. 13:20**

DOCTRINE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Is discipleship an option for the Christian?

There is a totally wrong perception out there as to what a true disciple is.

What a disciple is not:

"Someone who reads his Bible and prays." (If this is the extent of activity)

"Someone who says he believes in Jesus." (Again if this is the extent of the relationship)

"Someone who attends church every week." (Again …)

"A pastor or Bible teacher must be a disciple." (Not if that alone is the extent of their relationship with Jesus)

The New Testament is a book **about disciples, by disciples and for disciples.**

Unfortunately, today, many are under the illusion that you can be identified with Christ without being His disciple.

The disciple is one who is intent upon becoming Christ-like by systematically and progressively rearranging his/her life according to the Life of Christ. We are enrolled in the School of Christ – really we are enrolled in the Life of Christ.

Discipleship is no mystery. If your mind is cluttered with excuses to avoid this commitment to discipleship by declaring it too hard or too much a mystery, you will believe one of the great lies at work in our era. This lie has already turned the walk of a disciple of Jesus into an anemic, on again/ off again infantile crawl – not the "walk" of a man or woman of God.

"*Disciple making is not about a program or an event but about a relationship … we impart life … sharing the life of Christ."* David Platt, Radical

- Nothing less than the life in the steps of Christ will meet the needs of the human soul.

Word Study

"Disciple" in Greek is *mathetes* and means: follower, learner, one who follows the teaching of another; in the ancient world a disciple many times would leave everything to follow and learn from his *didaskalos* (teacher), the student would do exactly as the teacher instructed;

the disciple was not only a pupil but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher Vine's Expository Dictionary

- ✓ As far as how you see yourself, as Christian or as disciple, realize that the word "Christian" is used three times, whereas "disciple" is used over two hundred fifty times in the New Testament.

Luke used the word "disciple" twenty-eight times in his gospel account to describe ***ordinary*** believers.

The Discipline of Discipleship

Without discipline, we are not disciples.

- The first discipline is the discipline of humility. We recognize our deep need for conversion from death to life. "*But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe*." **Gal. 3: 22**

Also **Rom. 3: 23; Is. 53: 6**

This discipline is counter to the natural heart of man who resists the humility of confessing the need for a Savior. The hard heart of man will not humble itself to admit his own sin and shame. Yet the repentant publican beat his breast in genuine sorrow and prayed, "Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner." **Luke 18: 13** **He is the one who went home justified!**

- ✓ Without salvation, there is no possibility for discipleship. Without humility, there is no salvation.

God disciplines *His children*. **Heb. 12: 5, 6, 11**

Discipleship costs something.

- **Love Christ above all.**

Matt. 10: 37 tells us that we must love Jesus more than father, mother, son or daughter.

This includes obedience. "*Salvation apart from obedience is unknown in the sacred scriptures*." A. W. Tozer

- **Deny ourselves.**

We must deny our own agenda as well. **Matt. 16: 24** "*If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me*."

- **Count the Cost**

Luke 14: 28 – 33 reminds us to count the cost of discipleship.

"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?"

- **Carry the Cross Daily**

"And whoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." **Luke 14: 27**

The Power to Live as the Disciple of Jesus Comes From the Holy Spirit

- The power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the disciple is not an impersonal force or power like "the Force" in Star Wars. Just as the disciples of the early Church learned, the life of the disciple must rely on the Holy Spirit to guide, direct, empower and understand. This empowerment of the disciples of Christ was prophesied by many prophets. **Joel 2: 28-32**
- The disciple needs the Holy Spirit to illuminate the truth of Scripture in order to have the thoughts of God propelling him to live the life of Christ**. 1 Cor. 2: 6-13**

Verse 10 – *"For to us God revealed {truth and wisdom} through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God***."**

- It is the Spirit Who gives us the power to live.

"For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." **Rom. 8: 13**

- It is the Spirit Who guides in ministry**. Acts 13: 1-3**
- *"The Holy Spirit is the key to authentic Christian life – to discipleship – and without His empowerment, teaching and guidance it is impossible to live faithfully."* Tom Tarrants
- *Paul urges the disciple of Christ to be "filled with the Spirit" and he uses the present tense which means, continually be filled with the Spirit, again and again. Think of being filled with the Spirit like a bucket being filled to the brim. So why is once not enough? "Because we leak badly."*

The Cost of Non- Discipleship

"A great deal of focus has been put on 'getting people to the door of the church,' but not enough done to help them grow to spiritual maturity once they are in."

Kerry Knott, *Sparking a Discipleship Movement*

The decision not to follow Christ wholeheartedly will cost dearly – it costs you the abundance of life which Jesus offers! ***John 10: 10***

If you separate regeneration (the new life in the believer) from justification (the transfer from unsaved to saved), you will believe you can have a Savior that died for your sins in order for you to have fire insurance. This is a spirituality which is inherently resistant to the truths which Christ taught. This belief in such a Savior will insure that you do not walk in a vital, life-transforming union with the Master Who owns you. Jesus is not a "take Him or leave Him" Lord. He is Lord of lords and King of kings!

Consumption of Christian services replaces obedience to Christ. We have grown content to just "go to events" as if by warming a chair and thinking about a few remarks in a sermon or study will do anything lasting to us.

We have relied on hearing – preaching, teaching, worship music – to form faith in us and then we expect this faith to form the inner life of the believer. But apart from faith joined with action, is there really any faith there?

We must be hearers and doers of the Word!

This is where a true disciple of Jesus lives.

To choose not to follow Christ wholeheartedly will cost you abundant life, peace and purpose.

Intentional Living

The life of the follower of Christ must be planned and executed. A life well lived as His disciple cannot be haphazard. It is not hit or miss. You, as His disciple, must deliberately and intentionally follow Him. Just as the Twelve did 2, 000 years ago.

If we have been baptized with Him and walk in newness of life as Romans 6 declares – there will most definitely be a transformed life. Basically the new life is a life lived in concert, in union with the life of Christ. His heart beats in one with your heart.

If you suffer from the delusion that <u>you do not have time</u> to concentrate on dedicated time to seek the Lord about His forming within you the life of Christ, then you are destined to live a frustrated life as a Christian.

There is nothing in this world that is more important for you to spend your time on than taking each step, drawing each breath from His storehouse of riches. You are walking in beggar's clothes still if you are not relying on Him. But reliance on Him is not yet instantaneous while we reside in this alien land. In order to tap into His riches, which are ours by rights, we must wire our minds in accord with His each day and each moment.

The world wants to wire your mind according to its destructive and warped view. Christ wants you to turn the world upside down, so that the world will be right side up.

Genesis Chapter Three records the Fall of Man. This is where sin became the dominant theme of man's life. At that point the world was turned upside down – at odds with the way the Lord created it. When you, as the Lord's child, act in His power, you are turning the world back to the right balance. The world sees God upside down. It is our job, as His inheritance to turn the world back to the proper perspective so the world can see God more clearly.

Right now the world only sees God upside down and they cannot make Him out or see Him as He truly is.

Let us, as disciples of Christ, help this world clearly grasp Who this majestic, worthy and holy God really is.

As you learn and grow, you are encouraged to invest in people. The people you disciple today will change the world tomorrow.

Once you have committed to follow Jesus as His disciple, counting the cost, there are still some pitfalls.

- *If you undertake to "change the world" for the sake of Jesus, thinking that you are following the Great Commission (**Matt. 28: 18-20**), **be careful not to allow your new mission to become your focus.***
- *If we undertake to "straighten out the world" and the church, and we do this on our own, we will hurt a lot of people and damage the mission of Christ.*
- *Our only responsibility is to sustain our relationship with our Lord, listening to His voice and following His lead; keeping the embers burning in the greatest love of your life.*
- *Do not fall for the lie that says your role as an unknown disciple can do little for the kingdom of God – the first disciples were relative unknowns when Jesus called them to do the extraordinary*

"Christ for us is all our righteousness before a holy God; Christ in us is all our strength in an ungodly world." Robert Murray McCheyne

Disciple of Christ, here are your marching orders:

Grab one corner of the world (your corner of the world), and turn it upside down!

Five Misconceptions of Discipleship

- **Discipleship takes place when people attend church programs.**
  In fact, much good teaching can take place during church, but it is often too general and not targeted to the special needs of a new Christian.

- **Discipleship just happens.**
  In fact, we must go counter cultural and instruct others personally and lovingly about the ways of Christ. We need to ask the hard questions and get involved into the process of why they do things.

- **Discipleship is only for new Christians.**
  In fact, discipleship is a process that should be occurring all through our lives. A disciple always follows his master's life. Once a disciple, always a disciple.

- **Discipleship is a program.**
  In fact, discipleship is a lifestyle. We are Christ's disciples and this Christian life calls us to learn and live like Him. This will require significant changes in the way we think and live.

- **Discipleship is only for certain parts of our lives.**
  In fact, Christ wants to teach us in each aspect of our lives from our parenting skills to handling finances. This differs from some cults which will actually make your decisions for you! Mentoring is a term that describes the training of a person in one or more specifc areas.

Description of Discipleship

True discipleship takes all of Christ's teaching and implements them into our lives in such a way that we live like Christ did.

We must not be content with only the passing on of knowledge and tradition and assume the accompanying of conviction and belief. We are called to live out a godly life before those we instruct, just as Christ did. There is a great difference between the modern student and a disciple.

Do we really need discipleship materials?

A good set of discipleship materials is important but not our key focus.

Materials can get in the way and actually just become another program if we are not careful. Good discipleship materials are opportunities to enter different aspects of a believer's personal life with the truth of God. Our goal is to share our lives, convictions and knowledge with them so that they will be more like Christ. The process is not unlike what should happen in a great family where the parents take their parental responsibiliites seriously.

Key questions to ask concerning discipleship

Here are some questions to begin to get you thinking:

1. What areas of growth are we hoping to grow in?
2. Are you willing to grow in those areas of need? What has God taught you? How has He taught you?
3. What steps are needed to bring you to Christlikeness in those areas of weakness?
4. Under this last crucial step, we might approach it from different perspective such as:
   - Truths a person needs to learn
   - Activities needed for fostering growth
   - Areas in which we are praying for discernment

Concepts of Discipleship

We must start at change in the heart.

Concepts for Discipleship has 3 parts:

> Defining Discipleship (Defining the concept of discipleship)
> Describing Discipleship (Spiritual disciplines and discipleship)
> Designing Discipleship (Designing discipleship which you can incorporate into your real life experiences)

We must fight the 'independent' attitude today in which we let everyone learn by himself.

Christ said we need to make disciples. As a church we need to think through where we want to be in areas of giving, discipling, evangelizing, family care, loving of neighbors, etc. We can no longer assume people know the right thing to do.

DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Redemption Accomplished and Applied

Why should this doctrine be so difficult to explain or come to grips with?

Simply put: because we do not like concept of God choosing.

When God chose the tree from which Adam could not eat, that commandment caused doubt and rebellion to form in Adam's mind (with the help of Mrs. Adam and her new friend, the serpent).

Man does not like to be less than master of his own fate.

We recoil at the idea of God choosing my eternal address if that means He also chooses another's eternal address.

As we go throughout this doctrine on election, let me encourage you to leave everyone else in the capable and kind hands of Almighty God. This is between you and God. That's it!

How do we begin this tremendously controversial and complicated doctrine of election?

Well, as with all things, it's best to start at the beginning.

Who indeed has free will?

God alone has perfectly free will because He alone is perfect.

He is not restrained by inclinations to do less than perfection.

He is free to choose and always choose well.

Since the Fall, we abdicated certain aspects of "free will.".

"For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:9, 10). Is man answerable for his

choices and actions? Absolutely: "For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). If we're going to be faithful to the testimony of Scripture, we have to find a way to acknowledge both sides of the coin.

"Only God has free will in the sense of ultimate self-determination." - https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/is-god-sovereign-over-my-free-will

How does God apply salvation to our lives?

Does He wait to see what we will do?

Does He force us to come to Him?

Does He draw us to Him?

Does He reveal His true nature and thereby ensure an irresistible yielding?

Does He stand aside and hope we will make the right decision?

Which of these pictures of God's application of salvation seems biblical to you?

We don't seem to have a problem with God choosing Israel as His chosen people of the Old Testament.

We don't have a problem with God choosing Jeremiah before his birth.

God chose Paul when Paul was going an entirely different direction from God.

God chose David.

God chose Moses.

God chose Joseph as the salvation of all effected people during the famine.

Throughout Scripture, Old and New Testament, God chooses whoever He wills to choose.

This is a clearly substantiated truth.

So why do we have a problem with God electing people to join Him in eternity?

I think it is because we think we are more kind and compassionate than God is!

This cannot be – God is All- Goodness, All- Kindness, All-Compassionate; He alone will make the right choice when it comes to … well, anything.

There is indeed some will on our parts.

Joshua tells us to choose who we will serve, as for him, he and his family will serve the Lord. **Josh. 24: 15**

But our will is not truly "free."

Only God's will is free.

- ✓ When questioned about reconciling God's sovereignty with human responsibility, Spurgeon stated, "I don't have to reconcile old friends."

Always remember, a true doctrine must magnify the Lord.

The test of a true doctrine must pass this criteria: Does this teaching exalt and bring the Lord into sharper focus or does this teaching elevate man to a position which usurps the domain of God?

I prefer to believe that my loving, just, holy, merciful, righteous God has sovereignty over the lives of my loved ones more than they do. He will choose well. I can rest knowing their eternity is in His hands and not in their own hands.

We see salvation form the MANWARD side. We are attempting in the doctrine of Election to see the GODWARD side of salvation.

1 Tim. 2: 4

God our Savior "*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

2 Pet. 3: 9

"*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance*."

- ✓ Do you see Spurgeon's point? Spurgeon stated, "*I don't have to reconcile old friends*."

This is not a one-dimensional proposition. We are contemplating divine truths and we must not man-handle them. Stay with the Scriptures and do not deviate from their message.

Yes, God is sovereign. Yes, God loves the world and desires people to come to Him.

Yes, man's will is involved to some degree but never to the degree that man usurps the will of God. We must leave that will solely in His hands.

Prior to coming to the Lord in His saving work, we are dead on our trespasses and sins.

Just as Lazarus, while dead, could not breathe, eat, see or hear, we are also unable to hear the Lord's call until He opens our spiritual ears as He did those of Lazarus.

Lazarus could not hear if Christ did not first enable him to hear – just so God makes the first move by drawing us to Himself.

Eklektos #1588 chosen, elect

1 Pet. 2: 4

"*And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men but is **choice** and precious in the sight of God*."

1 Pet. 2: 6

"*For this is contained in Scripture*:

'*Behold, I lay in Zion a **choice** stone, a precious cornerstone and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed*."

Eph. 2: 1-5

"1) *But you **were dead** in your trespasses and sins, 2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in*

*the sons of disobedience… 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 (by grace you have been saved.")*

Eph. 1: 3- 5

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He **chose** us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He **predestined** us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will."*

Eph. 1: 9

"*He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him."*

Matthew 22:14

14 *For many are called, but few are chosen."*

Acts 13: 48

*"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were **ordained to eternal life believed."***

Rom. 8: 28-30

***28** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. **29** For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; **30** and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified*.

OTHER VERSES WHICH SHOW THE SOVEREIGN INTENT OF GOD CANNOT BE OVERTURNED

Is. 14: 27

"For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched out hand, who can turn it back?"

Is. 44: 13

"*Even from eternity I am He, and there is none who can deliver out of My hand, I act and who can reverse it?"*

Dan. 4: 35

"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing. But He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth;

And no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have you done?'"

2 Chron. 20: 6 (This is Jehoshaphat speaking)

"And he said, 'O Lord, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You.'"

Prov. 21: 1

"The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes."

BUT NOW WHAT?

Rom. 6: 17-18

"But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you ***became slaves of righteousness****."*

Gal. 5: 1

"It was for freedom that Christ set us free, therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

- ✓ ***Our freedom is only and wholly in Christ!***

"We do not have ultimate self-determination, but we will all give an account to God for our choices." John Piper

Matt. 12: 36

"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment."

Rom. 14: 12

"So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God."

Definition of Election*: Election is an act of God before creation in which He chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of His sovereign good pleasure.*

Order of Salvation or *Ordo salutis*

1. Election - God's choice of people to be saved
2. The gospel call – proclaiming the message of the gospel
3. Regeneration - being born again
4. Conversion - faith and repentance
5. Justification - right legal standing
6. Adoption - membership in God's family
7. Sanctification - right conduct of life
8. Perseverance - remaining a Christian
9. Death - going to be with the Lord
10. Glorification - receiving a resurrection body

Keep in mind, this is man's way of looking at salvation, compiled from study and prayer involving a way to look at this topic.

We also have many verses which point out the Lord's desire to save.

We must not neglect one aspect of the Lord's hand in salvation over another.

We cannot deny the sovereign choice of God mentioned so many times in Scripture, but we cannot deny the verses which tell us He desires all men to be saved. **1 Tim. 2: 4**

Our problem is that we have a two-dimensional view of everything and we think if God chooses some to salvation He must choose the others to damnation.

Clearly God chooses some to salvation, but where are we told that He chooses others to damnation? There are passages which are used to teach this, but far and away the clear teaching involves God's saving love and not His damning particular people to hell.

Remember God is the Creator. He is not limited by a two-dimensional view of things.

He can choose some to eternal life and there can be other God designed alternatives which we are just not aware of but must leave in the hands of a Just, All-Mighty, Good and Powerful God.

I am not suggesting some heretical alternatives which deny Scripture. What I suggest here is that God is God and He must not be dictated to based on our limited dimensional thinking.

He alone knows the fate of anyone and we dare not force our human reasoning on Him.

When Scripture clearly states something, we must believe it whether we like it or not.

When Scripture does not state something, we must not speculate but leave that to Him.

Enjoy your search in regard to the Sovereign God you serve, but always

LET GOD BE GOD!

Predestination and God's Sovereign Choice

by Robin Schumacher

Dan Delzell's Christianpost article, *Predestination and God's Desire to Save Everyone*, reminded me of a statement made by theologian Loraine Boettner in his classic book on predestination: "The doctrine of Predestination has been made the subject of almost endless discussion, much of which, it must be admitted, was for the purpose of softening its outlines or of explaining it away."[1]

I mean no disrespect at all to Mr. Delzell when I say that, only that his article – written from the Arminian point of view – is definitely something crafted to take the punch and sting out of what I believe the Biblical doctrine of predestination truly means. For example, Delzell writes:

The doctrine of predestination is there to provide comfort to believers. It is intended to assure us that God is not going to let go of us. But the doctrine of predestination is not in the Bible for unbelievers. In other words, it is not there to suggest to unbelievers that some of them may not be "predestined."

Is that true? Let's take a short tour of predestination in the Bible and see if it matches up with what Delzell says.

pre·des·ti·na·tion

The word 'predestined' is used in six verses in the New Testament:

- "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. " (Acts 4:28)
- "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." (Rom. 8:29-30)
- "but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7)
- "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will" (Eph. 1:5)

- “also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11)

The Greek term, *proorizō*, means exactly what you’d expect: decide beforehand; predetermine[2], so there is no mystery about what it stands for. If you’re a Christian, you can’t ignore its place in Scripture, but that said, I think the primary debate among believers is not whether to dismiss the idea of predestination, but rather it’s over the *basis* of God’s foreordination.

Most Christians explain predestination like this: “God predestines the plan, but not the man,” which seems to be Delzell’s stance. To the first part of God predestining His plan of salvation, there’s no argument as Scripture is plain on the subject: “this Man, delivered over by the ***predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God***, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death” (Acts 2:23, emphasis mine).

But what about God predestining the person as well as the plan? Ah, there’s the rub and the “softening” of the doctrine to which Boettner was referring.

I believe predestination applies to each person who receives Christ as well as the overall plan of Christ dying for His people. But to understand this, we have to quickly examine the three ‘camps’ of how Christians explain how predestination works in the lives of individuals.

God Knows

By far, the most popular explanation of how predestination works in our lives is that of the *prescient* view. Prescient (pre-science or fore-knowledge) means knowledge of things before they exist or happen; foreknowledge; foresight. This position says God does choose people for salvation, but His choice is based on His foreknowledge of what they will do.

Prescients say God looks down through history and knows in advance who will respond to the call of the gospel message and who will not. God chooses people based on His knowledge of whether they will respond to His call and them having faith, and is conditional on a person’s faith.

Prescients rely on verses like Rom. 8:29 and 1 Pet. 1:1-2 and argue that since foreknowledge precedes predestination, it is the one and only basis of predestination. However, is that how ‘foreknowledge’ is really used in Scripture?

Consider Acts 2:22-23 again: “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and ***foreknowledge*** of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”

Now ask yourself – did God look down through history, see what Christ would do, and then predestine Jesus to fulfill His plan? No, foreknowledge in this context (and all

others) means God knew the plan because He made and chose the plan, as well as the man.

Lastly, a major problem often overlooked by prescients is that, in their view, they have God learning something. However, Scripture states that God is omniscient and never learns anything. So in embracing this view, prescients are embarking down the path of open theism, a heretical teaching they would do well to avoid.

God Really Knows

The position on predestination most likely in the minority today is that of *Molinism*. Developed by the Jesuit Luis de Molina, the Molinist position is much like the prescient view, although the concept of 'middle knowledge' is what distinguishes it from the base prescient stance.

According to Molinism, God arranges the world as He chooses based on His middle knowledge. God exercises sovereign control in the sense that He creates the person He wishes to create and brings about the circumstances He wills, knowing just what free will choices all those persons will make in the circumstances He has brought about.

Although a bit different, Molinism is simply a variation on the prescient view and suffers from the aforementioned issues. Its other primary drawback is that the Biblical support for it is nearly non-existent.

God Chooses

The Reformed position (credited first to Augustine) on predestination doesn't deny that God has foreknowledge or that He has the ability to know everything that could or will be.

According to Reformed theology, for reasons known only to God Himself, He elected some to salvation with there being no condition (like the prescient view of a person first exercising faith) whatsoever imposed on the individual. God chose some people for Himself and allows all others to continue in their freely chosen sin and eventually experience His justice.

Whether it is God choosing Abraham from out of everyone else on the planet or Paul who had a taste for murdering Christians, Scripture showcases the reformed view of predestination from cover to cover.

We see the Bible saying only those who are appointed (predestined) to eternal life believe and not the other way around (Acts 13:48). That God must first open a person's heart before they exhibit faith (Acts 16:14). That salvation doesn't depend on a person exercising their own will, but its basis is God who has mercy on those He chooses (Rom. 9:15-16, 18).

We hear Jesus say that it is only the people that He grants knowledge to who will come to know God (Matt. 11:27). That only those who the Father gives to Him comes to Him

(John 6:37). That no one comes to Him unless the Father draws them, and those that are drawn will be raised up to be like Christ (John 6:55; note that all who come will believe and be perfected, which is the not the case with everyone). That many are called but few are chosen (Matt. 22:14).

Boiling it Down

All that said, what is the primary difference between the prescient and reformed positions? It's this:

The first is primarily based on man's choice and the second in God's choice. The first is based primarily on the willing of the unbeliever and the latter on the willing of God.

Jonathan Edwards summed it up like this: "Those who have received salvation are to attribute it to sovereign grace alone, and to give all the praise to Him, who makes them to differ from others."[3]

Lastly, in trying to make his case that God does not just predestine some, Dan says: "But there is not so much as one verse of Scripture which teaches that Jesus died only for His sheep. Not one. It simply isn't taught in Scripture. Christ died for all, plain and simple. (1 Peter 3:18)". However, there are actually numerous verses that refer to the fact that Jesus died only for those whom God predestined (e.g. Is. 53:11; Matt. 1:21; John 10:11, 15; John 17:9; Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25).[4]

Why Care?

So while my Christian brother Dan Delzell wants to smooth off the seemingly repellant edges of the doctrine of predestination, I'll have to respectfully disagree and say that his Arminian view of the teaching is lacking in many respects. I believe the Reformed view of predestination is the correct stance for the reasons I've outlined.

Why care which view is correct? Many Christians don't and are content to live as if there's no difference in believing one view vs. another. I'd disagree and quote John MacArthur who gives us a good reason for why believing in the Reformed view of predestination matters:

Let me tell you in closing how you ought to think about the doctrine of election. Election is pride crushing. That's the first thing I want you to think about. It just produces nothing but humility. It is not that you believe because you were smarter than anyone else, or better than anybody else, or wiser than anybody else. It is that you were chosen. Spurgeon called this doctrine the most stripping doctrine in all the world. He said, "I know nothing, nothing again that is more humbling than this doctrine of election." He said, "I have sometimes fallen prostrate before it when endeavoring to understand it, but when I came near it and the one thought possessed me, God has chosen me from the beginning unto salvation, I was staggered by that mighty thought and from the dizzy

*elevation down came my soul, prostrate and broken, saying, Lord I am nothing, I am less than nothing, why me, why me?"**[5]***

In our day where pride and the me-monster run unchecked, I'd say that's a pretty compelling reason wouldn't you say? That and, of course, because it's also what Scripture teaches.

[1] Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, Kindle Edition, Loc 98-9.

[2] Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed.) (409). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[3] http://www.biblebb.com/files/edwards/je-sovereign.htm.

[4] To view a PowerPoint presentation on the doctrine of limited or definite atonement, see: http://www.slideshare.net/schumacr/sovereignty-free-will-and-salvation-limited-atonement.

[5] http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/90-275/the-doctrine-of-election-part-3.

http://blogs.christianpost.com/confident-christian/predestination-and-gods-sovereign-choice-25441/#more

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Why is the faithfulness of God so important to our faith?

Gods throughout history have not always been faithful; some have indeed been very fickle and immature, provoking and behaving in petulant manners. The Greek and Roman gods are rife with such activity. But the God of the Judeo-Christian faith is a God of truth and integrity.

What does Scripture have to say about the faithfulness of God? Perhaps in observing these Scriptures we can answer the introductory question.

Deut. 7: 9, "*Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, Who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments*."

Deut. 32: 4, "*The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He."*

Ps. 89: 1, *"I will sing of the lovingkindness of the LORD forever; to all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth. For I have said, 'Lovingkindness will be built up forever; in the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness*.' "

89: 8, 24, *"O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You… 'My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him, and in My name his horn will be exalted.'"*

Ps. 36: 5,"*Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies."*

Ps. 91: 4, "*He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark."*

Do you notice that God's faithfulness is mentioned many times in conjunction with His covenant (*lovingkindness* is a term associated with God's covenant relationship)? Why do you think there is a connection between these two great doctrines of God's ways?

- From these few verses, we see that faithfulness is not a necessity to God in the sense that air is a necessity to a human being, but His faithfulness is simply part of Who our God is. It is unimaginable to understand God without recognizing His character of faithfulness.

Ps. 100: 5, "*For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations."*

Lam. 3: 22, 23, *"The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."*

Ps. 119: 86, 138, *"All You commandments are faithful; they have persecuted me with a lie; help me!... You have commanded Your testimonies in righteousness and exceeding faithfulness."*

Ps. 119: 90, *"Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; You established the earth, and it stands."*

What *does the New Testament have to tell us about our faithful God?*

***1 Cor.1:9**, "God is faithful, through Whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."*

1 Thes. 5:24, *"Faithful is He Who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass."*

1 Thes. 3:3,*"But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."*

1 Pet. 4:19, *"Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right*."

1 Jn. 1: 9, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Rev. 19: 11, *"And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He Who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war."*

- These verses in the New Testament show a connection from God's faithfulness to His people. It is clear that God's faithfulness has a distinct bond with the relationship He shares with His people.

Like begets like. A child is like his father in some ways.

Our Father is the standard of faithfulness. As His children, we are to hold to that same standard and be a people of faithfulness.

God's faithfulness should result in our own built-up faith. As we encounter His faithful ways in Scripture, in history and in our daily lives, we should give testimony to His everlasting faithfulness and thereby exhibit our faith.

God is not pleased when we neglect to "share in the family resemblance" in regard to faithfulness.

Matt. 23:23, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others."*

- God's faithfulness is inextricably connected with His other attributes: His majesty, for instance. In His majesty, we see that He is exalted in His judgment on sin. **(Is. 5:16; Rev. 19:1-2)**

His faithfulness is involved in His coming judgment as well. "*Before the LORD, for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness.*" **Ps. 96:13**

When we think of God's faithfulness, we like to focus on all His promises of safety, love, provision, protection and prosperity. Blessings, in other words. But God has also promised curses to those who reject His ways of truth. These curses are warnings because as our Creator, He knows what we were created for: to glorify Him. When we fail to glorify God, we are acting counter to our intended purpose and therefore can have no peace. God, in His faithfulness, has promised life to the obedient and death to the disobedient. He has not complicated things … we have.

- Unlike man, when God makes a promise, He is able to bring it to pass. God keeps all His promises without fail. When we read a promise in Scripture, we can be assured that it will happen as God has said. This is the great faith builder in reading Scripture, because we see time and again how God has been proven faithful to His word. If He has been faithful for all time, then we can trust Him for our lives and our future.

"*And being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform*." **Rom. 4:21**

"*God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good*?" **Num. 23:19**

"Faithfulness is that in God which guarantees that He will never be or act inconsistent with Himself…Everything God says or does must be in accord with His faithfulness." A.W. Tozer, The Attributes of God

When we are under pressure, we desire a God, a Champion Whom we can trust. In the heat of battle against our enemy, we need to know our Commander. Studying the attributes of our God will only serve to strengthen and empower us in the days of battle. When the heat is turned up is not the time to call out to a "Santa Claus" version of Almighty God. We must know Him as He truly is: holy, faithful, just, loving, merciful, righteous, all-powerful, compassionate, awe-inspiring, wise, eternal …

Our culture has invented a god that is comfortable and easy. This is not the true God of Scripture.

We had better know Who God is. If we do not, our enemy will use this misinformation to undo us.

When we evaluate the complete message of Scripture, from Genesis One to Revelation Twenty-two, we see a common communication: God is faithful. Look at all the narratives of the Old Testament; look at the pronouncements of the prophets; look at the life of our Lord. All of the Bible tells us one thing: God can be trusted with our eternal souls.

Do not keep this truth to yourself. Tell the world how faithful our God is and what He has done in your life.

Forgiveness – A Doctrine

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." **C. S. Lewis**

Why do we need forgiveness? What is this inexcusable thing we have done?

Isaiah 53:6 "All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the wrongdoing of us all to fall on Him."

Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

Daniel 9:8-9 "Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness for we have rebelled against Him."

General Statement:

"Despite its relative neglect in many systematic theologies, the forgiveness of sins is one of the central benefits of the Mosaic sacrificial system and is the chief benefit of Jesus's death in apostolic preaching. Forgiveness is one of the blessings explicitly named in the new covenant (Jer. 31:34); it is the one image that Jesus uses to interpret the achievement of his death at the Last Supper (Matt 26:28); it is part of the missionary command to the disciples (Luke 24:47; John 20:23), and it is the image found across the Torah, Writings, Prophets, Gospels, Epistles, and Apocalypse. Forgiveness indicates a release from guilt and an end to relational estrangement." (emphasis added) *Evangelical Theology 2020 by Michael F. Bird pg 605*

First and Last Use of the Word Forgive:

Genesis 50:17 This is what you shall say to Joseph: "Please forgive, I beg you, the offense of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong."' And now, please forgive the offense of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (emphasis added)

Note:

- The offender confesses his offense and asks for forgiveness from the one he has offended so that he might be released from guilt; forgiveness is given, and relational estrangement is ended.
- Restoration of relationships is not always possible; but we are commanded to forgive without expectation. Forgiveness is between you and the Lord.
- God is a forgiving God, Christ is a forgiving Lord, and one who is like God and like Christ will be a forgiving person. John MacArthur

Forgiveness: A benefit of the LORD's mercy

Psalm 103:1-5

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits;

3 Who **forgives** all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases;

4 Who redeems your life from the pit,

Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;

5 Who satisfies your years with good things,

So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.

Question: Did you note the first benefit to praise God for?…Forgiveness

Stop and bless the LORD and give thanks for His forgiveness of your sins.

Forgives defined - from "New Spirit Filled Bible – Third Edition"

- **Forgives**, *salach*; Strong's # 5545: To forgive, to pardon; to spare someone; to relieve someone of the burden of their offense
- This verb and its derivatives occur 50 times in the OT. In every occurrence God does the forgiving; never does *salach* represent a man's forgiving anyone.
- This alone explains the shock of Jesus's listeners when they heard Him say "your sins are forgiven" (Luke 5:20).
- They responded, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Luke 5:21)
- These scribes knew that forgiveness is God's prerogative.

The Joy and Blessing in Forgiveness by God

Psalm 32:1-2 "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." … Psalm 21:1-2 quoted in Romans 4:7-8

Question: Do you grasp the wonder of God's forgiveness? Do you grasp the amazing wonder that God would forgive You and that Jesus would pay the price for your sin?

God's character and name are involved in His forgiveness of our sins

Psalm 86:5 "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.

Daniel 9:9 "To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him."

God is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and truth – Exodus 34:5-7; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 103:8

God forgives for the sake and the glory of His name. Psalm 25:11; 79:9

God gave out of His love His Son Who paid the price for our sins that we might be forgiven - John 3:16-18; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

The Readiness of God to Forgive and His joy over the one who returns to Him

This is best seen in the parable of the Lost Son – the Prodigal son

- Luke 15:11-24…the father was watching; when he saw his son from a distance, running quickly to his son the father threw his arms around him and had compassion on him … then there was a joyous celebration – the lost son was home
- Of note in this parable is the lost son's confession of unworthiness to be called his father's son and in verses 25-31 the loveless unforgiving attitude of the older son
- Luke 15:1-7…Parable of the Lost Shepherd…note the rejoicing of the shepherd over finding his one sheep which was lost…there is joy in heaven

How quick are you to forgive?

- Matthew 5:21-27 be quick to settle accounts with your brother before going to the Lord
- Of note: murder begins in the heart….examine your own heart before coming to the Lord
- Ask God to create in you a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within you Psalm 51:10-11

Question: When you sin, and we all do, do you do as 1 John 1:9 says….confess your sin and praise God for His faithfulness and righteousness (His character) to forgive your sins and to cleanse you of all unrighteousness?

What does God do with our sin?

- He is said to blot it out - to wipe out our sins…Isaiah 43:25 "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sin." Isaiah 44:22; Jer 18:23; Zech 3:9
- He removes it as far as east is from west…Psalm 103:12
- He casts our sins into the depths of the sea…Micah 7:18

Question: Do you allow God to handle – to wipe out - your sin, or do you allow the devil to bring to your mind your sin and beat you up again and again?

Question: If God does this with our sin, what do we do with the sin of those who hurt us? Do you hang on tight to their offenses or do you release them to God and not bring them up again?

In the Old Testament Intercession for forgiveness on behalf of the people by priests and prophets is seen:

- Moses pleaded to God …. "Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance" Exodus 34:9
- Levitical priests after offering a sacrifice would make atonement for the people and they would be forgiven…Lev 4:20, 26, 35; 5:10,13,16; 6:7; 19:22
- Daniel's prayer for his people: Daniel 9:3-19….the model prayer of confession of sin and petitioning for forgiveness

Question: Are you pleading with God on behalf of others that their sins would be forgiven?

In the New Testament:

- The primary words for forgiveness are aphiemi (to forgive), aphesis (forgiveness), charizomai (to grace), and apolyo (to pardon)
- These words are used in relationship to the forgiving of sins, debts, trespasses and offenses

A clear picture of the messianic deliverer who brings forgiveness and salvation from sins is clearly seen in the announcements in Matthew and Luke.

- The angel of the Lord tells Joseph in a dream that Mary's child is to be called "Jesus" because he will save His people from their sins. Matt 1:21
- Zecharias upon regaining his speech prophesized that this child was to be born "to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins." Luke 1:77

The apostles were to proclaim, both to Jews and to Gentiles, that God had provided forgiveness for sins through His Son, Jesus Christ. And this was the message they consistently preached.

- "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31
- "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." Acts 10:43
- "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you." Acts 13:38
- "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" Ephesians 1:7; Col !:14

Note: <u>We are never more like Christ than when we forgive!</u>

Question: Do you know the One who has paid your sin debt in full?

The Character of Forgiveness – Humility – Not my Way, Lord, but Your way!

Luke 23:34…As Jesus hung on the cross, He did not indulge in self-pity but rather ask the Father to forgive the ones there.

Acts 7:59-60…Stephen as he was being stoned ask the Lord not to hold the acts of these men against them.

2 Timothy 4:16…Paul when all had deserted him ask that their desertion of him not be held against them.

- It takes a humble heart to forgive
- Forgiveness says this is not about me, it is about obedience to God
- It is about not grieving the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 4:30-32 "and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

A person is never more noble and never more like God than when he forgives someone. A person who forgives understands that he has been forgiven much and then chooses to also forgive.

Proverbs 19:11b … it is the glory of a man to overlook a transgression.

Forgiveness takes you out of the equation and invites the Lord in. When we forgive, we allow the Lord to handle the one who has offended us. We do not seek payment from the offender for his offense against us.

- Unforgiveness is birthed in pride.
- It is about self-glory, self-protection, ego, self-pity, vengeance, retaliation
- Note in Ephesians 4:31 the behaviors we are called to put away…they exist when we will not forgive

Another Characteristic of Forgiveness is Love

- Proverbs 10:12 "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers a multitude of sin."
- Proverbs 17:9 "He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends."
- Note the contrasts between love that gives forgiveness and the actions of unforgiveness

Consequences exist for the one whom God has forgiven who will not forgive

Matthew 18:21-35 The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

- The Master (God) forgave a servant (you) a huge debt then this servant went out and demanded repayment of a debt from a fellow servant
- When the Master heard this, he was angry and delivered the unforgiving servant to the torturers
- 18:35 says "so My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

- So if you will not forgive, God will deliver you to the tortuers. These torturers may be…sleeplessness, anxiety, anger, bitterness, guilt, and more.

When we do not forgive, we give Satan a foot hole in our life.

Hebrews 12:14-15 (we are instructed) "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble , and by this many become defiled;"

- Unforgiveness produces a root of bitterness in the one who will not forgive.

Forgiveness in the Body of Christ

Paul addresses forgiveness in the church in 2 Corinthians 2:3-10.

- Forgiveness in the church maintains unity; Unforgiveness leads to division and alienation.
- Forgiveness brings healing; unforgiveness brings sorrow.
- Forgiveness is birthed out of love showing we belong to Jesus.
- John 13:35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Forgiveness is an act of the will; it is a decided action

- The human tendency is to demand payment from the one who has offended or hurt us or we feel owes us something.
- Our desire is to demand justice or to take vengeance.
- To seek revenge.
- We want to play God…we must know that God says vengeance is His.
- "Revenge indeed seems often sweet to me, but it is only sugared poison, and its aftertaste is bitter as hell." John MacArthur
- "Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless the temperature of the heart" Corrie Ten Boom

We have a choice: to walk in obedience to God and forgive or to turn from God and demand our own way and walk in unforgiveness.

- "Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude." Martin Luther King Jr.

To choose unforgiveness allows Satan to take advantage of us. 2 Corinthians 2:11

In life, we will experience hurt and pain. People will say all kinds of things against us and stomp all over our feelings, but what do you do with it?

If we choose not to forgive, you will be shackled to your hurts and pain and the person who offended you.

By forgiving your offender, you will be set free from the misery of unforgiveness.

Why do we forgive?

- We forgive because we have been forgiven by God. (Ephesians 4:32)

- We forgive in obedience to God. (Matt 6:14-15; Romans 12:18)
- We forgive others to gain control of our lives from hurt emotions. (Genesis 4:1-8)
- We forgive so we won't become bitter and defile those around us. (Hebrews 12:14-15)

(from All About God – Definition for Forgiveness)

Conclusion:

Forgiveness then is the noblest thing that one sinner can do for another sinner, and that is to cover his sin permanently, never to remember it, never to bring it up in one's own mind willfully, never to bring it up to the sinner and never to bring it up to anybody else ever. It is a promise to forget. It is a promise to bury. It is a promise to remove away from all thoughts and all words the wrong that was done against you. Now by very definition, this has to start in the heart, doesn't it? It can't be something external because the heart has to do it.

So forgiveness is an attitude in the heart that holds no personal pride, no self pity, no wounded ego, no thought of bitterness, no desire for vengeance. It is a heart attitude of love. John MacArthur – sermon The Blessings of Forgiveness part 2 March 6, 1994

Forgiveness is a Matter of the Heart

Proverbs 4:23…Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

- What is stored in your heart?
- Go before the Lord and allow Him to do an inventory of your heart.
- Is there anyone in your heart you need to forgive?
- Or is there an event in your life present or past that is causing trouble?
- Deal with it today…

Forgiveness will set you free!

Cynthia Daniel clsd819@bellsouth.net Fresh Start facilitator

Visit our we site: freshstartforallnations.org

At Fresh Start -
We love to see men, women, and young people become free from the effects of offense, hurt and loss through the transforming power of forgiveness and freedom in Jesus Christ

GIVING – GOD GAVE

Tom Davis noted that "Love is mentioned 714 times in the Bible, yet “giving” or “possessions” is mentioned **2,172 times**."

Why does God want us to give?

Our giving is **a reminder of the blessings God gives us and gave to us through Jesus Christ**." **John 3:16** reveals three thoughts that should be the foundation of all our giving:

- God's motivation for giving was love.
- He gave Himself in the person of Jesus.
- God gave in response to our need.

Why do we give back to God what is already God's?

Giving is one of the most important spiritual practices a disciple of Jesus can observe.

The attitude we have toward our money and finances directly influences the condition of our relationship with Jesus. Sharing our resources can also reflect the level of giving in other areas of our lives.

Giving is contagious, as it spreads from our money to our time, our talents, our abilities and our presence. Lacking generosity and the willingness to share is also contagious.

We know as Christians we are taught to share what has been given to us with those who have less. We share our gifts, talents, time, ourselves and our financial resources.

When we share with others, we are ultimately sharing with the Lord. We are giving back to Him what He has blessed us with as stewards of ALL His benefits.

When we recognize that all we have is given to us by the Lord, we find it easier to part with “things” like money, time and possessions. As we gain the perspective that we are only “managing” these resources which the Lord has temporarily bestowed on us, we exert a looser grip on these items.

David writes in **Psalm 24:1**, *“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants too.”* It all belongs to God. **James 1:17** states this truth: “*Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above. These gifts come down from the Father*.”

We should not give because we think God needs our gifts in order to be God, or that the church needs our money to be the church.

Whenever we give, we are declaring to ourselves and to others that we trust God, we are thankful to God, we adore God and we acknowledge our continued dependence on God.

Probably the most famous verse in the entire Bible is **John 3: 16**.

Here we see that God gives.

He gave His Son … to die. He did not give some money or some earthly treasure – He gave Himself.

Why did He do this?

"For God so loved …"

Our giving should be based on love.

We give our family gifts because it brings us joy to see them joyful at receiving a gift.

We should give to the Lord for the same reason – to give Him joy Who has not held back ANYTHING from us.

In **1 Corinthians 13:3**, Paul writes, "*If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing."*

When we refrain from giving, holding back what rightfully belongs to God, we are dishonoring God, we are willfully placing a barrier between us and God.

Then we wonder why the Lord is distant to us or why we are not blessed.

Luke 21 introduces us to a widow who gave everything she had.

She withheld nothing from the Lord.

God's gifts are meaningful. Our gifts should be meaningful as well.

To casually offer a small amount that you don't even remember later, means that you have not really offered anything.

We are to ask the Lord what He would have us give and then promptly give it.

The widow gave from her heart. Jesus saw the rich people throwing their pocket change into the offering plate. Jesus commented that the poor widow had surpassed them all.

Jesus defines giving by the condition of the heart, not by the size of our gifts. For Jesus, motivation is everything when it comes to giving. A disciple of Jesus will give because the disciple recognizes all that God has given to them.

God also gave because there was a need.

Even in the book of Exodus chapter 35, we see the Israelites all generously giving the materials and time to build the tabernacle. If any of those people decided to withhold the materials they owned or the skills they had, the tabernacle wouldn't have come together.

Move forward some in the Bible, and in Malachi 3:10-12, giving is the one thing God tells us to test him in.

2 Cor. 8: 5

"And this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God." – This refers to the need felt in the early church at Jerusalem and the willing hearts of the Macedonians to give even though the Macedonians were impoverished.

In order to give with the right motives and the right heart, we must first give ourselves to the Lord.

❖ Go through the following verse and underline the word "give" "gave."

Acts 20:35

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Luke 11:13

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Hebrews 13:16

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Matthew 10:8

… Freely you have received; freely give.

Acts 20:32-35

"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Matthew 6:19-21

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

(Although the word "give" is not in these verses, what do you learn about giving from this passage?)

❖ Bible verses about how to give generously

Luke 21:1-4

As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Luke 19:8

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Matthew 6:1-4

"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Matthew 26:6-13

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

❖ Bible verses about what happens when we give

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Psalm 112:5

Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.

2 Corinthians 9:10-15

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with

everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Proverbs 11:24

One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.

Proverbs 11:25

A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.

- ❖ **As we wrap our time up on giving, note the 5WH.**

See what you learn about Who What Where When Why and How Giving is to be done.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

Luke 22:19

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 1:12

After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.

Job 42:10

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Titus 2:14

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

Ephesians 5:25-26

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Romans 8:32

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

And walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:2

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

1 John 5:11

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

Philippians 2:9-10

The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

1 John 3:24

He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

James 1:18

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

2 Timothy 1:9

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

John 10:28-30

But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

1 Chronicles 29:14

https://dailyverses.net/search/Gave?p=2

So What About Tithing?

Giving is to be done with thoughtfulness, sacrifice, generosity, and joy. We are to thoughtfully consider how much to give based upon our income (1 Corinthians 16:2). Along these lines, 2 Corinthians 9:6–7 says, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Thoughtfulness, generosity, freedom, and joy are all part of giving. We are to be "cheerful" in our giving. It's easy to be joyful when singing praise songs to God. This same joy should be present in our giving. We have an example of sacrificial giving in the Macedonians, who gave even in their "severe trial," "extreme poverty," and "beyond their ability" (2 Corinthians 8:1–9).

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were commanded to give around 23 percent of their annual income to support the Levites (Leviticus 27:30), to fund celebrations such as Passover (Deuteronomy 12:10–18), and to help the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28–29). These commands included two tithes (the giving of 10 percent) and a third of a tithe. The giving was a legal requirement in Israel's theocracy.

On top of their required giving, God directed the Israelites to give "freewill" offerings. Deuteronomy 16:10 explains that they were to give a "freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the Lord your God has given you." It is this directive that is most similar to the New Testament type of giving. There is no tithe required today, but our gifts are more akin to a freewill offering. After prayer and consideration, we give as we feel God would have us to. Believers have freedom in this area of worship. As the Lord prospers us, we should consider giving more.

The Law was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17). When the church began to grow beyond the Jewish people and reach Gentiles, leaders struggled with whether or not to command these new believers to follow the Mosaic Law. In the end, only a few instructions were given for the sake of peace, but tithing was not among them (Acts 15:19-21).

The principle in the New Testament is to give voluntarily to support the needs of others (Acts 2:45; Romans 15:25-27), support Christian workers (1 Corinthians 9:11-12; 1 Timothy 5:18), and expand Christian outreach (Philippians 4:15-16). No specific amount is ever commanded, and no percentage is suggested. While a tithe or tenth of one's finances may be a good standard to use for Christian giving, it is clear the early church did not focus on a specific amount but rather on meeting needs. This sometimes included giving much more than a tenth, as some believers sold homes or land to meet the needs that existed in the church (Acts 4:34-37).

From:

Does the teaching on tithing in Malachi 3:9-10 apply to us today?
From: gotquestions.org

- **Giving is a privilege and a responsibility as God's steward.**

When we do not give, we are robbing from our Master.

We are to manage what He has temporarily put in our charge.

To hold on to what is rightfully His is foolish and dangerous. It becomes poison to us at that point.

Do not deny yourself the joy of obedience in this form of worship.

God loves a cheerful giver.

And the giver knows the love of the Father as he reflects the giving heart of his Father.

GOD IS THE CREATOR

Why is the doctrine that God is Creator so important?

First of all, the teaching that God is our Creator is repeatedly expressed in Scripture, so this must be an important message of our Lord to His children.

As our Creator, God has authority over His creations. By acknowledging this truth, we also are acknowledging His particular design and therefore His direct purpose for our existence.

"The teaching of Scripture about the relationship between God and creation is unique among the religions of the world. The Bible teaches that God is distinct from His creation. He is not part of it, for He has made it and rules over it." Grudem's Systematic Theology

The term which means God is greater than His creation is **transcendent**.

God is also involved in His creation and that term is **immanent.**

"*The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life*." **Job 33: 4**

"*Nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things… For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'*" **Acts 17: 25, 28**

"*One God and Father of us all, Who is above all and through all and in all***." Eph. 4: 6**

With this doctrine of creation, the objection to the possibility of miracles vanishes. Therefore the other miracles pronounced in Scripture carry more weight and cannot be easily denied or selected piece-meal.

Who is involved in creation?

Elohim is the name God uses in Genesis 1 to describe Himself. This is a plural form for El (God) and indicates the plurality of powers represented in the Trinity. This term is used about 2,500 times in the Old Testament and testifies to the might and power of our God. **El Olam**, "The everlasting God," also in Genesis, describes the eternal nature of our Creator. Before anything was, He had existed.

"*From everlasting to everlasting, You are God*." **Ps. 90: 2**

"*God's eternity means that He has a different kind of existence, an existence without the passage of time, a kind of existence that is difficult for us even to imagine*." Grudem

Job 36: 26, "*Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know Him; the number of His years is unsearchable*."

Ps. 102: 24, *"O God, do not take me away in the midst of my days, Your years are throughout all generations."*

*God the Father was active in creation, but He did not work alone.

John 1: 1-3, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."*

1 Cor. 8: 6, "*Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from Whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we exist through Him."*

Col. 1: 16, *"For by Him (Jesus) all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him."*

Heb. 1: 2, *"In these last days God has spoken to us in His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He made the world."*

Just as God the Father is eternal, so is His Son Jesus.

John 8: 58, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."*

*We must not forget the role of the Spirit in the act of creation.

Gen. 1: 2 says, "*The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."*

Job 26: 13, "*By His breath* (*ruach*, same word as Spirit), *the heavens are cleared."*

Ps. 104: 30, *"You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the ground."*

"The Nicene Creed speaks of the Spirit as 'The Lord, the Life-Giver,' and a combination of further passages describing Him as the direct Agent in the creation of man, just as He is responsible for his re-creation." Herbert Lockyer

"*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*." **Genesis 1: 1**

With these words we have the beginning of everything, right? No!

Before Jesus died, He prayed a very special prayer. "*Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world*." **John 17: 24**

1 Peter 1: 20 echoes this idea. "*For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you."*

Not only does our Lord point to a time prior to the creation of the world, but our lives testify to this truth as well. **Eph. 1: 4, 5** "*Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself…"*

2 Tim. 1: 9, "*Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."*

Francis Schaeffer tells us, "The mentality of the whole Scripture is that creation is as historically real as the history of the Jews and our own present moment of time."

The fact of creation is a real time event. But any discussion of the origins of the universe must include the origin of time itself. God is timeless and the Creator, not only of the world, planets, solar systems and all we can see, but He created **time**. When we debate about how old the earth is, we have no real concept of what we are talking about. We cannot comprehend the absence of time; it is integral to our existence. God is distinct and very different from those He has created.

Yes, He created us in His image, but even that truth is shrouded in mystery because God is spirit and we are made "*from the dust of the ground*." **Gen. 2:7**

Why did God create?

Is. 43: 7, "*Everyone who is called by My name and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made."*

Ps. 19: 1, 2, "*The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge."*

Rev. 4: 1, "*Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."*

How did God create?

Jer. 10: 12, "*It is He Who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; and by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens."*

1 Tim. 4: 4, "*For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude."*

Gen 1: 31, "*…it was very good*."

Unger's Dictionary defines *creation* as: "*the work of God in bringing into existence the universe, including both the material and the spiritual worlds; in a more restricted sense, the*

bringing into existence and into its present condition the earth and the system to which it belongs."

We are also taught that God created *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, by the power of the almighty will.

Ps. 33: 6, 9, "*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host… For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."*

John 1: 3, *"All things came into being through Him, and **apart from Him nothing** came into being that has come into being*."

Acts 17: 24, "*The God Who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands."*

Rom. 4: 17, "*'A father of many nations have I made you, in the presence of Him Whom he believed, even God, Who gives life to the dead and calls into being **that which does not exist**."*

The first sentence of the Apostle's Creed is, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

What was lost between Creator and creature at the fall?

When man fell due to sin, there was a sharp alteration to the Creator-creature relationship. Man's attitude toward his Creator was changed. Man lost his way in discovering true happiness. In a very basic form, salvation is the restoration of a right relationship between man and his Creator.

We are servants. At the fall we became servants of sin and no longer servants of the Lord Who made us.

"Made as we were in the image of God, we scarcely find it strange to take again our God as our All. God was our original habitat and our hearts cannot but feel at home when they enter again that ancient and beautiful abode." Tozer

Chip Ingram has written a book entitled, God as He Longs for You to See Him. This book explores the character of God. It also reveals the lost ability to see God as He truly is. We tend to create God in our image instead of the other way around. Throughout Scripture, the godly men and women were the ones who knew their God and knew Him well.

"***UNTIL YOU KNOW GOD AS HE IS, YOU WILL NEVER BECOME ALL THAT HE HAS CREATED YOU TO BE.***" Ingram

Ps. 119: 73, "*Your hands made me and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn Your commandments."*

"**Some of the most rapturous moments we know will be those we spend in reverent admiration of the Godhead. In those holy moments the very thought of change in Him will be too painful to endure**." A.W. Tozer

What is the final act of creation?

Is. 65: 17, "*For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness."*

By the way, when we read of the new heavens and new earth written by the apostle John, how was he enabled to write these passages?

Rev. 1: 10, "*I was in the **Spirit** on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet."*

With the doctrine of creation, we are reminded that God is sovereign over the universe He created. He made it all and it is His. He is Lord of all of it. We owe our allegiance, praise and reverence to Him. At His appointed time, He will realize His final plans in plain view for all the world to see. We can have absolute confidence that He will ultimately defeat His enemies and be revealed as the Majesty on High. He will be worshiped forever.

"*For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens (He is the God Who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), 'I am the LORD, and there is none else*.'" **Is. 45:18**

GOD IS JUDGE

"*For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; He will save us."* **Is. 33: 22**

"*And the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is judge*." **Ps. 50: 6**

"*But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another*." **Ps. 75: 7**

"*Righteous are you, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments*." **Ps. 119: 137**

There is much in Scripture which informs us concerning this aspect of our God as Judge.

In fact, an entire Old Testament book is entitled "Judges." This particular book explores the early days in the history of Israel, before the kings, when God used His representatives, the judges.

These men and woman were called upon to serve the nation of Israel in leadership. They were also used of God as deliverers from the oppression of surrounding nations. The accounts of the judges reveal to us God's commitment to His people to protect, guide, discipline and mold them into His own particular people. The ultimate judge is God Himself.

"*When the **LORD raised up judges** for them, **the LORD was with the judge** and **delivered** them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them*." **Judg. 2: 18**

"*I therefore have not sinned against you, but you are doing me wrong by making war against me; may the LORD, the Judge, judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon."*

Judg. 11: 27 (Concerning the situation during the time of Jephthah)

This entire book of "Judges" points to our need for a Judge.

- The first time the word "judge" is used in Scripture is **Gen. 15: 14.**

"*But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions*." Clearly God is in control here of who is judged, when he is judged and how it will turn out when the judgment is completed.

Sarai, the wife of Abram, called upon God as Judge. "*May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the LORD judge between you and me*." **Gen. 16:5**

Concerning the destruction of Sodom, "*Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly*?" **Gen. 18: 25**

- In Exodus, we see that God has called Moses to act as His judge for the benefit of the people.

"*It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening."* When he was questioned regarding his long hours of service Moses answered, '*Because the people come to me to inquire of God*." **Ex. 18:13, 15**

The following verses are the advice of the father-in-law of Moses.

"*Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands ... Let them judge the people at all times*." **Ex. 18: 19-22a**

- Leviticus and Deuteronomy give instruction regarding judging the people.

"*You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly*." **Lev. 19: 15**

"*You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, **for the judgment is God's**. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it*." **Deut. 1:17**

"*You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they will judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue."* **Deut. 16:18-20a**

"*The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the LORD your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel*." **Deut. 17: 12**

- Hannah knew the importance of God as her Judge.

"*Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; against them He will thunder in the heavens, the LORD will judge the ends of the earth; and He will give strength to His king, and will exalt the horn of His anointed*." **1 Sam. 2: 10**

Later in the book of 1 Samuel we see the people demanding a king to judge them because the nations surrounding them do this. **1 Sam. 8:5**, "*And they said to him, 'Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations."*

- As David was pursued by a crazed king Saul, he cried out, "*The LORD therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand."* **1 Sam. 24:15**

Do you begin to see the great need of man for justice and a righteous Judge?

The Lord knows we need this system of balance and righteousness in our community. There is no justice apart from God. He is the standard by which we know what is indeed right.

- When Solomon asked God for wisdom in order to judge God's people, God was pleased to give Solomon great gifts.

"*So, give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"* **1 Kings 3: 9**

- As a good king Jehoshaphat appointed judges in the land. "*He said to the judges, 'Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for* ***the LORD Who is with you when you render judgment.'"*** **2 Chron. 19: 6**

When threatened by invading armies, Jehoshaphat cried out to God, not as Father, but as Judge.

"*O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You*." **2 Chron. 20: 12**

- All creation longs for the standard of perfection which resides within Almighty God. The only possible hope for all life is the corrective work of our Lord. When He comes to judge, He truly comes to set all things right and sound.

"*Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD; for He is coming to judge the earth."* **1 Chron. 16: 33**

"*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him Who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God."* **Rom. 8: 20, 21**

"*And He will judge between the nations and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war*." **Isaiah 2:4**

Concerning the Coming One …

"*And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also, righteousness will be the belt about His loins and faithfulness the belt about His waist*." **Is. 11: 3-5**

"*And men will say, 'Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God Who judges on earth!'*"**Ps. 58: 11**

"*Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness."*

Ps. 67: 4

"*A father for the fatherless and a judge for the widows, is God in His holy habitation*." **Ps. 68:5**

"*Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is You Who possesses all the nations*." **Ps. 82: 8**

"*Rise up, O Judge of the earth, render recompense to the proud*." **Ps. 94: 2**

"*How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me*?" **Ps. 119:84**

- The Lord is the only Judge to Whom we can appeal; with great confidence, we can know that He will judge with perfect justice AND compassion.

"*For the LORD will judge His people and will have compassion on His servants."* **Ps. 135: 14**

"*Judge me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness, and do not let them rejoice over me*." **Ps. 35: 24**

"*And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity*." **Ps 9: 8**

"*The LORD judges the peoples; vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me… God is a righteous judge, and a God Who has indignation every day."* **Ps. 7: 8, 11**

"*O LORD, You have seen my oppression; judge my case*." **Lam. 3: 59**

"*You say, 'What does God know? Can He judge through the thick darkness*?'" **Job 22: 13**

"*I said to myself, 'God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man,' for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.*" **Eccl. 3:17**

"*Then hear from heaven and act and judge Your servants punishing the wicked by bringing his way on his own head and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness."* **2 Chron. 6: 23**

- Yes, our Lord is compassionate in His judging, but make no mistake, it will come!

"*Now the end is upon you, and I will send My anger against you; I will judge you according to your ways and bring all your abominations upon you… Now I will shortly pour out My wrath on you and spend My anger against you; judge you according to your ways and bring on you all your abominations*." **Ez. 7: 3, 8**

"*Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns; indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity… Before the LORD, for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness.*" **Ps. 96: 10, 13**

"*The LORD arises to contend and stands to judge the people*." **Is 3: 13**

Why does God judge?

"*You will fall by the sword. I will judge you to the border of Israel;* ***so, you shall know that I am the LORD.*****" Ez. 11: 10**

"*The LORD has made Himself known; He has executed judgment*." **Ps. 9: 16**

"*Thus says the LORD, 'By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood*.'"

Ex. 7: 17 *(God's judgment on Egypt was a way of revealing Himself as Lord of all.)*

"Therefore, I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another." **Ez. 34: 22** (He judges to deliver.)

"*Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations."* **Joel 3: 12** (He judges to bring all things to completion.)

What does the New Testament have to tell us about our Judge?

"*I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me*." **John 5: 30**

"*He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; and the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day*." **John 12: 48**

"*Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man Whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."*

Acts 17: 31

"*And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One Who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead*." **Acts 10: 42**

"*And I heard the altar saying, 'Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments*.'"**Rev. 16:7**

"*And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He Who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war*." **Rev. 19:11**

"*And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'*"**Rev. 6: 10**

"*To the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect*." **Heb. 12: 23**

"*Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door."* **James 5: 9**

"*But they will give account to Him Who is ready to judge the living and the dead*." **1 Pet. 4: 5**

"*And while being reviled, He did not revile in return, while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him Who judges righteously*." **1 Pet. 2: 23**

"*If you address as Father the One Who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth*." **1 Pet. 1: 17**

"*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, Who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom… In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."* **2 Tim. 4: 1, 8**

"*On the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."* **Rom. 2:16**

What is to be our role in judging?

"*I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when **I learn** your righteous judgments."* **Ps. 119: 7**

"***I know**, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me*." **Ps. 119: 75**

"***My flesh trembles for fear of You**, and **I am afraid of Your judgments***." **Ps. 119: 120**

"*Therefore **do not go on passing judgment** before the time, but **wait** until the Lord comes Who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God*." **1 Cor. 4: 5**

"*Or do you not know that the **saints will judge the world**? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?"* **1 Cor. 6:2**

"*But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For **we will all stand before the judgment seat of God***." **Rom. 14: 10**

God's role as Judge in history should bring us to our knees in worship to our mighty God. He alone is righteous to judge; He alone is powerful enough to bring judgment to pass; He alone is perfect in His decisions; He alone is compassionate in His just decrees; He alone can judge with perfect impartiality. We can rest in the veracity of His judgments. The more we learn of Him, the more we can trust His ways in all things, and that includes His judgment.

Sin requires judgment. A holy God cannot condone, overlook or ignore any violation of His standard. The fine must be paid. "The wages of sin is death." Jesus experienced God as Shaphat, as Judge. He faced and accepted the judgment that should have fallen on me; I praise my Lord and Redeemer that He has provided an eternal life for me, a life free of condemnation. Yet, I will stand before the Lord and give account of how I have used this life He has given me. I will not be condemned, but I will answer for my words and deeds before a Holy God.

Jehovah Shaphat

God is Judge.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD

"*You are good and do good*." **Ps. 119: 68a**

The perfections of Yahweh are those qualities which are revealed to His people through His revelation to them in His word. The basis for hope lies in the perfections of Yahweh. God's "goodness" is connected to His covenant fidelity. All of His promises are integrated into His promise of "goodness."

"God's goodness is that perfection which prompts Him to deal kindly and bountifully with all His creatures." Herbert Lockyer

"*For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations."* **Ps. 100: 5**

"*For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You*." **Ps. 86: 5**

"*I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living*." **Ps. 27: 13**

"*How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear you, which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You, before the sons of men!"* **Ps. 31: 19**

"*O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!"*

Ps. 34: 8

"*Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, His lovingkindness is everlasting*." **Ps. 136: 1**

"*I will give You thanks forever, because You have done it, and I will wait on Your name, for it is good, in the presence of Your godly ones*." **Ps. 52: 9**

"*The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. And He knows those who take refuge in Him."* **Nahum 1: 7**

The goodness of God means that God's standard of good is the authoritative norm and all that He is and does constitutes what is good.

Jesus Himself said that God alone is good. **Lu. 18:19; Mark 10:18**

"Good" is the old English word for "God."

Hebrew verb: "to do good" and "to be good"

Tob: to do good, to be happy, to please, to be loved, to be favored, to endure, to be valuable, to do well, to do right, to be glad

Tobah: and adj. which means good, well-pleasing, fruitful, morally correct, proper, convenient, appealing and pleasant, useful and profitable, good as opposed to evil

God is originally good, in His essence He is good. Not only is He good, He is goodness itself. He is eternally and immutably good; He cannot be less than good. Any goodness in a creature is there because of the goodness God has imparted to that creature.

All that comes from God – his laws, decrees, ordinances, creation – can only be good.

"*God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good."* **Gen. 1: 31a**

"*And He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness*." **Acts 14: 17**

"God's mercy is His goodness toward those in distress, his grace is His goodness toward those who deserve only punishment, and His patience is His goodness toward those who continue to sin over a period of time." Grudem's Systematic Theology

One of the first verses we learn as young Christians is **Rom. 8: 28**, "*For we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* How could we be confident in this if God were not able (omnipotent) to bring this "good" to pass and the source of goodness itself? **James 1: 17** tells us, "*Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow."*

As we evaluate things as God has designed us to see them, we are in agreement with His approval or disapproval of things. We therefore will delight in the things in which He delights and disapprove of the things which meet with His disapproval.

"When we realize that God is the definition and source of all good, we will realize that God Himself is the ultimate good that we seek." Grudem's Systematic Theology

*"*When I say that God is good, that God has a kind heart, I mean that God has a heart infinitely kind and that there is no boundary to it… It is impossible for God to be anything

and not be completely, infinitely what He is. It is possible for the sun to be bright, but not infinitely bright because it doesn't have all the light there is." A.W. Tozer

But for God He is infinitely good and perfectly good. There is no partially good or somewhat good. He is completely and wholly good. Whatever God is, He is perfectly.

The goodness of God excludes any tolerance for sin. His goodness cannot exist in company with sin.

Rom. 11: 22, "*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shall be cut off."*

"History shows that no tribe or nation has ever risen morally above its religion." Tozer

If the religion of the people was impure, corrupt, and debauched, then the people would follow its lead.

"CHRISTIANITY AT ANY GIVEN TIME IS STRONG OR WEAK DEPENDING ON HER CONCEPT OF GOD." Tozer

This is why seeing the goodness of God is critical to our faith. As Christians we must accept nothing less than God's version of what is good. When we settle for mediocre morality, we walk the way of the world and dishonor our good and holy God.

Eph. 5:9, "*For the fruit of the Light consists in all **goodness** and righteousness and truth."*

"goodness" is Greek *agathosune*: it is energized character, expressing itself in

benevolence and active good.

In Greek philosophy, good had several meanings. Some saw it as what is pleasant (Sophists); Plato saw goodness as the central idea; Aristotle viewed it as the necessary. For the Greeks, people became good through instruction in the good.

Old Testament Judaism saw goodness differently. **Jer. 32:39, 42,** "*And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own **good** and for the good of their children after them…For thus says the LORD, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the **good** that I am promising them.'"*

New Testament believers have the distinct privilege of living in the light of this goodness every day. "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He Who began a **good** work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus***." Phil. 1: 6**

"*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,* ***goodness****, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."* **Gal. 5: 22, 23**

GRACE

This is one of the most important words in the Bible.

Without the existence of this concept of God, we would most certainly perish with no hope at all.

But praise be to God, this word GRACE, does exist.

This word exists because this word represents the nature, the character of God.

He has declared Himself to be gracious.

But You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, Slow to anger and abundant in mercy and truth. **Ps. 86: 15**

And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

Jonah 4: 2

When the Lord passes before Moses at Sinai in **Exodus 34:6**, he proclaims himself to be gracious:

The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

The Lord is gracious and merciful;

Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. **Psalm 145:8**

This characteristic of God changes everything.

We are no longer left to fend for ourselves. We have a gracious God Who provides for, cares for, protects, fights for, goes before us because He is motivated by grace and love.

Honestly, of all the doctrines I have prepared as an essay, this is the most daunting one.

Why? Because the topic of God's grace is incomprehensible, unfathomable and inscrutable.

The idea of grace is utterly beyond the human mind. This is true of many of the attributes of God, but grace, like holiness, touches everything. The vastness of grace cannot be contained or adequately described, but we continue in our search, in our "pressing on" to understand the grace of God.

The word “grace” means “favor” and also means “**elegance or beauty of form, manner, motion, or action.”**

This causes us to realize that the grace of God is far more than simple kindness; grace springs from a beautiful and lovely Being. There is no beauty or loveliness in this world apart from His grace. Therefore, to live our lives with God’s grace is to bring beauty and loveliness into God’s creation.

The most common Hebrew word for “grace” is **חן (hen)**. However, sometimes it is translated into a different English word, like 'precious' or 'valuable'.

The Hebrew word translated as grace is חן (*hhen*, Strong's #2580).

*A wonderful description of this word from the Gospel Project is at the end of this article.

What follows below is a beautiful 2 minute description of the word in Hebrew for grace.

Do not miss this blessing!

https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Hebrew+word+for+grace&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#kpvalbx=_9cqNY-7TK6a2qtsPs7Kg6Ao_28

- ❖ Where do we first see this word hen?

The first use of the word ‘grace’ in the Bible is found in **Genesis 6:8**: “But Noah found grace (or favor) in the eyes of the LORD.”

The Hebrew word used here to define grace or favor is indeed *hen*. Its derivative, *hanan* (חנן), is often translated as “to be gracious” or “have mercy.

Was Noah aware that he needed God’s grace? We are not told but it’s fairly easy to see that his times were troubled and he stood out among the people with whom he lived.

Was Noah asking for grace? Did he even know what grace was?

One of the key properties of grace is that God makes the first move. He initiates grace.

Grace and Covenant

At the heart of the Old Testament teaching on God's grace is God's covenant with his people. The covenant provides the historical revelation, thread, and structure to God's gracious dealings. The Abrahamic covenant ceremony described in **Genesis 15** is both conventional and highly unusual. On the one hand, it was typical for ancient Near Eastern covenants to be ratified by the cutting in two of sacrificial animals, between which the covenanting parties would pass as a way of saying, "If we break the terms of the covenant, may we be torn in two as these creatures have been!" Yet in Genesis 15, Abram does not pass between the carcasses; only the Lord does this. In taking this action, the Lord unconditionally and unilaterally pledges himself to Abram and his descendants. As we see in the New Testament, this action prefigures the work of God in Christ on the cross at Calvary, where he takes up the penalty for our sins in the fulfillment of the covenant.

Grace and Sacrifice

In contrast to cheap sentimentalism, God's grace in the Old Testament is more than a whim or a spineless capitulation to human rebellion. God does not ignore the problem of sin and pretend it does not exist. He feels a holy anger and wrath toward sin and cannot simply pardon the rejection of his rule as if it had never happened. So there is need for atoning action to deal with the transgressions of his mandates. Thus, God establishes a sacrificial system under Moses, the supreme manifestation of which is the Day of Atonement, detailed in Leviticus 16, whereby sin might be addressed. God himself creates the sacrificial system, he regulates it via his word and elect priesthood, and ultimately, it is God who chooses to accept the sacrifices presented to him.

This fact—that God is the one who establishes and regulates the sacrificial system—should not be ignored. It's significant because it teaches us that the Old Testament sacrifices were not an attempt by human beings to find something that would placate or cajole an angry God. We wrongly imagine that God was angry with his people and they somehow discovered ways to twist his arm and earn his favor despite their sin. The Scriptures teach us that it was God who took the initiative, revealing how sinful humans could relate to him. He established the content, the terms, and the results of the sacrifices because his wrath needed to be satisfied in a particular way. This initiative is further evidence of his grace and favor toward his people. This is not humanity reaching up to God but God reaching down to humanity, an action completely founded in God's unmerited favor toward his people. He establishes *by grace* the sacrifices which serve to satisfy his justice.

The gracious activity of God does not begin with the sacrificial system instituted under Moses, of course. Hints of this are found even earlier in the Old Testament. We first see God's grace on display when God confronts Adam and Eve in the garden after the fall. Adam and his wife have made themselves clothes out of leaves in an attempt to cover their shame. When God approaches, he does not accept their coverings, yet he does not immediately wipe them from the face of the earth either. Instead, he slays animals and covers Adam and Eve with the skins of the animals so that their sinful nakedness might be covered. God deals with the immediate

problem of their guilt in the manner of his own choosing. In other words, he provides the solution to the problem of Adam's sin. In Genesis 3, for all his wrath at Adam's rebellion, he is revealed to be a gracious God who saves his people through animal sacrifice. These themes recur throughout the Scriptures, as we find again in Genesis 22, for example. After God has asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son to the Lord, Abraham makes the portentous statement that God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering (Gen 22:8). Again, we see God revealed as gracious because he provides for his people what they cannot provide for themselves—the sacrifice required for sin. Grace and sacrifice are inextricably linked throughout God's dealings with his Old Testament people.

Grace and Prayer

Human beings are sinful and deserve nothing but justice and wrath at the hands of God. Yet as we have seen, God's gracious action is both the response to sin and that which gives Israel its basic identity. So it should not surprise us to find that grace becomes a staple of the piety of the Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament narratives, Psalms, and in the Prophets, we find God's people crying out to the Lord in their prayers, pleading for him to be gracious.

Prayer is, of course, closely attached to the notion of sacrifice. We must not forget this, for to do so would be to detach prayer from its position in God's overall gracious action and also to lose that powerful, raw, existential aspect that we noted above in regard to the nature of sacrifice. If grace is not empty sentiment, then neither is prayer a sentimental action. How often on news reports do we see examples of human suffering with the response that people are praying for the victims? While the response is in a sense a good one, it is hard not to wonder whether phrases such as "our thoughts and prayers are with the victims" are really just another way of saying "we feel very badly for the victims and want to express our solidarity with them and their loved ones." That is not biblical prayer. Biblical prayer rests on God's grace and thus on God's character as expressed in his saving actions toward his people and as shown forth in the bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament.

This is why the primary place of prayer in the Old Testament is the tabernacle and then the temple, the places where God dwells in covenant with his people and where sacrifices are offered to him. The temple was a house of prayer (**Isa 56:7; cf. Matt 21:13**). It was also the place where prayers were answered. The existential confusion of the psalmist over the apparent prosperity of the wicked, for example, is resolved when he takes his questions to God's sanctuary (**Ps 73:16–17**). We can only speculate as to what precisely happened to him in the temple to solve his problem, but it was surely something to do with the sacrificial actions that took place there.

If sacrifice is the context of prayer, then once again we might note that it is the character of God revealed in these sacrifices that is of utmost importance. When Nehemiah (**Neh 9**) leads the people of Israel in a prayer of corporate confession, he recounts how God has saved them

in the past despite their sin and rebellion and ascribes graciousness to him (**v. 17**), consciously echoing the words God has declared about himself in **Exodus 34:6**. Nehemiah knows that at this critical moment when Israel returns to Jerusalem a knowledge of God's grace will be vitally important for the people. They must be taught to remember who they are in light of what God has done for them so they can understand the significance of their actions. Nehemiah does not speak to their immediate needs; he points them back to God's great historic dealings with his people, calling them to recall how God has revealed himself to be merciful and faithful to them in the past. Nehemiah calls both the people and God himself in his prayer, asking God to be the God he has promised to be and reminding the people of who they are. And of course, he is engaged in the great project of rebuilding the temple, the very place where the sacrifices that undergird prayer are to be performed.

The existential impact of grace is nowhere more apparent than in the Psalms. When we turn to these, we find them replete with references to God's graciousness as well as explicit calls for him to be gracious. Indeed, the grace of God serves as the foundation for the piety of the psalmist. It is God's grace alone that forms the basis for any salvific engagement with him. In **Psalm 4** he calls on God to be gracious by hearing his prayer (**v. 1**). **Psalm 6** asks the Lord to be gracious by not rebuking the psalmist in wrath (**v. 1**). **Psalm 9** calls on the Lord to be gracious by saving him from persecution at the hands of his enemies (**v. 13**). At times, the suffering of the psalmist leads him to question whether God is still gracious (**Ps 77:9**), while at other times his confidence overflows with exultant declarations of how gracious God is, echoing other declarations of God's gracious character found in **Exodus 34:6 (Pss 103:8; 145:8)** or the Aaronic blessing (**Ps 67:1**). As noted earlier, the covenant is also featured as the grounds for God's graciousness. Prayer typically takes the form of calling out to God and asking him to be the gracious God he has promised to be. The psalmist does not look to his own merit but rather the character of God as he has displayed it in his dealings with his people.

What is clear from a study of prayer in the Psalms is that God's grace, his unmerited mercy in his dealings with his people, is foundational to the relationship between human beings and their Creator. Prayer is not a conversation between equals, nor is it a cooperative exercise between a servant and a king. The piety of the Psalms is decidedly one-sided, rooted in God's character and in God's response to human sin. The psalmist pleads no merit of his own but looks solely to God's grace in making his requests. As we move into the New Testament, we see this grace embodied and definitively revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet even in the piety of the Old Testament we see the people turning to the grace of God. To live in the favor and grace of God has been the perennial longing of the people of God from the very start. The psalmist knows that the only answer to the deepest and most troubling questions of human existence is the grace of God.

In fact, at the heart of biblical piety as established in the Old Testament lies a cry of human desperation. The psalmists recognize that there is hope, but it is only found in God's gracious initiative. They have despaired of themselves and see no hope in a fallen creation. They know that if salvation is to come, it can only come from God himself and can only be rooted in his character and his actions. The reason is simple: human beings are in rebellion against God. The

creation groans under the weight of human sin and the disruption in our relationship with our Creator. Human experience is tragic: life is not as it should be and ends in death, the penalty for sin. Death is an unnatural intrusion into the realm of human existence, and hope, if there is any hope, must be in God himself breaking into this creation from outside and acting toward it in mercy.

This is why, even in the darkest of the psalms (**Ps 88**) where there is no explicit expression of hope at all, the psalmist uses the covenant name of God. Despair is set against the larger background of God's covenant and his grace. The problem of humanity is not lack of self-fulfillment requiring personal affirmation and assistance. It is that we are rebels against God at the very core of our being and need him to be gracious toward us.

I would note at this point that this understanding is quite different from what we often find today, even among Protestant churches that claim to take the Bible and the Reformation seriously. Under the impact of cultural forces that place the consumer at the center, Christianity has become a means to an end, something that helps us to realize our own goals or potential. It is a kind of self-help therapy dressed up in an orthodox religious idiom. Yet this has nothing in common with biblical piety, a grace-based piety that understands the tragedy of the human condition and knows that only God's unmerited favor can solve the problems of the human condition.

This is further evident in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Earlier, we noted Jonah's complaint about God's grace, knowing that Nineveh deserved destruction but "worried" that God might prefer mercy to justice. Jonah relished grace for himself but was not eager to share it with others. More positively, Joel speaks of God's grace in calling the people back to repentance (**Joel 2:13**), as do Amos (**Amos 5:15**) and Malachi (**Mal 1:9**). Of all the prophets, however, Isaiah is arguably the greatest prophet of God's grace. Beginning with his own crisis moment in Isaiah 6, when he is confronted by the Lord in his holiness, Isaiah is driven to despair because of his own sin, a despair cured only by God's own merciful and gracious action. This awareness of God's grace carries through his writings, into the magnificent Servant Songs, where Isaiah looks to the grace of God as the ultimate hope for the people's salvation.

Isaiah 53:4–6 famously offers a pointed and powerful statement of this grace:

Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;

and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Here we see the culmination of God's gracious action focused on the Servant. Our griefs and our sorrows have been borne by him. Our peace is bought as he is crushed and chastised. Our sins and transgressions have been laid on him by the Lord so that we might not have to bear their consequences ourselves. God is the agent in this work on our behalf. It is not a response to any good actions we have performed. Rather, it is the opposite: this is how God responds to our sinful rebellion. God's graciousness finds fulfillment in the work of the Servant. Here God's unmerited salvific favor is enacted and displayed for all to see. Isaiah's prophecies of the Servant and his gracious activity point us forward, to the fullness of God's grace revealed in Christ in the New Testament.

Learn more in the Grace Alone Video Lectures.

Footnotes

1. The Hebrew term *khen*, which is typically translated as "grace," carries the meaning of "favor," as does the verb *khanan* and its cognates.
2. Theologians typically make a distinction between "mercy" and "grace." They regard "grace" as the goodness of God shown to people irrespective of what they actually deserve. "Mercy" is the unmerited goodness of God toward those who have sinned and are guilty. The distinction is a fine one and perhaps not greatly significant. Mercy, we might say, is a specific form of grace.
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer memorably distinguishes between cheap grace and costly grace: "Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting to-day for costly grace. . . . Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. . . .[Costly grace] is costly because it cost God the life of his Son" (The Cost of Discipleship, trans. R. H. Fuller [New York: Touchstone, 1995], 43, 45).

https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/grace-in-the-old-testament

Grace in the New Testament

"Grace" - #5485 *charis* = grace, particularly that which causes joy, pleasure, gratification, favor, acceptance, for a kindness granted or desired

A favor done without expectation of return; the absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the Giver; unearned and unmerited favor. *Charis* stands in direct antithesis to *erga* (works).

God's grace affects man's sinfulness and not only forgives the repentant sinner but brings joy and thankfulness to him. It changes the individual to a new creature without destroying his individuality (**2 Cor. 5: 17; Eph. 2: 8, 9**).

Charis, when received by faith, transforms man and causes him to love and to seek after the righteousness of God. Charis is initially regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit in which spiritual life is given to man and by which his nature is brought under the dominion of righteousness. The maintenance of this condition requires an unbroken and immense supply of grace. Grace remains constant in, and basic to a believer's fight without against the devil and his struggle within against sin. God's grace ensures that those who have been truly regenerated will persevere until the end of life. This entire work is called sanctification., a work of God 'whereby we are renewed in the whole man and are enabled more and more to die daily unto sin and to live unto righteousness' as is stated by the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. (**Rom. 12: 2; 2 Cor. 4: 16; Eph. 4: 23; Col. 3: 10)**

Notes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Spiros Zodhiates

2 Peter 1 says, "Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness" (**vs. 2-3**).

So here grace comes through the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The more we know of our Lord, the more grace of His Being He sheds abroad in our understanding of Who He is.

You see that the grace of God is more than salvation but also everything we need for life and godliness. The definition of grace could be "God's life, power and righteousness given to us by His unmerited favor." It is through grace that God works effective transformation in our hearts and lives. Grace gives us a new life which is not condemned by God. Through God's grace we are forgiven, changing our thinking, resulting in the renewal of our mind and heart. Through grace we live the kind of life that God desires every one of His children to experience. Let's consider in more detail what the grace of God does in us.

God's grace saves us.

Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." It is important to see here that by God's grace we have been saved. It is not by works. Salvation is generated strictly on the basis of God's grace. God's gift of grace comes through the cross of Jesus alone – nothing else added, such as our works.

God's grace justifies us.

Romans 3:24, "Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." We are accounted right by God only because of His grace and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which is available to us because Jesus willingly offered His life for us, paying the price we

owed for our rebellion against God. Our justification is not something we receive because of good works, but because of the payment Jesus paid for us at the cross when he suffered and died.

God's grace sanctifies us.

2 Thessalonians 2:13, "Because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." We are saved by grace and we continue in sanctification dependent on grace as well.

Salvation: our right standing before God depends on grace.

Sanctification: the process of being made holy for God's use, is accomplished by His grace as well.

1 Corinthians 1:30, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."

God's grace gives us purpose.

God's grace empowers us to live the lives that He has planned for us.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (**1 Corinthians 15:10**). We do not earn God's grace by performing works, the works we do originate from the grace of God within us by His Spirit.

Grace, which is God's life, comes into us and energizes us so that we can be all and achieve all His good purposes. **Philippians 2:13**, "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." Our gifts and abilities are given to us by His grace. These gifts should be used for His kingdom and His glory. The gifts of God were never given so we could be happy and lead a good life; the gifts of God have been bestowed on us so that we could fulfill His promises that the seed of Abraham would bless the world through His Son.

Imagine for a minute a world without grace – specifically God's grace.

There is no way for us to ever make ourselves clean and useful for God.

We will never be "good enough for God."

Keep this in mind as you serve the Lord. Only what is done in His grace is worthwhile and has eternal benefits.

Everything good that comes in us and through us is only by the grace of God.

Grace saves us, justifies us, sanctifies us, and empowers us for His service.

Being a Spirit filled Christian means one who walks by grace, God's grace.

Being a Spirit filled Christian means exhibiting the beauty, the loveliness, the demonstration of God's favor which comes directly from the heart of a gracious God.

* **Biblical Grace and a Generous God**

The Complex and Surprising Answer to Why God is Gracious. **BibleProject Team**

In Exodus 34:6,

God describes himself as gracious. This is a word that's probably pretty familiar to you. But taking time to think through the different meanings of this word and how it's used throughout the Bible will help us better understand what it means for a person to be gracious. And more specifically, what it means for the God of the universe to be gracious.

In contemporary English, to be gracious typically means you are kind, courteous, and even delightful. We hear this word used to describe someone's surprising and kind attitude towards another person or in a difficult situation—"he was so gracious with that rude stranger," or "she exudes grace under pressure." Someone who is gracious is an enjoyable person to be around because they bring light and life to others.

Another common English meaning of gracious is to be forgiving, merciful, and compassionate—"it was gracious of her to just give you a warning," or "the judge's lenient verdict was gracious."

These definitions of "grace" and "gracious" can be connected by the idea that to be gracious is to extend kindness or show delight towards someone who may not be deserving of that treatment. These two meanings are also connected in Hebrew thought. So when God calls himself gracious, what he means is that he sees you as a treasure, he delights in you, regardless of your status or behavior.

Grace as Beauty

Let's start to unpack this by looking at the Hebrew word for "grace," *khen* (חֵן). (To pronounce this word, say "hen" but clear your throat a little at the beginning.) In Hebrew, *khen* is anything that induces a favorable response or something we find ourselves drawn to. It might elicit a favorable response because it is elegant or

charming, or it might be because it is beautiful. Anything that we encounter that brings us delight could be called khen.

In Proverbs 3:22

Proverbs 3:22

God's wisdom is compared to a necklace and is called "an ornament of *khen*," usually translated as "an ornament of grace." Think about it. Wearing a necklace brings delight to those who wear it and to those who see it worn. And the teacher is asking you to think of God's wisdom like that necklace.

In Psalm 45:2,

a gifted poet is said to have lips of *khen*, most often translated as "lips of grace." The poet's lips create beauty when he uses them for his poetry.

In Proverbs 5:19,

a deer that moves swiftly and elegantly is called a "deer of *khen*," or a graceful deer.

All of these examples of khen are describing beauty, elegance, and things worth treasuring. To find khen is to find a treasure.

Grace as Favor

Another way we see this word used in the Bible is when someone asks to be treated like a treasure, that is, to be treated favorably. This is what it means to be "found as *khen*" in someone's eyes. That phrase, "to find *khen* in the eyes" is a popular biblical phrase, used 47 times throughout Scripture. And it is exclusively used when someone of higher status looks upon someone of lower status with favor.

For example, Joseph was a slave who found *khen* in the eyes of his master Potiphar Genesis 39:4

When Potiphar looked at Joseph, he didn't just see some lowly slave. He saw someone worth delighting in because Yahweh was with Joseph. Potiphar's favor towards Joseph came in the form of putting him in charge of his household and entrusting all of his assets to him.

Another great example is when a landowner named Boaz decides to take care of a widowed immigrant named Ruth by letting her glean in his field for free. In response to

this generosity she says, “Why have I found *khen* in your eyes that you should notice me, since I am a foreigner?” (Ruth 2:10)

Someone in authority can find someone of lesser status as worthy of *khen*(favor). As a result, that person of lower status will be treated with higher regard than their true position would necessitate. And the opposite is true too. Someone in a lowly position can ask someone superior to find *khen* in their eyes for them. This is what it means for someone to “find *khen*” in the eyes of another.

Grace as Action

Let’s take this further. Khen can also be an action—you can favor someone. In this sense, *khen* is being used as a verb, and the verb form of *khen* is *khanan*(חנן). (Let’s practice that pronunciation again. Say “hanan” but clear your throat!) When used as a verb, this word means you are bestowing *khen*—delight, favor, or value—on someone. And remember, this always refers to an act of generosity or favor from someone of higher status to someone of lower status.

For example, in Esther 4:8 and 8:3

Esther goes before King Ahasuerus to ask for her people to be spared from destruction. She asks for *khanan*. Esther is a subordinate making a request to a superior who is not obligated to grant her request. But he does so, and this is called *khanan* (showing favor).

A Gracious God

When someone is consistently favorable towards people of lower status, they could be characterized as being full of *khen*. This is *khen* being used as an adjective, and the adjective form is *khanun* (חַנּוּן). (How is that throat clearing going?)

In the Bible, the person that shows the most *khanun* to others is God himself. Every human is of lower status than the creator God, but God consistently looks upon humans with favor. God treasures us, and he doesn’t show us favor because we deserve it. In fact, the story of the Bible is one that shows humans as constantly messing up—we lie, cheat, steal, and kill. We go out of our way to show God we don’t deserve to be favored. But despite our failings, God is *khanun*; he is gracious.

The context of the Exodus passage where God first calls himself gracious is a powerful example of this. God has just rescued the Israelites from slavery, brought them to

safety, and made a covenant with them. And the first thing they do is make an idol statue, breaking two of the commandments of the covenant! And God's response is to call himself "gracious." He will continue to show favor on humanity even when we rebel.

This attribute of God, his graciousness, the consistent favor he shows towards humanity, is something the Bible celebrates. It is presented throughout Scripture as the undeserved gift it truly is. Take Psalm 103:8-10

as an example.

The Lord is compassionate and *khanun* (gracious) Slow to anger and abounding in loyal love. He will not always strive with us, Nor will he keep his anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

Psalm 103:8-10

We can trust that God will be gracious with us, and it's even something we can feel empowered to ask of him. We see this in Psalm 51
A Contrite Sinner's Prayer for Pardon.

For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

1Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;

According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

2Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity

And cleanse me from my sin.

3For I know my transgressions,

And my sin is ever before me.

4Against You, You only, I have sinned

And done what is evil in Your sight,

So that You are justified when You speak

And blameless when You judge.

5Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,

And in sin my mother conceived me.

6Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,

And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.

7Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8Make me to hear joy and gladness,

Keep Reading

when David asks for God's graciousness even though his circumstances are the result of his own sin.

Be *khanun* (gracious) to me, according to your loyal love, according to your compassion, blot out my rebellious acts.

Psalm 51:1

The story of the Bible is about how God is relentlessly pursuing a relationship with humanity. He continually strives to show us favor even when we betray him or turn our backs on him. Throughout the Bible, we see the God of the universe find ways to reconcile with a hard-hearted and rebellious humanity. And that's what it means that God is gracious.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

What do you think when you dwell on the holiness of God?

***Holy* means "*consecrated, sanctified, set apart, completely other than*."**

God, therefore, is unlike anything in our world; He is "*completely other than*" anything we know. Does this mean we cannot know God?

It would if God had not provided a way to glimpse into His Presence, as He did with Moses. (Ex. 33: 18-23)

We see certain things of Who God is.

As we study the Bible, we see that every attribute of God is touched by His holiness: His love is holy; His anger is holy; His mercy is holy; His judgment is holy; His peace is holy; His fierceness is holy; His ways are holy.

There is nothing about God that you can say that does not include the fact that He is holy.

Therefore, having a grip on this quality of God is paramount to you knowing Him! You must meditate on His holiness because this is vital to Who He is.

- **The Bible calls God holy more than anything else.**

James Montgomery Boice, *"Holy is the epithet most often affixed to His name."*

Wayne Grudem in his <u>Systematic Theology</u> says, "*God's holiness means that He is separated from sin and devoted to seeking His own honor*."

God Himself is the Most Holy One as He is called in Scripture repeatedly.

Ps. 71: 22

"I will also praise You with a harp, Even Your truth, O my God;

To You I will sing praises with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel."

Ps. 78: 41

"Again and again they tempted God, and pained the Holy One of Israel."

Ps. 89: 18

"For our shield belongs to the Lord and our king to the Holy One of Israel."

Is. 1: 4

"Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly!

They have abandoned the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away from Him."

The Lord's holiness and His action as the Warrior God (Lord of hosts) are connected.

Is. 6: 3

"*And one called out to another and said,*

Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts,

The whole earth is full of His glory."

"God's holiness is celebrated without ceasing by the seraphim before His throne." Boice

"He is holy in His nature. As light is the essence of the sun, so holiness is God's very being. Because of His divine perfection, 'God is absolutely distinct from all His creatures, and above them in infinite majesty' (Ex. 15: 11; Is. 57: 15) … Holiness is His inward character – not merely a trait of His Being, but His very essence – not one of a list of virtues but the sum of all excellencies rather than an excellence." **Herbert Lockyer**

- **The Tabernacle**

God does not grade on the curve.

His standard of holiness is wholly His own – yet He requires holiness from His people.

"One misconception is to think of God's holiness largely in human terms. It is imagined that holiness or righteousness is something that can be graded more or less." Boice

We compare ourselves to one another and not to God.

"*As long as Isaiah could compare himself to other mortals, he was able to sustain a lofty opinion of his own character. The instant he measured himself by the ultimate standard, he was destroyed – morally and spiritually annihilated."*

R. C. Sproul

A.W. Tozer says in <u>The Knowledge of the Holy</u>, "*True religion confronts earth with heaven and brings eternity to bear upon time*."

The institution of the tabernacle system and sacrifices was to clearly reveal man's inability to maintain God's standard of holiness. Man would need some intense help in becoming holy.

***"The word <u>holy</u> is used to describe both parts of the tabernacle, for example. The tabernacle itself was a place separate from the evil and sin of the world, and the first room in it was called the 'holy place.'"* Grudem**

"On one level, the tabernacle was constructed to teach the immanence of God, the truth that God is always present with His people. But on the other hand, it also taught that God is separated from His people because of His holiness and their sin, and can therefore be approached only in the way He determines…

***A Greek could enter any of the temples of Greece and pray before the statue of the pagan god or goddess. A Roman could enter any of the temples of Rome. But a Jew could not enter the Holy of Holies."* Boice**

This view of God, the correct view of God, is that He is far beyond anything we can imagine or attain on our own. His holiness declares His "complete otherliness."

Ps. 24: 3

"Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place?"

Because Jesus Christ was willing to become the Lamb of God, making the perfect sacrifice that would last for all time, He has made available to God's people the offer of holiness.

Romans 5:1. ***"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."***

1 Cor. 1: 30 ***"But it is from Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God [revealing His plan of salvation], and righteousness [making us acceptable to God], and sanctification [making us holy and setting us apart for God], and redemption [providing our ransom from the penalty for sin],"***

"Only the Spirit of the Holy One can impart to the human spirit the knowledge of the holy."

Tozer

- ## Maintaining a Holy View of God

Tozer remarks on the condition of the church as believers "*have surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshiping men."*

"This loss of the concept of majesty has come just when the forces of religion are making dramatic gains and the churches are more prosperous than at any time within the past several hundred years."

Yet the problem lies in this: the gains have been external while the losses are internal.

"We have learned to live with unholiness and have come to look upon it as the natural and expected thing."

***"It is impossible to keep our moral practices sound and our inward attitudes right while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate*."**

"Quite literally a new channel must be cut through the desert of our minds to allow the sweet waters of truth that will heal our great sickness to flow in."

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."
Tozer

Heb. 12: 10

"For they (our earthly fathers) disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness."

Remember discipline is not merely the act of correcting but also the act of training. We must be constantly training and equipping our hearts to revere and worship the Lord of All.

- **Holiness is no option for our Lord and it is no option for us.**

Heb. 12: 14

"Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."

Eph. 5: 26, 27

"So that He might sanctify her (the Church), having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."

Rev. 4: 8

"And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say,

"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty, Who was and Who is and Who is to come."

Rev. 15: 4

"Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name?

For You alone are holy;

For all the nations will come and worship before You,

For Your righteous acts have been revealed."

1 Sam. 2: 2

"There is no one holy like the Lord,

Indeed, there is no one besides You,

Nor is there any rock like our God."

- **What does it mean to come face to face with the Holy?**

It is not a pleasant experience – nor was it meant to be. Pleasure is not God's ultimate desire for you. Holiness is!

John fell at the feet of Jesus as though dead at the Revelation of Jesus.

Isaiah responded "Woe is me! I am undone!" when he saw the Lord.

Habakkuk was overwhelmed at the presence of the Lord, trembling with dread, quivering lips and bones of rottenness.

Peter responded in Luke 5: 8 that Jesus should get away from him because of his (Peter's)uncleanness.

To be in the presence of this kind of holiness was never meant to be common or comfortable.

"It is profoundly threatening, for the Holy cannot coexist in the same space with the unholy." Boice

"This facet of the diamond of divine holiness implies that He is the Cause of all that is holy in others. He is both the Pattern and Principle of holiness… Since God is all-holy, He must consequently dominate the universe, opposing and condemning and punishing sin. He must remain forever the absolute and eternal enemy of sin."

Herbert Lockyer

"Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard." Tozer

2 Cor. 7: 1

"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

"God cannot have one standard for Himself, and another for His creatures… as a being of perfect goodness God could have had no other ultimate purpose than the creation of beings capable of reflecting such holiness."

Lockyer

Those Who Come to the Knowledge of the Holy

1- **They will learn to hate sin.**
2- **Those who have come to the knowledge of the Holy One through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will learn to love righteousness and strive for it.**

"*But as He Who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'".*

3- **We must look to the day when God will be fully known in His holiness by all men and women, and we can rejoice in anticipation of that day.**

May your number one priority become:

GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ONE.

And remember, "knowledge" of the Holy One does not mean learning "about" Him. To know Him means to intimately be in relationship with Him.

Are you in abiding, deep relationship with the Holy One?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a critical teaching of both the Old and New Testaments.
With a doctrine as important, vital and misunderstood, it is imperative that the focus be on Scripture and not on any particular manmade ideologies.

Hebrew for spirit is *ruah #7307*. This is a noun which means spirit, wind, breath.

The Holy Spirit was involved in creation.

We are introduced to the Spirit of God in **Genesis 1: 2**, *"The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."*

The truth of this fact is reiterated in the psalms.

Ps 33: 6 says, "*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host."*

Ps. 104: 30, *"You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the ground."*

Ps. 147: 15, 18, *"He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly…He sends forth His word and melts them; He causes His wind (#7307) to blow and the waters to flow."*

"*The revelation of the Spirit is a progressive doctrine*… As the flower or fruit form the last revealed part of the tree, so the Spirit is "third", seeing He is the last revealed personality of the Trinity." Herbert Lockyer

The Spirit gave abilities to perform certain tasks in the Old Testament.

Ex.31: 2-6, "*See… I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, to make artistic designs for work ...." This was done to enable the tabernacle to be built according to God's specifications*.

Judg. 15: 14, "*When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands."*

The Spirit inspired prophets to utter their prophecies and elders to judge.

Num. 11: 17, 25, "*Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit Who is upon you, and will put Him upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it all alone... Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do it again."*

2 Sam. 23:2, "*The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue."*

The Spirit was given to man at the discretion of God.

Ps. 51:10-12, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a stedfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit."*

Ez. 36: 27, "*I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." This was spoken to Old Testament people with a view to the future promise of the indwelling Spirit which they had only partially experienced.*

The people rebelled against the Spirit.

Ps. 106: 33, "*Because they were rebellious against His Spirit, he (Moses) spoke rashly with his lips."*

The people grieved the Holy Spirit.

Is. 63: 10, 11a, "*But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them. Then His people remembered ….*"

The Spirit was present among the returned exiles.

Hag. 2: 5, "*As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear*!"

Neh. 9: 20, "*You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, and You gave them water for their thirst*."

The Spirit gave rest.

Is. 63: 14, "*As the cattle which go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So You led Your people, to make for Yourself a glorious name."*

The Spirit brought the dead to life.

Ez. 37: 5, 6, "*Thus says the Lord God to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.'"*

The full and complete revelation of the Spirit would not become manifest until Pentecost.

Is not the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church today less distinct than in the early church? Why?

Our enemy would deny believers the truth of the blessed Holy Spirit. His tactic is to hide from us Who the Holy Spirit is and if he is not successful in that strategy, his method is that of patronage and falsification.

Paul warns us of the trinity of perversion in **2 Cor. 11:4**, "*For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully*."

The Holy Spirit was involved in the birth of Christ.

Matt. 1: 20, "*But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child Who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."*

Lk. 1:35, "*The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.'*"

John the Baptist foretold that Jesus would baptize in the Spirit. (**Mark 1:8; Jn.1:33**)

This was the fulfillment of the prophecy uttered in the Old Testament. (**Jer. 31:31-34; Joel 2:28-32)**

The following descriptions highlight the fact that the Holy Spirit acts as a Person; these are personal acts.

The Holy Spirit speaks.

Acts 1:16, "*Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus."*

Acts 8: 29, "*Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot*.'"

Acts 10: 19, *"While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Behold, three men are looking for you*.'"

Acts 13: 2, "*While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"*

The Spirit teaches, guides, and counsels.

Jn.14: 26, "*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."*

Rom. 8: 14, *"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."*

Gal. 5: 18, "*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law."*

The Spirit testifies (witnesses).

Jn. 15: 26, "*When the Helper comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me."*

Rom. 8:16, "*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God."*

The Spirit searches and reveals.

1 Cor. 2:10-16, *"For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God… Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit Who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words, taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised… But we have the mind of Christ."*

The Spirit wills.

1 Cor. 12:11, "*But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills*."

The Spirit intercedes.

Rom. 8:26, 27, "*In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words; and He Who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God*."

The Holy Spirit clearly is divine.

The Spirit gives life.

Jn. 3: 5-8, "*Jesus said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit…The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.'"*

***Jn. 6: 63**, "It is the Spirit Who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."*

Gal. 4: 6, "*Because you are sons, 'God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father*!'"

While the Spirit gives life, He also takes life.

Acts 5: 1-9, "*… But Peter said to Ananias, 'Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? … You have not lied to men but to God.' …Then Peter said to her, 'Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well.'*"

The Spirit is opposed to the flesh.

Gal. 5: 16, 17, "*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."*

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin.

Jn. 16: 8, "*And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."*

The Holy Spirit helps.

Jn. 14: 16, "*I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because He abides with you and will be in you*."

The Spirit sanctifies.

Gal. 5: 22, 23, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."*

The Spirit transforms.

2 Cor. 3: 17, 18, "*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."*

The Spirit renews and regenerates.

Tit. 3: 5, "*He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit*."

"Regeneration does not make a sinner a better man, but brings in a new man. The old nature is not improved." Lockyer

The Spirit empowers.

Acts 1:8, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

The Spirit unifies.

Phil. 2: 1, 2, "*Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose."*

The Spirit gives evidence of God's presence.

1 Jn. 4: 2, "*By this you will know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God."*

Jn. 15: 26, "*When the Helper comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the father, He will testify about Me."*

The Holy Spirit will not unveil His magnificence and power unless we maintain a heart of devotion and humility.

"The work of the Holy Spirit is to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the church." Wayne Grudem

The Spirit dwells within the believer in Jesus Christ.

Rom. 8:6, 9, "*For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace… However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."*

Acts 2:38, *Peter said to them, 'Repent and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"*

Eph. 2:21, 22, "*In Whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in Whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."*

- ✓ Comforter: *parakletos #3875* refers to aid of any kind; used of a legal advisor, pleader, proxy, or advocate, one who comes forward on behalf of and as the representative of another; it comes from the verb *parakaleo* which means to call to the side, to aid, help, comfort, encourage, exhort

- ✓ Spirit: *pneuma #4151* means breath; the vital spirit of life; the rational spirit, mind, element of life; "*the spirit is man's immaterial nature which enables him to communicate with God, Who is also spirit.*" Zodhiates

"The true abode of the Spirit was and ever must be, the God-Man, crucified, risen, ascended, and coming again." Herbert Lockyer

Is. 11: 2, "*The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD*."

THE IMMANENCE OF GOD – The Universal Presence of God

Is God everywhere?

Is God IN everything?

What does His Immanence mean?

Does this promote pantheism?

This doctrine is not frequently addressed and that is unfortunate.

The presence of our Lord is one of the greatest truths that the Christian can contemplate.

We must be armed with this truth.

"*God dwells in His creation and is everywhere individually present in all His works. This is boldly taught by prophet and apostle*." A.W.Tozer

The doctrine of the divine Presence is NOT pantheism (God is the sum of all created things).

For the pantheist, God and nature are one. So when someone touches a tree or a flower, they are touching God. This is of course in error.

God is far above and beyond (His Transcendence) BEING a leaf or a flower.

The glory of the Incorruptible Deity must be held to the standard of the divine and not the common or profane.

While God is immanent, He is also transcendent – He is above all His works. To speak of God being contained in a material object is to misunderstand the doctrine of Holy Immanence.

Holy means "*completely other than*." Yes, God is personal and loving and condescends to live among His people, but He in no way is relegated to dwelling in these material things, like a rock or water.

"*But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!"*

1 Kings 8: 27

- What does it mean that God dwells with us, then?

"*No point is nearer to God than any other point. It is exactly as near to God from any place as it is from any other place. No one is in mere distance any further from or any nearer to God than any other person… In the beginning God, the uncaused Cause of matter, mind and law. There we must begin*." Tozer

"*Where can I go from Your Spirit?*

Or where can I flee from Your presence?"

If I ascend to heaven, You are there;

If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there." **Ps. 139: 7, 8**

"*That they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'"*

Acts 17: 27, 28

In **Gen. 28: 16**, Jacob recognized that the Lord was in the place with him.

- "*The Presence and the manifestation of the Presence are not the same.*
  There can be the one without the other. God is here when we are wholly unaware of it. He is manifest only when and as we are aware of His presence. On our part, there must be surrender to the Spirit of God, for His work is to show us the Father and the Son. If we cooperate with Him in loving obedience, God will manifest Himself to us, and that manifestation will be the difference between a nominal Christian life and a life radiant with the light of His face." Tozer

"*There is no idea of physical distance involved in the concept. It is not a matter of miles but of experience*." Tozer

"*The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord."*

Ex. 34: 5

Here we are not talking about spending more time in the study of Who God is.

We are talking about spending great amounts of time in the company and conversation with God. When we replace the study of God with the Presence of God we settle for far less than He desires to give us.

Speaking of profound things *about* God, Tozer says, "*Prying into them may make theologians, but it will never make saints."*

"We read our chapter, have our short devotions and rush away, hoping to make up for our deep inward bankruptcy by attending another gospel meeting or listening to another thrilling story told by a religious adventurer lately returned from afar. The tragic results of this spirit are all about us."

Let me ask you:

Do your quiet times with the Lord, your encounters with God leave you with less than adoration or devotion?

Do these times seem ordinary?

They must be extraordinary if they are true encounters with the Living God!

God is NEVER ordinary and NEVER tame. He is beyond all our imagination.

Brother Lawrence in his The Practice of the Presence of God, tells us*: "That many do not advance in the Christian progress because they stick in penances and particular exercises, while they neglect the love of God, which* ***is the end****. That this appeared plainly by their works and was the reason why we see so little solid virtue."*

For Brother Lawrence Prayer was a time of being in the Presence of God. During this time, his soul was insensible to everything else save his great love of God. His prayer was so deep that when the official time of prayer ended, he still remained in the presence of God in praise and devotion, eager to do His works continually – even washing pots and pans!

This man found that "the whole substance of religion was faith, hope and charity, by the practice of which we become united to the will of God."

The end to which we should find ourselves devoted is to become the most perfect worshipers of God since this is our eternal occupation.

- God's immanence refers to His presence within His creation.

A belief in God's immanence holds that God is present in all of creation, while remaining distinct from it. In other words, there is no place where God is not. His sovereign control extends everywhere simultaneously.

Pantheism and deism twist many people's view of how God relates to His creation. Pantheists believe that everything is God or is a part of God, making Him equal with His creation and unable to act upon it. Deists hold that God is distinct from His creation but deny that He plays an active role in it. Contrary to these and other false views of God, the Bible says that God is both different from His creation and actively upholding it.

Transcendence (God exists outside of space and time) and immanence (God is present within space and time) are both attributes of God. He is both "nearby" and "far away," according to Jeremiah 23:23. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). That is God's transcendence. "In him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). That is God's immanence.

https://www.gotquestions.org/immanence-of-God.html

The immanence of God refers to God's relationship to the world – that He actively operates within it, sustains it as its effective cause, and is continually present (i.e. omnipresent). Hebrews 1:3 says that God, through Jesus Christ, is "sustaining all things by his powerful word" (NIV).

Immanence is the balancing concept to God's transcendence, which describes God as being of a completely different kind or substance from and completely independent of the universe He created. These two concepts are able to coexist by differentiating between transcendence as an attribute of God – something that He inherently exists as – and immanence as a situation in which He has chosen to place Himself with the world – not something inherent to His being. While God is far above and "transcendent" of this world, He has also chosen to place Himself in direct connection with it as its creator, sustainer, and savior.

https://www.compellingtruth.org/immanence-of-God.html

"Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord."
(**Jeremiah 23:23-24**)

...Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for
"'In him we live and move and have our being'..."
(**Acts 17:27-28**)

Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.
(**Haggai 2:4-5**)

https://blogs.blueletterbible.org/blb/2011/09/08/the-attributes-of-god-immanent/

"*The fact that creation is distinct from God yet always dependent on God, that God is far above creation yet always involved in it (in brief, that God is both transcendent and immanent) … The Bible is the story of God's involvement with His creation, and particularly the people in it. Job affirms that even the animals and plants depend on God: 'In His hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.' **Job 12: 10** In the New Testament Paul affirms that God 'gives to all men life and breath and everything' and that 'in Him we live and move and have our being. **Acts 17: 25, 28***

*Indeed, in Christ 'all things hold together' **Col. 1: 17**, and He is continually 'upholding the universe by His word of power' **Heb. 1: 3** God's transcendence and immanence are both affirmed in a single verse when Paul speaks of 'one God and Father of us all, Who is above all and through all and in all.'" **Eph. 4: 6***

Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology

- The literal meaning of the **immanence of God** is "to be within" or "near" in relation to God's creation. Immanence is closely related to God's omnipresence, in that God is always present within the universe, though distinct from it. God is 'within' the universe in that God is its sustaining cause. (Geisler)

"'Am I only a God nearby,' declares the LORD, 'and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?' declares the LORD. 'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' declares the LORD." (Jeremiah 23:23-24)

"In Christ all things hold together..." (Colossians 1:17)

- Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Volume 2: God, Creation* (Bethany House, 2003)

https://www.theopedia.com/immanence-of-god

- **Distinction between the Creator and His Creatures**

The Old Testament draws a clear distinction between the Creator and created beings,
a distinction that was not made by the other nations.
God can never cease to be God,
nor can anyone become God.
The heathen belief in demi-gods is unknown to the Hebrew and Christian revelation.
The theory put forward by some modern theologians that there is no difference in kind between God and man is inconsistent with Theism, and is really Pantheistic.

Immanence of God

But God is also immanent.
He is inside all that He has made as well as outside.
He is the Sustainer and Preserver as well as the Creator.
He is the source of all power and all beauty.
Nothing could continue to exist for a moment if He were not continually keeping it in being.

It is easier to believe in the immanence of God than in His transcendence
if one lives in the midst of a crowded city and in a mechanical civilization full of contrivances of every kind.
The immanence of God was over-emphasized in the steaming plains and swarming cities of India.
Modern Christians need to emphasize the transcendence of God rather than His immanence, especially as the decline of the importance of personality is such a dangerous tendency in the modern world.

God is immanent in man, as in all other created beings.
But His immanence in all men must not be confused with His Incarnation in Jesus Christ.

The Incarnation is entirely unique:
only once did the Word become Flesh.
To say, as some have said, that Jesus of Nazareth was the highest instance of the immanence of God in man is a deadly error.

I ascend,
He said,
to my God and your God.

Never once did He identify Himself with His disciples, or His relation to His Father with theirs, by using "our" of Himself and them (the Lord's Prayer is put into their mouths, and is not the way in which He Himself prayed) [Contrast St. Matt.11.25; St. John 17; etc.].

http://www.katapi.org.uk/ChristianFaith/IV.htm

- God is immanent and He is omnipresent

To be omnipresent is to be in all places, at all times. Yet, it is important to understand that for God "to be" in a place is not the same way we are in a place. "God's being is all together different from physical matter," the website Ligonier.org explains. "He exists on a plane wholly distinguishable from the one readily available to the five senses."

In summary, developing a biblical view of the immanence of God is absolutely necessary to our growing understanding of Who God is and how He relates to us.

Dwelling in thought about His divine Presence ushers us into a totally different dimension than the earthbound condition in which we constantly exist. When we realize He is forever seeking to manifest Himself to us we also realize how very precious we are to Him.

This awareness will deepen and enrich our prayer lives as well. Since it is only through the Holy Spirit and the practice of prayer (which is communication with the Almighty) in which we can tap into the Presence of God, we will need to look at prayer with new eyes – eyes anticipating the Wonder of Who God is.

Jehovah-shammah is the God Who is there. His presence must be remembered at all times.

Ezek. 10: 4, 18, 19; 48:3

There is no separating His Presence from His revelation of the truth found in the Scriptures that He is indeed the God Who dwells with His people.

1 God is our refuge and strength,

He is our ever-present help in trouble.

Ps. 46: 1

The Presence of God is our hope, our heart, our navigation.

*Additional notes on Immanence

God as "other", and God as "near" are two key elements of Biblical doctrine. God is the sovereign Creator, transcendent, and distinct from His creation. Yet, God also draws near in love and judgment to His creation. Both elements are important for a Biblical understanding of the Biblical God. While Evangelicals have often rightly understood God's otherness, it has been our progressive counterparts who are more known for discussions of the immanence of God. Since, however, both are aspects of the Biblical picture of the divine, Evangelicals need to recover a true sense of God's presence.

Immanence in Contemporary Theology

To say that progressive theologians are more known for doctrines of divine immanence is fair enough, but they have often not held to a biblical formulation of such a doctrine. Progressive theologies of immanence tend to look more like pantheism or panentheism than Biblical Christianity. The religious philosophies of Spinoza and Hegel viewed God as identical with the world. Hegel, for example, taught that through the process of dialectical thought one would discover that all things are related, and in fact all things are God. God is inseparable from the world. Without losing the distinctions between God and the world, panentheism argues for interplay between the two, where both are affected by the other. God contains the universe, but is not identical with it. Process theology, in particular, has developed from this view to formulate a God-world relationship that offers a unique view of immanence. In such views God is very

present in the world. In fact He is so present with the world that He is virtually indistinguishable from the world. God enters the world and becomes so "worldly" that He cannot be found apart from it.

If, however, progressives have gone afoul of Scripture in their formulation of immanence, Evangelicals have done so too. In an effort to maintain God's transcendent otherness, we have let the doctrine of immanence fall short of its full Biblical glory. Kevin Vanhoozer argues that an examination of the doctrine of God's love shows the paucity of Evangelicalism's immanence doctrine. In *First Theology*, he includes an essay on God's love that explores the influence of Platonic thought on early Christian theology. Vanhoozer writes:

According to Plato, love is either the desire (eros) for something I do not have or the desire never to lose what I now have in the future. Love is "always poor," always needy. Augustine agrees with Plato that love is essentially the desire for ultimate happiness. For Augustine, however, only one's love for God will not disappoint…Only God then should be loved for his own sake and not for the sake of something else. Now human beings are mortal. How, then, can God love us? According to Plato the gods cannot love, for they lack nothing. It is not as though God needs the human creature, for it follows from the notion of perfect being that nothing can add to God's own enjoyment of himself. (73-74)

Classical theism, thus, creates a tension. God's love in this formulation is one of willing the good, it is one of control and mastery. God's love is not moved, nor does it express desire and delight. Nicholas Wolterstorff has summarized Augustine's view of God's love as "non-suffering apathy", something more akin to Stoicism than Biblical Christianity.

Following Augustine Thomas Aquinas' perfect being theology articulated an unaffected divine love. Vanhoozer summarizes Aquinas' view saying:

God, says Aquinas, is like a stone column to which humans stand in relation. The column may be on our left or our right, in front of or behind us, but our relation to the column is in us, not in the column. Similarly, we may experience God's mercy or his wrath, but it is not God who changes, only our relation to him. (76)

Such classical views certainly help us protect the transcendence of God. He is the unmoved mover. He acts on the world but is so separate from the world as to be unaffected by it. In this view, God is immanent in some sense of the word, but this view surely falls far short of the Biblical picture. And while these theologians certainly spoke of God's love, it doesn't seem genuinely loving.

A Biblical Picture of Immanence

The Scriptures, on the other hand, describe a God who is grieved (Genesis 6:6; Ephesians 4:30), who delights and rejoices (Psalms 147:11; 149:4; Zephaniah 3:17), who even changes His course of action (Exodus 32:14; Jonah 4:2). God truly interacts with the world. Evangelicals of course hold to the Scriptures that teach us that God does not change (Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2); He is transcendent. Yet, we must formulate our understanding of divine immanence in a way that allows us to embrace the full picture of God's relationship to the world. Classical theism does not give us a sufficient answer to the paradox of otherness and nearness.

When we consider immanence, then, we should think carefully about God's interaction with time. When we speak of the God of Scripture we recognize that He exists outside of time. He is not bound to time like we are, but lives above it. He is eternal. He knows the future, and sees the beginning and the end (Isaiah 46:10). He knows the number of our days and has even predetermined them (Job 14:5; Psalms 139:16). Yet, the Bible also reveals that God operates in time with us. He interacts in the world He has made. He is not a distant deity far off watching things unfold. No, He steps into time and speaks to His people, walks with Adam, brings down justice, and most notably incarnates Himself in Jesus. God interacts in time; He is an actor in history. We may rightly say, then, that God is unchanging in His essence and nature, yet experiences change in time with us. So, John Frame explains:

History involves constant change, and so, as an agent in history, God himself changes. On Monday he wants a certain thing to happen, and on Tuesday he wants something else to happen. He is grieved one day and pleased the next. In my view, this is more than just anthropomorphic description. In these accounts, God is not merely like an agent in time; he is really in time, changing as others change. And we should not say that his atemporal, changeless existence is more real than his changing existence in time, as the term anthropomorphic might suggest. Both are real. Neither form of existence contradicts the

other. God's transcendence never compromises his immanence, nor do his control and authority compromise his covenant presence. (The Doctrine of God, 571)

We can see God's changing in time when we consider His relationships to changing people. We are born children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3), and God judges us and condemns us in such a state. Yet, when we profess faith in God, His relationship to us changes. We are now not children of wrath, but instead children of the promise. He blesses us, in this relationship, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). God has built into His relationships with humanity the possibility of relational change.

The prophet Jeremiah gives us some help in understanding this relational change. God often establishes conditional prophecies. For example, we read:

Then the word of the Lord came to me: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it **(Jeremiah 18:5-10).**

Notice several things about this passage. It is set within the context of the Potter/Clay analogy, one of the strongest analogies for divine sovereignty in the Scriptures. God's relenting is still within His sovereign control. Notice also that this prophecy is not a certain prediction, but rather a warning to Israel. As the relationships of people to God in real-time change, so God changes His interactions with them. Think of Nineveh. God's nature and essence do not change, but God does change in His relationships.

A Few Final Thoughts

There are, of course, other responses to God that are not orthodox, responses that communicate God as always in process, as undefinable, or as random. Such theologies are not consistent with the Scriptural picture. Answers that assert God's inability to know and control the future, or which assert that God can

make mistakes are out of step with the self-revelation of God in the Bible. This picture of immanence, however, asserts a possible solution to the tension of God's otherness and nearness. We need this doctrine of immanence. We need a fully feeling, embracing, and loving God. A truly biblical understanding of immanence gives us that. Let us as Evangelicals reclaim divine immanence as our doctrine. We need it.

https://servantsofgrace.org/immanence-of-god/

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

"But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end**." Heb. 1: 12b**

"*In His essence, attributes, counsel and will, God Himself remained unchanged and unchangeable. All His attributes are like Himself, unalterably fixed, enduring forever. His perfections, purposes and promises are ever the same*."

H. Lockyer

- **Without a personal study of this doctrine – the changelessness of God- you will have a weak and insufficient understanding of Who God is. Therefore, you MUST know this attribute of God.**

Sometimes the Bible is foreign and confusing. At times, as we read it, we become more and more puzzled. We can even be bewildered and discouraged. We begin to wonder if it is worth the effort to continue.

Why does this happen?

Simply put it is this, when we read our Bibles we are going into a foreign world, with very different times and customs. We meet many men and women that seem so different from us. All that we read belongs to that world and not to the world in which we live. All we can be at this point are spectators.

What are we to do?

We need a connection from our times to the times of those in the Bible.

What is that connection?

The link is God Himself.

While we face change daily and the consequences of change, like death and upsetting events, God does not change; nor will He EVER change. This truth concerning God gives us the stability and firm foundation to view our lives through the lens of our Lord.

"*At first it may not seem very important to us to affirm God's unchangeableness. The idea is so abstract that we may not immediately realize its significance. But if we stop for a moment to imagine what it would be like if God could change, the importance of this doctrine becomes more clear. For example, if God could change (in His being, perfections, purposes, or*

promises), then any change would be either for the better or for the worse. But if God changed for the better, then He was not the best possible being when we first trusted Him.

***And how could we be sure that He is the best possible being now*?" Grudem**

"Your throne is established from of old;

You are from everlasting**." Psalm 93: 2**

"Before the mountains were born

Or You gave birth to the earth and the world**,**

Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are Lord**." Psalm 90: 2**

"*If God is not unchanging, then the whole basis of our faith begins to fall apart, and our understanding of the universe begins to unravel*." Grudem

"Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, Whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen."

1 Tim. 6: 16

"Even they will perish, but You endure,

And all of them will wear out like a garment;

Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

But You are the same,

And Your years will not come to an end." **Ps. 102: 26,27**

- Created things have a beginning.

They also have an end.

This is not true of their Creator. This is the doctrine of God's Immutability – "*God is unchanging in His being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and He acts and feels differently in response to different situations." Wayne Grudem* <u>*Systematic Theology*</u>

Exodus 3 gives us the name of God by which He makes Himself known to Moses and the people of Israel: Yahweh. This name of God means "self-existent One." This name is not for descriptive purposes.; it is a declaration of His nature as self-existent and eternally changeless. This is a reminder to mankind that He has life in Himself, and that what He is now, He is eternally.

"***God still stands to all the promises, and demands, and statements of purpose, and words of warning, that are there addressed to New Testament believers. These are not relics of a bygone age, but an eternally valid revelation of the mind of God towards His people in all generations.***" J I Packer

- God always acts according to His character.

The more you know God's character, the more you can be settled at how He handles your life.

You can find your peace as you find your God.

"***All that He planned in eternity He carries out in time***." J I Packer

"***The doctrine of God's immutability is of the highest significance for religion. The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature. Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in Him alone, for only He is pure being and not becoming. Hence, in Scripture God is often called a Rock***." Herman Bavinck

"*I am God, and there is none like Me,*

Declaring the end from the beginning

And from ancient times things not yet done,

Saying, 'My counsel shall stand,

And I will accomplish all My purpose…

I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;

I have purposed, and I will do it." **Is. 46: 9-11**

"***The eternity of God means that God has always existed and always will exist; nothing comes before Him, nothing after …This quality is one that separates the Creator from even the highest of His creatures. God is unchangeable while no other part of His creation is. All that we know changes***."

James Montgomery Boice

- **The Changelessness of God (His Immutability)**

Num. 23: 19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Ps. 33: 11 "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation."

Ps. 102: 27 "But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end."

Mal. 3: 6 "For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

Heb. 6: 17 "In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath."

James 1: 17 "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the FATHER OF LIGHTS, WITH WHOM THERE IS NO VARIATION OR SHIFTING SHADOW."

Also read 1 Sam. 15: 29, the very chapter from which this discrepancy arises.

Man, in contrast to the Lord, is ever changing, having ups and downs.

God, on the other hand, steadily shines with His ever- broadcasting brilliance.

Part of God's immutability is His constant holiness and perfection. There is no shadow of turning in Him (**Ex: 3: 14**). Man cannot comprehend this state.

Specifically, God's promises and purposes never change, but at times His actions will vary according to our conduct.

"**While the Bible speaks of God repenting this is only a human way of speaking of God, and simply indicates a change in man's relations to God. (Ex. 32: 14; Jonah 3: 10)"** H. Lockyer

As with all of God's attributes, we must say that each one is holy. God's love is holy, His hate is holy, His mercy and grace are holy, His justice and wrath are holy. So, in this case, His immutability is holy.

What does that mean?

The fact that God is changeless factors in His holiness. God is completely "other than" any other being. "Holy" means "consecrated, set apart" but it also means "completely other than."

When we say that God's changelessness is holy, we are agreeing with the truth that He is utterly different than we are in His holy changelessness.

"***The being of God is unique in the only proper meaning of that word; that is, His being is other than and different from all other beings***." Arthur Pink

"***One who can suffer any slightest degree of change is neither self-existent, self-sufficient, nor eternal, and so is not God***." Pink

"***Only a being composed of parts may change, for change is basically a shift in the relation of the parts of a whole or the admission of some foreign element into the original composition.***

Since God is self-existent, He is not composed. There are in Him no parts to be altered. And since He is self-sufficient, nothing can enter His being from without." A.W. Tozer

"***The law of mutation belongs to a fallen world, but God is immutable, and in Him men of faith find at last eternal permanence… In a world of change and decay not even the man of faith can be completely happy. Instinctively he seeks the unchanging and is bereaved at the passing of dear familiar things."*** A. W. Tozer

Think of how much your life changes. From your birth onwards, you are faced with change non-stop. But not God, He never changes.

This should give us great comfort to know that the One Who holds Time in His hands does not change and is not affected by change.

"***All that God is He has always been, and all that He has been and is He will ever be***." Tozer

"***Before God made the universe, there was no 'time', at least not in the sense of a succession of moments one after another. Therefore, when God created the universe, He also created time. When God began to create the universe, time began, and there began to be a succession of moments and events one after another… And time, therefore, does not have existence in itself but, like the rest of creation, depends on God's eternal being and power to keep it existing."*** **Grudem**

- God is immutable in His essence. That means Who He is. His nature and being are infinite, and so, subject to no mutations.

- God is immutable in His attributes. Whatever His attributes were before the creation of the world, they are the same today and will be forever.

- God is immutable in His counsel. His will does not change. He has the knowledge of all things and the power to accomplish His will.

- God's purpose never alters. God is both omniscient and omnipotent therefore "there is never any need for Him to revise His decrees."

"The counsel of the Lord stands firm forever." **Ps. 33: 11**

"***In the cases of God being sorry that He had made man, or that He had made Saul king, these too can be understood as expressions of God's present displeasure toward the sinfulness of man***." Grudem

"*What peace it brings to the Christian's heart to realize that our heavenly Father never differs from Himself. In coming to Him at any time we need not wonder whether we shall find Him in a receptive mood. He is always receptive to misery and need, as well as to love and faith. He does*

not keep office hours nor set aside periods when He will see no one. Neither does He change His mind about anything. Today, this moment, He feels toward His creatures, toward babies, toward the sick, the fallen, the sinful, exactly as He did when He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to die for mankind. God never changes His moods or cools off in His affections or loses His enthusiasm." J. M. Boice

- God's "*plans are made on the basis of perfect knowledge, and His perfect power sees to their accomplishment*." Boice

Scripture warns us again and again that God has a coming judgment. In fact, this is one of His promises. The fact that His nature stays the same should be a comfort to those in union with Him and a terror to those who disobey Him.

His coming judgment is as sure as His loving plans of redemption.

Heed His warnings.

INHERITANCE and ADOPTION

"*The LORD is my portion; I have promised to keep Your words."* **Ps. 119:57**

"I have inherited Your testimonies forever." **119:111**

The Westminster Catechism tells us that adoption is "an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God."

- **Romans** has much to say about adoption and inheritance.

8: 15 says, "*For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of **adoption** as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"*

8: 17: "*And if children, **heirs** also, **heirs** of God and **fellow heirs** with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."*

8: 23, "*And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our **adoption** as sons, the redemption of our body."*

- Likewise, the book of **Galatian**s has an entire chapter describing the inheritance of God's children.

Beginning with **Gal. 3: 16** through **Chapter Four**, we see much regarding the sonship of the heirs of the promise. **3: 29** says, "*And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, **heirs** according to promise."*

4: 3-7: "*So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the **adoption** as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an **heir** through God."*

"*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are **of God's household**."* **Eph.2: 19**

Eph. 3: 6 says, "*To be specific, that the Gentiles are **fellow heirs** and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."*

- One of the effects of our adoption and familial relationship with the Father is that the world will not know us. We are strange and puzzling to the world.

"*See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called **children of God**; and such we are. For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him*."

1 John 3: 1

"*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*." **Jn. 1: 12, 13**

God "only adopts into His family those who have been born anew…As used in Scripture, adoption implies a change of nature and a change of relationship." Herbert Lockyer

- ✓ Regeneration has to do with son-making; adoption has in view son-positioning.

In Roman law, a son exchanged his garment referred to as the *pretexta* for the *toga veritas* (garment of manhood). There would be a ceremony commemorating this coming of age for the young man. A sacrifice would be made and with this tradition entrance into public life would be accomplished. The Greek word for "adoption" is *huiothesia: son + a placing*

So here we have, "the placing or positioning of a son." The adopting parent gained the *potestas* (legal power) over the adopted child exactly as though this child was the issue of his own body.

Titus 3: 7: "*So that being justified by His grace we would be made **heirs** according to the hope of eternal life."*

1 Pet. 1: 4, "*to obtain an **inheritance** which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."*

Col. 3: 24, "*Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the **inheritance.** It is the Lord Christ Whom you serve."*

- Not only do we obtain many advantages and privileges as heirs to the King, but we face the discipline of a heavenly Father when we disobey.

Heb. 12: 6-11, "*For those whom the LORD loves He disciplines, and He scourges every **son** whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with **sons**; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ..He disciplines for our good, so that we may share His holiness."*

Vine's Expository Dictionary: "child" – difference of *teknon* and *huios*

Teknon stresses the fact of birth

Huios gives prominence to the dignity and character of the relationship

- Even the Old Testament has much to teach regarding this topic of inheritance and adoption.

Moses was adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh and he enjoyed all the privileges of royalty although he was by blood a "lowly Hebrew."

Jacob adopted the two sons of Joseph. (**Gen. 48: 4-22**)

Esther was adopted by Mordecai and he raised her as his own daughter. **Esther 2: 7**

And as for inheritance, the greatest Old Testament example of this concept is found in the dividing of the land. **Joshua 13** relates the apportioning of the land to Israel. All the tribes received specific lands. But the Levites received no territory of their own. Why?

Josh. 13: 32, 33, "*These are the territories which Moses apportioned for an inheritance in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan at Jericho to the east. But to the tribe of Levi, Moses did not give an **inheritance; the LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as He had promised to them.***" Read also **Deut. 18: 1-8**

Like the Levites, believers in Jesus Christ are a royal priesthood (**1 Pet. 2:9**). This verse tells us why we have been chosen as God's priests. "*So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."*

"*And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the **inheritance** among all those who are sanctified*." **Acts 20: 32**

From the very words of our Lord while He was on earth,

"*Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, **inherit** the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" **Matt. 25: 34**

From **Revelation 21: 6, 7,**

"*Then He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes **will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son**."*

PATRIA POTESTA AND THE ROMAN CEREMONY OF ADOPTION

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with *him,* that we may be also glorified together. Rm.8:15-17.

In this passage Paul is using one of the great metaphors in which he describes the new relationship of the believer to God. He speaks of the Christian being adopted into the Family of God.

Roman adoption was always rendered more serious and more difficult by the Roman patria potestas. The patria potestas was the father's power over his family; that power was absolute; it was actually the power of absolute disposal and control, and in the early days it was actually the power of life and death. In regard to his father a Roman son never came of age. No matter how old he was, he was still under the patria potestas, in the absolute possession, and under the absolute control, of his father. Obviously, this made adoption into another family very difficult and a very serious step.

In adoption a person had to pass from one patria potestas to another. He had to pass out of the possession and control of one father into the equally absolute control and possession of another. There were two steps. The first was known as mancipatio, and it was carried out by a symbolic sale, in which copper and scales were symbolically used. Three times the symbolism of sale was carried out. Twice the father symbolically sold his son, and twice he bought him back; and the third time he did not buy him back and thus the patria potestas was held to be broken.

After the sale there followed a ceremony called vindicatio. The adopting father went to the praetor, one of the Roman magistrates, and presented a legal case for the transference of the person to be adopted into his patria potestas. When all this was completed the adoption was complete. Clearly this was a serious and impressive step.

But it is the consequences of adoption which are most significant for the picture that is in Paul's mind. There were four main consequences. (1) The adopted person lost all rights to his old family, and gained all the rights of a fully legitimate son in his new family. In the most literal sense, and in the most legally binding way, he got a new father. (2) It followed that he became heir to his new father's estate. Even if other sons were afterwards born, who were real blood relations, it did not affect his rights. He was inalienably co-heir with them. (3) In law, the old life of the adopted person was completely wiped out. For instance, legally all debts were cancelled; they were wiped out as though they had never been. The adopted person was regarded as a new person entering into a new life with which the past had nothing to do. (4) In the eyes of the law the adopted person was literally and absolutely the son of the new father.

Roman history provides an outstanding case of how literally and completely this was held to be true. The Emperor Claudius adopted Nero, in order that Nero might succeed him on the throne. They were not in any sense blood relations. Claudius already had a daughter, Octavia. To cement the alliance Nero wished to marry Octavia. Now, Nero and Octavia were in no sense connected; they were in no sense blood relations; yet, in the eyes of the law, they were brother and

sister; and before they could marry the Roman Senate had to pass special legislation to enable Nero to marry a girl who was legally his own sister. Nothing shows better how complete adoption in Rome was.

This is what Paul is thinking of. He uses still another picture of Roman adoption. He says that God's Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we really are children of God. The adoption ceremony was carried out in the presence of seven witnesses. Now, supposing the adopting father died, and then suppose there was some dispute about the right of the adopted son to inherit, one or more of the original seven witnesses stepped forward and swore that the adoption was genuine and true. Thus the right of the adopted person was guaranteed and he entered into his inheritance. So, Paul is saying, it is the Holy Spirit Himself who is the witness to our adoption into the family of God.

We see then that every step of Roman adoption was meaningful in the mind of Paul when he transferred the picture of our adoption into the Family of God. Once we were in the absolute possession of sin, in absolute control of our own human nature; but God, in His mercy, has brought us into absolute possession of Himself. The old life has no more right over us; we begin again anew life; a life with God. We become heirs of all the riches of God. If that is so, we become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, God's own Son. That which Christ inherited, and inherits, we also inherit. If Christ had to suffer we also inherit that suffering, but if Christ was raised to life and glory we also inherit that life and glory.

It was Paul's picture that when a person became a Christian they entered into the Family of God. He did nothing to earn it; he did nothing to deserve it; God, the Great Father, in His amazing love and mercy, has taken the lost, helpless, poverty stricken, debt-laden sinner and adopted him into his own Family, so that the debts are cancelled and that unearned love and glory inherited! The price of adoption? The blood of Christ!

https://www.pilgrimtours.com/church_history/italy/devotionals_history/Adoption.htm

JESUS CHRIST

Jesus is a subject about which "even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written." This is indeed the loftiest study to which one can engage his mind. While art, poetry, literature, and music have made efforts at honoring this Man, it is Scripture alone which can truly enlighten us as to the full revelation of His life and purpose.

Without a proper understanding of Who Jesus is, we miss the import of the entire teaching of Scripture.

Historian Philip Schaff describes our Savior,

"This Jesus of Nazareth,

without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon;

without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined;

without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet;

without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times."

The doctrine of Jesus Christ introduces the student to the greatest life ever lived. We first make the acquaintance of Jesus Christ in Genesis chapter one. The first verse of the Bible makes it clear that Elohim, the plural form of the word "El" created the heavens and the earth. Each day of creation is begun with, "then God said," this points to the creative force of the voice of God, even the Word of God. Colossians makes this evident, "*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together*." **Col. 1: 1-17**

Also **John 1: 3, 10** "*All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being…He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.*" We run the risk of not knowing Him as He truly is, unless we endeavor to search the Scriptures to discern His true identity.

The Scriptures are full of Jesus Christ. From the opening verse to the closing verse, Jesus is at the heart of the redemption story. The imprint of Jesus is seen in the accounts of the creation of our world, the fall of man, the need for a Savior and the solution to our inevitable righteous judgment. Genesis opens with the creative force of Elohim, the Godhead (we also see the work of the Holy Spirit in creation in **Gen. 1:2**). The last book of the Bible is referred to as "the Revelation of Jesus Christ …"

But what is astounding is that this Jesus Whom we worship and adore is One Who existed before the creation of the world. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God*." **John 1:1-2**

- Jesus is co-eternal with the Father and with the Holy Spirit.

Christ declares His pre-existence. "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad…Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.'*" **Jn. 8: 56, 58**

"*Now Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was*." **Jn. 17: 5**

When Jesus entered into the world as a human baby He was declared prophetically to be "*the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom … the zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. "*
"*Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever. Amen*." **1 Tim. 1: 17**
"*He is "the Lamb Who has been slain before the foundation of the world.*" **Rev. 13: 8**

- There are pre-incarnate theophanies in the Old Testament to prepare the world for the ultimate arrival of God Himself in the flesh. Many of these refer to the angel of the Lord.

"*Now the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day…I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son."* Only God has the power to give life at His own discretion. **Gen. 18:1, 10**

As Abraham was about to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice *"the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!,' And he said. 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.' Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son."* **Gen. 18: 11-13**

In the account in **Gen 32** of Jacob's struggling with the Lord, this is seen as an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ.

Jacob refers to God as his "*Shepherd all his life, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil*." **Gen. 48:15, 16**

Josh. 5: 13-15 records Joshua's encounter with the Captain of the host of the Lord Who instructed him to remove his sandals because he was on holy ground. Joshua fell on his face to the earth and bowed down. There is no remonstrance to this obvious worship.

Manoah, the future father of Samson, upon hearing of the coming birth of his son from the angel of the Lord asks the name of the angel. "*But the angel of the LORD said to him, 'Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful*?'" **Judg. 13:18**

"*These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him."* **Jn. 12: 41**. This refers to **Is. 6** where Isaiah says that he *"saw the LORD sitting on a throne, high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple… calling out to one another, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory. "*'

Zechariah records an encounter with God also. "*For behold, I will wave My hand over them so that they will be plunder for their slaves. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me. Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst … then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you." declares the LORD*." **Zech. 2: 9-11**

Christ's pre-incarnate appearance is hinted at in **Dan.3: 25**. "*Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"*

- The Old Testament contains many prophetic pronouncements of the coming Servant of the Lord, His Anointed One. For hundreds of years, the prophets had told of One coming to do the work of the Lord. He would come from the tribe of David and He would rule His people and all nations.

Even in **Gen. 3:15** we have the announcement that God would put "*Enmity between the serpent and the seed of the woman.*" In ancient writings, very little is mentioned of the woman's seed; it is inconsequential as to the woman's seed. The man's seed is the important issue. The mention of the woman's seed points to a unique concept and foreshadows the virgin birth.

Gen. 12: 1-13 records the great blessing in promise form of God's dealing with the man Abraham and his effect on all the world. **Gal. 3: 16** clarifies this promise. "*Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ."* One of the key theses of the book of

Matthew is to reveal Christ as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, and so Matthew begins his account with the genealogy, commencing with Abraham.

1. The Christ is to come from the tribe of David. **2 Sam. 7: 12-14**
2. He is to be born of a virgin. **Is. 7: 14; 9: 7; Matt. 1:22, 23** It is clear and should be pointed out that Scripture makes it key that Jesus was born of Mary and the Holy Spirit. "*Jacob begat Joseph*" follows a long list of 'begats' to be ended with "*Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus.*" The word 'begat' is not included in Mary's geneaology. Jesus was not 'begotten' of natural generation, but was brought forth by the Holy Spirit.
3. He is to be born in Bethlehem. **Mic. 5: 2**
4. He will be worshiped by Gentiles. **Is. 60: 6; Matt. 2: 11**
5. He will have a forerunner. **Is. 40: 3; Matt. 3: 1-3**

A study of the incarnation or the birth of Christ is a complete and separate doctrine worthy of deep and serious attention. But the above information suffices for the purpose of a cursory view of the doctrine of Christ.
A summary statement of the doctrine of Jesus Christ would include the fact that Jesus was fully God and fully man in one person.

- The human nature of our Lord is clearly presented in scripture.

1 Cor. 15: 21 tells us, "*For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead."*

Jesus as a man, possessed a soul. "*Then He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.'"* **Matt. 26: 38**

"*See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have*." **Lu. 24: 39**

"*Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."* **Heb. 2: 14**

Jesus experienced the same circumstances as ordinary men. He hungered, wept, felt weary, loved, was angered and felt a full gamut of emotions, but always within the bounds of lawful behavior.

Jesus is referred to both as the Son of God and the Son of Man. Because of His work on our behalf, the Son of God became the Son of Man so that He might effect our transformation, making the sons of men become the sons of God. **1 John 3: 1-3**

A mere man could not accomplish this work. Only the Son of God could redeem man from his fallen state.

- Scripture leaves no opportunity for argument as to the divine nature of our Lord.

Both Old and New Testaments remark as to the deity of our Savior. (**Is. 9: 6; Jer. 23: 6; Matt. 11:27; Jn. 1: 1; Phil. 2: 5-11; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 19:16)**

He is self-existent, immutable, omnipresent (**Matt.28: 20**), omniscient (**Col.2: 3**), omnipotent (**1 Pet. 3: 21, 22**).

He is the Lord of the Sabbath, the Forgiver of sin (**Lk. 5: 20-24**), the Commander of death and Hades (**Matt. 9: 24; Jn. 11: 43, 44; Rev. 1: 18**), the Savior (**Acts 4: 12; 5: 31; Lu. 2: 11**), the Creator and Preserver of all things, the Judge of all men (**Matt. 13: 39-43; 16: 27; Jn. 5: 22, 23; 2 Cor. 5: 10**).

When reading scripture, the alert student will see that in most cases where the human nature of our Lord is mentioned, the divine nature will not be far from this truth as well. The reverse is true also. When we see the divine nature mentioned, the human nature is not far away. We are profoundly grateful for a King and Lord Who would express His love for us in such a way that we can never fully comprehend, yet we can reap the benefits for all eternity.

-Our Lord was baptized to show His identity with His beloved children. (**Matt. 3**)

-Our Lord was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. (**Matt. 4; Heb. 4:15**)

When we yield our lives to Christ, we surrender to the One Who mastered our great enemy in the wilderness and at Calvary. The life of the only One ever to resist and overcome Satan abides within the believer in Jesus Christ.

-Our Lord was sinless. (**Jn. 8: 29, 46; 1 Jn. 3: 5; Heb. 4:15; 7: 26)**

-Our Lord was faithful to fulfill all prophetic proclamations concerning Him.

-Our Lord "was going throughout all Galilee, **teaching** … **proclaiming the gospel** of the kingdom and **healing** every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people."

-Our Lord performed many signs which were recorded in scripture "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

Jn, 20: 30, 31

-Our Lord died for His people in a vicarious manner. (**Matt. 26: 28; Mk. 10: 45; 2 Cor. 5: 21; Gal. 2:20**) As an inspired writer of scripture, the apostle Paul devotes much of his teaching to the cross of Christ. This is a crucial teaching which must be transmitted to a fallen world. Christ without the cross is heresy.

"A mere belief in the historical Christ will not save. Our hope is built on His blood and righteousness, without which we are lost." H. Lockyer

The death of our Lord is not our hope. Our hope lies in His resurrection. "*That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that **God raised Him from the dead**, you will be saved*." **Rom. 10:9**

The doctrine of the Resurrection is a teaching in itself which scholars have devoted their entire lives to pursuing.

The first sermons in **Acts** focus clearly on the Resurrection. **Act 2: 24-32; 3:15**

Although the preaching of the Resurrection resulted in great persecution for the early church, the apostles would not yield in their proclamation of this doctrine.

The Resurrection is an accomplished fact with resounding scriptural support. "*But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.*" **Heb. 10:12**

More than five hundred people saw the resurrected Christ. This is documented in the scriptural accounts. It may be argued that the Bible cannot support the Bible, but before the compilation into the scriptures we possess today as the canon, these were individual writings of witnesses to these truths. These are not the accounts of one or two people. Also these letters and gospel teachings were contemporary with those acquainted with their veracity or the lack thereof. The claims made by the followers of Christ could have been easily rebutted and dismissed by disclaimers had they not been true. Because of the availability of eye witnesses currently living, the scriptures had to be beyond reproach in their accurate reporting of events.

OUR LORD IN HISTORY

*Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette of Yale says, **"It is evident of His importance, of the effect that He has had upon history and presumably, of the baffling mystery of His being that no other life ever lived on this planet has evoked so huge a volume of literature among so many peoples and languages, and that, far from ebbing, THE FLOOD CONTINUES TO MOUNT**."* (Capital letters my addition)

Our Lord is also referred to as **Prophet, Priest and King**. In former times, a prophet spoke to man about God and a priest spoke to God about man.

1. The people acknowledged Him as a prophet. **Lu. 7:16; 24:19; Matt. 21:11, 46**
   He today continues to reveal God's will to His people. **Jn. 16:12-14; Lu. 24:27, 44, 45**
2. Jesus represented His people as Priest and as sacrifice and today continues to represent them before the Father as their Intercessor. (**Is. 53:12; Lu.23:34; Jn. 1:29; Heb. 2:17; 3:1;4:15; 9:11-15, 24-28; 10:19-22**)
3. Jesus is to be worshiped as King.

When our Lord first appeared, He took the form of a servant, yet some saw Him as He truly is: Sovereign King. When He returns there will be no doubt: He will come as reigning King.
Ps. 2:6; Matt. 2:2; 28:18; Acts 17:7; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:15-19; Rev. 11:15; 19:16

Have we crowned Him Lord of all? This is the only question we need answer.

- The Return of Christ

There is much teaching on the second coming of our Lord. This area of the work of Christ is referred to as the study of end times or eschatology. The Greek word *eschatos* means "last." The coming of our Lord is described in scripture as triumphant and glorious. He will return with great power. He Who was judged at the end of His stay on earth will judge all the nations.
Matt. 24: 30; 25: 31-46
It is the responsibility of all believers to eagerly await His Personal, visible, bodily return.
1 Jn. 3: 2, 3; 1 Cor. 1: 7; Tit. 2: 13; Heb. 9: 28

"*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*" **1Thes. 4:16**

"*He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."*
Rev. 22:20

JUSTIFICATION

The doctrine of justification is one of the most important biblical teachings. This was the primary issue of the Protestant Reformation. The vital point of this doctrine is that God does the work of justifying and not man. Man cannot justify himself.

Rom. 3:27, 28 clearly proclaims the truth of this tenet of our faith.

"*Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law*."

Verse 26 of the same chapter says, "*For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would* ***be just*** *and the* ***justifier*** *of the one who* <u>*has faith*</u> *in Jesus*."

- ✓ While Romans is the book declaring **God as the Justifier** of a believing man, the Old Testament gives us some insight into this truth as well.

Paul proclaims that man is justified by faith. The opposite of a faith-produced justification would be a works-produced justification, a law-centered justification. Yet, nowhere does the psalmist in the psalm most associated with God's law (Ps. 119), announce that he is justified by the law. In fact, he repeatedly prays to the Lord to "save" him, to deliver him, to redeem him. He asks the Lord to *cause* him to incline his heart to God's testimonies (36), to *cause* him to keep God's law (34), to *cause* him to walk in the path of God's commandments (35). He acknowledges that his blameless state is totally dependent on God. Nowhere does the psalmist comment on his goodness or his own abiding by the law as his guarantee for salvation. He does not expect God's help based on his own merit but "according to God's word." Because God is in a covenant relationship with the psalmist, God will perform all His promises regarding the salvation of His heir.

Ps. 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far **has He removed** our transgressions from us."

Habakkuk tells us that "the righteous will live by his faith." **Hab. 2:4b**

- ❖ Hebrew for "justify" is #6663 *tsadak* (or *sadaq*): a verb meaning to be right, to be righteous, to be just, to be innocent, to be put right, to justify, to declare right

"*As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will* ***<u>justify</u>*** *the many, as He will bear their iniquities*." **Is. 53:11**

- Not only does God do the ***justifying***, He has made it a legal certainty. Theologians refer to this truth of justification as *forensic* because it has "to do with legal proceedings."

Grudem's <u>Systematic Theology</u>: "***justification*** *is an instantaneous legal act of God in which He (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.*"

IMPUTATION

This act of justification involves the act of more than just declaring us innocent. That would be a merely neutral standing before God. We would be just as Adam (and we all know how that turned out). No, we are forgiven of our sins AND we are imputed the righteousness of Christ.

"*I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, **He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness**, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels*." **Is. 61:10**

Impute: to think of as belonging to someone, and therefore to cause it to belong to that person. God "thinks of" Adam's sin as belonging to us, and it therefore belongs to us, and in justification he thinks of Christ's righteousness as belonging to us and so relates to us on this basis. Grudem

Rom. 4:6, "*Just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God **credits** righteousness apart from works*."

Imputation is encountered three times in this doctrine of justification.

First, Adam's sin was imputed to his descendants. **Rom. 5:12**

Second, our sin was imputed to Christ. **2 Cor. 5:21**

Third, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. Now God sees Christ in us when we identify in covenant relationship with our Lord. **Rom. 5:18**

"*For in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.'*" **Rom. 1:17**

- ✓ This verse was the watchword of the Reformation. This verse helped to lead Martin Luther into the truth of justification by faith.

"*This text was to me the true gate of Paradise*."

Now let us break down this verse phrase by phrase.

The righteous

Christ is our righteousness.

The believer has ceased trying to please God and has turned to Jesus instead for the righteousness that God gives freely.

1 Cor. 6:11, "*Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God*."

- The focus is on the *past* work of Christ. He has done it all!

Shall live

In **Galatians chapter 3**, it is pointed out to the Galatians that they had started by receiving the Spirit by faith, but now they are trying to move toward perfection by the works of the flesh.

They had ceased to live by faith. **Gal. 3:2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 21**

- The focus on the *present* life of faith versus a life of works.

By his faith.

As the book of **Hebrews** tells us, especially in **chapter 11**, believing God means acting on that belief. With each entry in **chapter 11**, the writer tells us that each believer lived *by faith. "By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice … by faith Noah prepared an ark … by faith Abraham obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out not knowing where he was going."*

- The focus is on the *future* promises which give the believer the proper perspective for the life of faith.

"By faith Abraham lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." **Heb. 11: 9, 10**

The Law cannot save us.

Gal. 2:16, "*Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be* ***justified****."*

Gal. 3: 11, "*Now that no one* ***is justified*** *by the Law before God is evident; for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith*.'"

Acts 13: 39, "*And through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses*."

So what does the Law do for us?

Rom. 3: 20, "*Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be* ***justified*** *in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin*."

Gal. 3: 24, "*Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be* ***justified by faith***."

Now that we see the Law cannot save us, what can we do?

Rom. 4: 5, "*But to the one who does not work, but* ***believes in Him*** *who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.*" Notice who God justifies … the ungodly.

W**hat is our future**?

Titus 3: 7, "*So that being justified by His grace, we would be made* ***heirs according to the hope of eternal life*****."**

Rom. 4: 13, *"For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be* ***heir of the world*** *was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith*."

Rom. 5: 1, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith,* ***we have peace*** *with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ... Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be* ***saved from the wrath of God*** *through Him*."

John Murray says, "**Justification is still the article of the standing or falling of the Church."**

<u>Redemption Accomplished and Applied</u>

"*Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, '****the LORD our righteousness****.'*" **Jer. 23:5, 6**

We are justified because He is our righteousness.

He is our Jehovah-tsidkenu

JUSTIFICATION

IS BY FAITH	Rom. 3:24; 5:1; Gal. 2:16	Faith in Christ
IS A GIFT	Rom 3:24	
IS BY GOD'S GRACE	Rom. 3:24	
IS THROUGH REDEMPTION WHICH IS IN CHRIST	Rom. 3:24	
IS OFFERED TO CIRCUMCIZED AND UNCIRCUMCIZED	Rom. 3:30	
IS THE WAY TO PEACE	Rom. 5:1	
IS NOT BY WORKS OF THE LAW	Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16	
IS REVEALED IN SCRIPTURES	Gal. 3:8, 24	
IS REVEALED IN THE LAW AS OUR TUTOR	Gal. 3: 24	

"Justification and sanctification can never be separated.
God does not justify whom He does not sanctify."

John MacArthur

Are you persuaded that God has justified you?

Do not rest today until that question is settled in your heart.

KINGDOM OF GOD

By: Kelly Allen

There seems to be a common misunderstanding that the kingdom of God is either 1- a location or 2- a group of people. While there are times in the Bible where the Biblical writers use kingdom in those ways (Exodus 19:6 "you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,") we would be missing the entire idea of Kingdom to limit it as such. – Don Carlson, Gospel Coalition

"[20] Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, [21] nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."

– Luke 10: 20-21

Kingdom – God's sovereign rule

Kingdom = Reign, not Realm.

Kingdom can refer in a broad sense to God's sovereign rule over all. Like in David's Psalm 145:1 , "I will exalt you, my God, the King." In this sense, everyone is in the kingdom. Everyone, everything, everywhere falls under the rule of God, the divine King with all authority. In Genesis, even though the word kingdom isn't used… like many other concepts and themes that present in Genesis without explicitly being stated, kingdom is woven into the creation story. Creation is God reigning. He exists, He rules by decree, He calls the world into being, he establishes right and wrong, holds people accountable, He is merciful, and He loves creation. No one is outside of this kingdom. It's here, it's been here, it will always be here.

Kingdom – Jesus brought the (upside down) kingdom

However, kingdom also refers to a sort of different subset within the reign of God. This is not simply a NT event, there are many references to the kingdom that will come. There were certainly people in the OT of course that were participants in this idea of kingdom. The Israelites had arrived at the terrible conclusion that an earthly king could do for them what God could not… so they demanded a king. The very first king God gave them, Saul, was an insecure disaster of a king. However, God in His mercy and grace would use the position of kingship to point many years into the future – to a future king, King Jesus. The second King of Israel was David. In 2 Samuel chapter 7 when David tells God he wants to build Him a house, God tells David something remarkable. He tells David, no I will build a house for you. Here we see the establishment of the Davidic Dynasty. The future King of Israel that would save the nation (and the earth) would come from the line of David. The Israelites were looking for the ultimate earthly king. They pictured someone mighty and famous! Someone that would tear through the injustice of the Romans and establish a nation of… well, winners. Jesus came preaching something radical, however. See below for a picture of the kingdom that Jesus brought. It contrasts starkly with any earthly "mighty" kingdom.

Earthly Idea of Kingdom	Kingdom of Jesus
Mighty leader who would deliver Israel from Roman rule	Delivered all people from their sin
Be an earthly king	King of the Jews, king of the world (John 19:19 – "Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.")
Jews anticipated a saving king for them alone	Jesus came for all nations. Jews time and again misinterpreted prophecy. (Isaiah 56:6-7 – "The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord [...] these I will bring to my holy mountain [...] for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.")
First is first	Jesus preached in the parable of the workers in the vineyard, (Matthew 20:16 - "So the last will be first, and the first will be last.")
Expectation was that of a mighty warrior king with many servants under him. Even the disciples were not totally getting it.. The mother of James and John ask Jesus to effectively secure a spot to "right and to the left" of Jesus when He becomes king. Jesus responds by telling them the king will serve, not be served.	Jesus is the servant King – (Matthew 20:25-28 –"Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **26** Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, **27** and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— **28** just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.")
Those who succeed in the kingdom exhibit authority, status, power, wealth, etc	Jesus lays out very clearly in the Beatitudes, those who will enter the kingdom: *-Poor in the Spirit* *-Mourn* *-Meek* *-Hunger and thirst for righteousness* *-Pure in heart* *-Peacemakers* *-Those who are persecuted*
King would certainly not be killed before he was able to deliver the people.	Jesus was the perfect Passover lamb that would give His life for His people. And like we as believers are told in Luke 10:33, ("**33** Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it,") we are to die, so that we may live.

	This is modeled in the sacrifice of the burnt offering – the blameless sacrifice was able to come into close proximity to God because of its righteous blood. ("I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— **15** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep." John 10:14-15)

<u>Kingdom will come</u>

In one sense God's kingdom has always been here (all of creation). In another sense, Jesus brought the kingdom of God. Yet, there is still a kingdom to come? YES! Jesus brought life. He brought a kingdom far better than anyone could ever imagine. He dismantled the sacrificial system. He defeated sin. He made a way for all people, Jews and Gentiles, to dwell with the Father. Jesus did all of these things, yet sin still exists. The kingdom that Jesus brought is still contested. There will be a kingdom coming, however, where it will be uncontested. Jesus will reign when He returns as the King… without the drudgery of sin. There is such incredible hope and anticipation in this! Certainly, there is a love-sick longing in every believer to be with Christ the King on the new earth.

- 2 Peter 3:12-13 – "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

- Revelation 21:1 – "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea."
- Revelation 21:4 – "and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

- 1 Corinthians 15:50-52 – "**50** I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. **51** Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— **52** in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. "

- Isaiah 66:22 - "For just as the new heavens and the new earth, Which I make will endure before Me," declares the Lord, So your offspring and your name will endure."

THE LAW

What comes to mind when you think of "law?"

It depends on where you are on the spectrum of grace.

For those under the Law in Old Testament times, the Law was a comfort if they were obedient. The Law was a burden if they struggled with obedience and lived their own way. But for this time period, grace was not on their radar in regard to the Law.

A few things to ponder before we begin our study of the Law.

The Law is a doctrine, a teaching.

Do you believe all the Christian doctrines?

You know how to validate your belief?

Answer this question: do you comply, do you live by, have you changed your life in order to follow these doctrines you say you believe?

To read and learn doctrine is an entirely different thing than dying to your way and submitting to the Sovereign Lord's reign.

- **So before we enter into this holy study on His Law, ask Him to enlighten you in order to transform your life.**

The concept of Law is complicated. In the OT, law can refer to the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments); the first five Books of the Bible (the Pentateuch); it can also refer to the whole of the OT with the exception of the Prophets; it can also refer to the divine revelation in general as recorded in Ps. 1: 2; 19: 7-9; 94: 12.

In the NT, Paul in particular writes about the law. In Rom. 7: 3 – he refers to the law in regard to freeing a woman to remarry by the death of her husband.

On the broader spectrum, Rom. 2: 14 discusses the law which the Gentiles by nature follow.

So how can we come to terms with this hard to nail down word? By the way, the Oxford English Dictionary lists 23 definitions of this word!

This is where reasoning through the Scriptures is paramount.

Always ask questions. Here we need to know WHY the law was given and WHEN.

So let's start with the easy one: WHEN.

God had a special relationship with Abraham. What was their relationship based on: law or covenant? What's the difference?

The covenant God established with Abraham was a unilateral covenant: God initiated it and He made certain promises to Abraham.

God's covenant with Noah, that never again should all life be destroyed by water, is a **UNILATERAL** covenant, meaning that it was a **PROMISE** of God, not a contractual agreement (which is a **BILATERAL** covenant).

In regard to Abraham:

First, the smoking fire pot and flaming torch were symbols of God (and some say Christ, but for our purposes that does not matter), only God passed between the animals, Abram did not. Therefore, this is a **UNILATERAL** promise, a promise God was making to Abram concerning his descendants and a "land grant." This covenant has never yet been fulfilled, for the Israelites have never possessed all the land "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates." This covenant promise will be fulfilled during the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. **Second**, God told Abram, "*know for certain*" which is covenant terminology for a sign, they both mean the very same thing but spoken differently in their usage.
Gen. 15: 9-21

https://newcovenantunderstanding.wordpress.com/2012/09/06/the-difference-between-unilateral-and-bilateral-covenants/

The above is a covenant, not a law.

The Law came later. Gal. 3: 17-18, "*What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise*."

Also Rom. 4: 16, "*For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all*."

John 1: 17, "*The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.*"

Rom. 5; 21, "*So that, as sin reigned in death, even so, grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*."

- **Jesus' View of the Law**

For Jesus the Law could be summed up in two commandments: love God and love your neighbor. Matt. 22: 34-40

Luke 10: 25-37 is the same question and answer, but in Luke we have a further teaching on who our neighbor is: the Good Samaritan. How thankful I am that this man asked Jesus this question!

The summation of the Law which Jesus gave places it high above ceremonies or rules and instead assigns it to a proper relationship between a person and his God and between that person and other persons.

Jesus also tells us, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." Matt. 5: 17

- **The Law that Jesus Knew**

The Commandments begin with our relationship with God. The first is key – no other gods before the true God.

How do we keep this commandment? John Stott writes, "*For us to keep this first commandment would be, as Jesus said, to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind (Matt. 22: 37); to see all things from His point of view and do nothing without reference to Him; to make His will our guide and His glory our goal; to put Him first in thought, word, and deed; in business and leisure; in friendships and career; in the use of our money, time and talents; at work and at home … No man has ever kept this commandment except Jesus of Nazareth.*"

Only a proper view of God, which begins with the Law, can set us on the right path to living life as Christ lives it. Christ followed the Law; it gave Him awareness of right and wrong – He reflected the character of His Father.

"*A typical view of the Law is that its purpose is to teach us how to be good. That is not the Bible's emphasis*." J M Boice

Why was the Law given?

"*The Old Testament Law is the purest expression of the holy character of God … God's character also has been expressed in the general moral consciousness … a universal awareness of moral law and a sense of need for it*." **J M Boice**

At the very moment Moses was receiving the Law from the Lord, the people were demonstrating (Ex. 32) their natural inclination to sin – specifically sinning in the areas which the first commandments prohibit. Clearly this is a poignant demonstration of the fact that man can never achieve the righteousness of God.

- ✓ **The primary function of the Law is to expose sin.**

- ❖ **Yet in the giving of the Law, which exposes our inability to attain to the righteousness of God, the Lord also gave instructions concerning the sacrifices which point to the maintaining of a relationship with a Righteous God.**

God chose Moses to be the Lawgiver, but He also chose Aaron to be the high priest who would consecrate the people.

"All the OT sacrifices point in one way or another to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ…

Before God can give us the gospel, He must slay us with the Law. But as He does so, He shows us that the Law contains the gospel and points us to it. "

J M Boice

The Three Purposes of the Law

1. The Law functions as a mirror. We can see both the perfect Righteousness of God and the sinfulness of man as we look into the truths of the Law.
   The Law gives knowledge of sin. Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-11
   The Law leads us to repentance and faith in Christ. Gal. 3:19-24
   The moral Law revealed in the Ten Commandments and expounded in other parts of the Bible is an expression of God's righteousness, given as a code of practice for God's people in every age.
2. The Law, in its civil use, restrains evil.
   The Law cannot change the heart, but it can dissuade lawlessness. Rom. 13:3, 4; Deut. 13:6-11; 19:16-21
3. The Law is a guide to the regenerate to do the good works that God has planned for them. Eph. 2:10
   The Law is the "family code" for the believer. As our Heavenly Father is holy and blameless, He has instructed us to be perfect, mature, complete because He is and we are His seed. Matt. 5:48; 1 John 3:4-10
   We are to make disciples who follow the Lord's teaching. Matt. 28:20; John 14:15
   The Law does not provide salvation, (Rom. 6:14; 7:4, 6; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 2:15-19; 3:25) but the believer is "under the law of Christ" as a rule of life. 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2

   "The Law is not opposed to the love and goodness of God, but shows what it is in action." Reformation Bible

Antinomianism

This term comes from two words: *anti* "against" + *nomos* " law."
It means "opposed to law." The one who holds this view would deny that God's law in Scripture should directly control the Christian's life. **2 Pet. 2; Jude 4-19** shed some light on this problem within the early Church.
Jude 4, "*For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*."
A particular group of antinomians were the **Gnostics**. They taught that the body and soul were separate. They believed that behavior of the body was irrelevant to the immortal soul. This gave their followers a license to sin.
Another brand of antinomianism placed trust in the Holy Spirit's inward prompting as to deny any need to be taught by the Law as to how to live. Freedom from the Law would bring a more receptive alliance with the truths of the spirit world.
Some see antinomianism as the view that the moral law does not apply to Christians, who are instead under the law of grace. For those who hold this view, moral effort is discounted and unnecessary.
Docetism was a belief system which denied the humanity of Jesus. Matter or the material is not real. The spirit or the mind are the highest forms of reality. So what one does with his body is not important. This perversion comes from Greek philosophy which considered the duality of life expressed in the material and immaterial.
Docetism takes its name from the Greek *dokeo*, meaning "to seem or appear."
This heresy taught that Jesus only "seemed" to be human. It was unbelievable that God could have become material, since all matter is evil and God is pure and holy. Jesus, to them, was simply an illusion, not a reality, more of a ghost or apparition, than a true human being.
What this means for the antinomian is that matter being evil can have no effect on the true essence of the spirit of the individual. This heretical teaching was a problem in the early church as evidenced by the writings of Paul and John. The first epistle of John addresses this issue. **1 John 4: 2, 3**, "*By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has **come in the flesh** is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world."*

The Law is not sin, but it shows what sin is.

❖ A New Testament approach to the Law is found in Romans 7.

While this is a controversial chapter, with some saying the author means to point to a prior salvation view of the Law and others a post salvation view, it is beneficial if we can put that argument aside for a moment and look mainly at what we learn about the Law from this chapter.

Paul is urging his readers to die.

In death we are freed from the Law, "*For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.*" Rom. 7: 5-6

Rom. 7: 12, 14, 22, "*So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good … For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin… For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body…"*

Rom. 8: 2-4, "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*."

***"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."* Gal. 2: 20, 21**

❖ Some Additional Notes Which May Prove Helpful in Regard to the Law:

God's Word and Its Synonyms

Psalm 119 is an acrostic arrangement on the theme of God's word. Each strophe or stanza has eight verses which begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The next strophe will begin with the following letter of the Hebrew alphabet. For instance, in English, stanza one would begin and continue each line with "A". Each line of the second stanza would begin with the letter "B". This would continue until the alphabet was finished. In an English poem, because we have 26 letters, there would be 26 stanzas.

Hebrew has 22 letters in the alphabet.

This psalm is a collection of thoughts, meditations and prayers on God's word.

The writer uses ten words to refer to God's word. (# 9 and #10 are not included by some.)

These are listed below.

1. "Law": # 8451 *torah* indicates direction or instruction. Reference to whole bodies of teaching is implied, such as Deuteronomy, even the whole Pentateuch.
   The word "law" has both a specific meaning and a general meaning. In the general sense it refers to any "instruction" coming from the revelation of God as the basis for life and action.

   In the specific sense it refers to the Torah of Moses.

"Here, as in **Ps. 1 and 19**, it must be taken in its widest sense, as synonymous with the "word" of Jehovah (**Is. 1:10; 2:3**), to include all Divine revelation as the guide of life."

A. F. Kirkpatrick

C.S. Lewis wrote a study on the psalms called Reflections on the Psalms. He mentions his surprise at how the psalmist writes of his "love" for God's law, not respect or admiration, but love. This seemed strange to him, similar to loving the instruments of a dentist which are used to inflict pain on the patient. But for Lewis, the reason for the confusion was answered with a better understanding of the word "law".

Law includes the entirety of God's written revelation, promises as well as warnings, blessings as well as judgments. Lewis also found that what the poet loved about God's law was "the engaging moral order of the divine mind." This order is carefully constructed in the psalm we have been studying for weeks now. We consider *love* as emotional but when the psalmist writes of love of God's law, precepts, commandments, it is not particularly emotional in the sentimental sense. This *love* is a reflection of the psalmist's awe and devotion in having been privileged to gain entry through God's word into the perfection and beauty of God's word – God's mind.

Torah: the revelation of God's character and covenant which is recorded in the first five books of the Bible. At its heart is the law, which God gave to Israel on Mt. Sinai; the focus being that God's will for human life is divinely revealed and historically evidenced in the story of Israel and mankind. The discussion of law or Torah in the Psalms takes on at least three forms: God's ways, God's works and God's words

Torah psalms: three psalms in particular make the Torah the focus: **1, 19, 119**. Sixteen others focus on this topic enough to fall in this category as well: **18, 25, 33, 68, 78, 81, 89, 93, 94, 99, 103, 105, 111, 112, 147, 148**. It is said these psalms form the structure for the entire Psalter; they give a foundational interpretive framework for the personal, moral and national identity of the psalm as a form

2. "Word":*# 1697 dabar* can mean spoken word or speech, a command or royal decree, a report or tidings, advice, reference to legal affairs, business dealings. But most of all it refers to divine communication. The Ten Commandments are literally called "the ten words of the Lord." This is a term which is used for God's revelation, any word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. This is a general designation for divine revelation. This can be a "word" referring to the Decalogue, the Law of Moses, or the word given by God to the prophets.

3. "Commandment": # 4687 *miswah* indicates a definite command with authority. Many times its use is associated with an order of the covenant God.

4. "Statutes": # 2706 *huqquim* comes from the root word which means "to engrave or inscribe." God is the divine authority and therefore issues the divine decrees to His covenant people. This word reveals His royal sovereignty and establishes His divine will in His creation. It is always in the plural.
   It also refers to that which must be observed by strict ritual.

   "The *huqqim* of the Lord give order to human lives, even as they uphold order in the created world." Expositor's Commentary on the Psalms

5. "Judgment": # 4941*mispot* means a judgment, a legal decision, a legal case, a claim. It denotes a binding law which stems from a judicial decision and corresponding precedence. It refers to cases or legal decisions associated with particular legal issues. The word is clearly associated with the basis of Israel's legal system. God is the supreme Judge and therefore reveals His will through His laws and judgments.
   This word can also refer to God's judgment on the wicked.
   This term also refers to the place of judgment, the place where judgments were rendered; disputes were to be taken here. This word is also used to describe the instructions or plans regarding the building of the Tabernacle and the exact directions for the Temple.

   The mispatim (judgments) of God are righteous and they establish His sovereign order in His creation, giving His people a security which they cannot create.

6. "Precepts": # 6490 *piqqudim* is a poetical word for mandate, found only in the psalms. This word is strongly associated with covenant and with the revelation of God. The root word (*p-q-d*) "visit or appoint" signifies a relationship between the speaker and the object. As the Sovereign, covenant-keeping God has commanded the precepts, it is the job of the psalmist to *guard, long for, keep, love, seek, choose, and meditate* on these precepts.
   The root of this word means to attend, to visit and to search out. The idea of attending to something, especially in the case of God paying attention to His people, is in view here. The idea that God is paying attention to how He wants things ordered is prominent in this word.

7. "Testimony": # 5715 *edah* declares a solemn declaration to the will of God. It can be referred to as a precept or warning sign. It reveals the standard for God's required conduct. Also referred to as ordinances. This word is derived from "w-d" ("witness or testify"). A covenant relationship is in view as this word is used when referring to "the tablets of the Testimony" and "the ark of the Testimony". God's covenant people were to be loyal to the covenant agreement made between Himself and His people. Observance of God's ordinances was not optional. He is our Witness and our Judge.

8. "Way": # 1870 *derek* describes the mode of life one will follow as directed by God's law. From the verb *darak*, meaning to walk or to tread. Usually this word is used metaphorically to refer to the pathways of one's life, indicating the pattern of life. The obedient life, the righteous life, the wicked life are all described using this word. Also pleasant, dark, and wise ways are represented in scripture using this word.

9. "Word" or "saying": # 559 '*imrah* can be translated "promise" and is closely connected to *dabar.* This can refer to anything God has promised, commanded or said.

10 "Path": # 734 *orah* is very similar to "way". It means "pathway, highway or byway. It describes the literal path one walks on (**Jud. 5:6**); the path or rank one walks in (**Joel 2:7**); the path of an individual or course of life (**Job 6:18**); the characteristics of a lifestyle, good or evil (**Ps. 16:11**); righteousness or judgment (**Prov. 2:13**). The Complete Word Study of the Old Testament

Throughout this psalm, the message of Deuteronomy is seen in both the language and message. The law as God's standard is not portrayed as burdensome or ritualistic, but a loving response to a gracious LawGiver.

"***When the psalmist used the word "law" (torah), or any other words for the Scriptures, he was referring to much more than the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial instructions that have now been fulfilled in Christ. He was referring to the entire revelation of God as found in the Old Testament Scriptures.***" W. Wiersbe

With the use of several words to clearly explain God's law, the psalmist carefully crafts a masterpiece depicting the eternal benefits and blessings of the Divine gift of His communication to His covenant people. Without covenant, there is no divine blessing and no understanding of His words of life.

DOCTRINE: A LIVING SACRIFICE

God gave you a body for a reason.

"Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."

Rom. 12: 1

This body God gave you was not so you could indulge your own appetites. That, in fact, is the way to misery. He gave you this body for the same reason He provided a body for Jesus.

Read **Hebrews 10: 5- 7**

5 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says,

"Sacrifice and offering You have not desired,
But a body You have prepared for Me;
6 In whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You have taken no pleasure.
7 "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come
(In the scroll of the book it is written of Me)
To do Your will, O God.'"

Just as a body was necessary for Jesus to accomplish His work, so a body is necessary for you to accomplish the work God has for you.

The question for you now is this: Will I yield my body as a living sacrifice for the Lord's purposes or will I continue to use this body for my own desires?

- **Below are Scriptures for meditation on what it means to be a living sacrifice.**

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 8:12

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Revelation 20:1-15

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ...

1 Peter 2:24

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Matthew 10:28

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Genesis 22:9-12

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

1 Corinthians 12:13 ESV / 3 helpful votes

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Romans 6:13

Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Matthew 25:21

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

Psalm 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

1 Peter 4:1-19

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ...

- **1 Peter 2:21-25**
  For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:
  "Who committed no sin,
  Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

  1 John 3:16-23
  By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. 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.

Matthew 16:24
Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

- **Philippians 2:17**
  Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

- **Colossians 3:1-5**
  If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

- **Hebrews 10:5-13**
  Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:
  "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
  But a body You have prepared for Me.
  In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin
  You had no pleasure.
  Then I said, "Behold, I have come—
  In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
  To do Your will, O God.""
  Previously saying, "*Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them* " (which are offered according to the law), then He said, *"Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God."* He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

- **Luke 9:23**
  Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

- **John 14:15**
  "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

- **John 21:18-19**
  Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.'

Hebrews 13:16
But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

- **1 Peter 4:1-2**
Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

    - **2 Timothy 4:6**
    For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

Psalm 40:6-8
Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;
My ears You have opened.
Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.
Then I said, "Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.
I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law *is* within my heart."

Being A Living Sacrifice Unto the Lord

QUESTION: What does the Bible say about being a living sacrifice unto the Lord?

ANSWER:

Sacrifice is defined by Nelson's Bible Dictionary as "The ritual through which the Hebrew people offered the blood or the flesh of an animal to God as a 'substitute payment' for their sin." Then what is a living sacrifice? How are we to offer our lives as a sacrifice to God?

The following verses describe what the Bible says about being a living sacrifice unto the Lord:

Romans 12:1-2 says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

1 Peter 2:1-5 reads: "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Ephesians 5:1-2 says, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

2 Corinthians 4:6-12 reads: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you."

Hebrews 13:15-16 says, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

Psalm 51:17 declares: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

We have all sinned and deserve God's judgment. God, the Father, sent His only Son to satisfy that judgment for those who believe in Him. Jesus, the creator and eternal Son of God, who lived a sinless life, loves us so much that He died for our sins, taking the punishment that we deserve, was buried, and rose from the dead according to the Bible. If you truly believe and trust this in your heart, receiving Jesus alone as your Savior, declaring, "Jesus is Lord," you will be saved from judgment and spend eternity with God in heaven.

What is your response?

https://www.allaboutfollowingjesus.org/being-a-living-sacrifice-unto-the-lord-faq.htm

Called to be a Living Sacrifice Roman 12-16

There is no Temple in Jerusalem, but God still expects you to present a sacrifice; and you may be surprised to learn just what that sacrifice is.

https://israelmyglory.org/article/called-to-be-a-living-sacrifice/

Question: "What does it mean to be a living sacrifice?"

Answer: In Romans 12:1, Paul says, "I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service." Paul's admonition to the believers in Rome was to sacrifice themselves to God, not as a sacrifice on the altar, as the Mosaic Law required the sacrifice of animals, but as a *living* sacrifice. The dictionary defines *sacrifice* as "anything consecrated and offered to God." As believers, how do we consecrate and offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice?

Under the Old Covenant, God accepted the sacrifices of animals. But these were just a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Because of His ultimate, once-for-all-time sacrifice on the cross, the Old Testament sacrifices became obsolete and are no longer of any effect (Hebrews 9:11-12). For those who are in Christ by virtue of saving faith, the only acceptable worship is to offer ourselves completely to the Lord. Under God's control, the believer's yet-unredeemed body can and must be yielded to Him as an instrument of righteousness (Romans 6:12-13; 8:11-13). In view of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus for us, this is only "reasonable."

What does a living sacrifice look like in the practical sense? The following verse (Romans 12:2) helps us to understand. We are a living sacrifice for God by not being conformed to this world. The world is defined for us in 1 John 2:15-16 as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. All that the world has to offer can be reduced to these three things. The lust of the flesh includes everything that appeals to our appetites and involves excessive desires for food, drink, sex, and anything else that satisfies physical needs. Lust of the eyes mostly involves materialism, coveting whatever we see that we don't have and envying those who have what we want. The pride of life is defined by any ambition for that which puffs

us up and puts us on the throne of our own lives.

How can believers NOT be conformed to the world? By being "transformed by the renewing of our minds." We do this primarily through the power of God's Word to transform us. We need to hear (Romans 10:17), read (Revelation 1:3), study (Acts 17:11), memorize (Psalm 119:9-11), and meditate on (Psalm 1:2-3) Scripture. The Word of God, ministered in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, is the only power on earth that can transform us from worldliness to true spirituality. In fact, it is all we need to be made "complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, NKJV). The result is that we will be "able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2b). It is the will of God for every believer to be a living sacrifice for Jesus Christ.

https://www.gotquestions.org/living-sacrifice.html

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God . . ." I appeal to you *therefore* . . ." That is, I appeal to you on the basis of what has gone before in the first eleven chapters of this letter. I will now call you in chapters twelve through sixteen to a kind of life that is built on something. It doesn't come out of nowhere. It has roots. This new Christian life is built on chapters one through eleven. Build your Christian life on Romans 1–11. Sink your roots here. And your fruit will be Christian fruit.

And he sums up the foundation with the phrase, "the mercies of God." I appeal to you therefore, brothers, *by the mercies of God*. That's the sum of Romans 1–11: "the mercies of God." God has been *merciful* to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of Christ, those who believe in him are justified by faith, and reconciled to God, and have the hope of everlasting joy. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died — more than that, who was raised — who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us" (Romans 8:34).

A Life of Mercy

Build your lives on this mercy. Sink your roots in this mercy. And your new life will flow out with mercy. That is, Romans 12 will become a reality in your own life. Romans 12 oozes with mercy. "Show mercy with cheerfulness. . . . Let love be genuine. . . . Give to the saints. . . . Bless those who persecute you. . . . Weep with those who weep. . . . Associate with the lowly. . . . Repay no one evil for evil. . . . Never avenge yourselves. . . . If your enemy is hungry feed him." Build your lives on mercy and become merciful.

Notice in passing that Paul models for us mercy even as he calls us to mercy in verse 1. First, he uses a gentle and winsome word: "I appeal" instead of "I command." He says explicitly in Philemon 1:8–9 that the use of the word "appeal" is softer than the word "command" and is an expression of love and mercy. Second, he calls them "brothers" and therefore puts himself down with them under the care and authority of God the Father, rather than over them because of his apostolic authority. So even though his words do carry God's authority, he uses this authority in a gentle and merciful way that models for us what he is about to command from us.

First, a Life of Worship

But today we notice something very significant in verse 1: Before Paul describes our new life in Christ as *merciful*, he describes it as *worshipful*. Before you think that the Christian life has everything to do with being merciful to people, realize that it has everything to do with being *worshipful* toward God. "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your *spiritual worship*." Before we give ourselves away in mercy to man, we give ourselves away in worship to God.

This is crucial to see. We must never let the Christian life drift into a mere social agenda. I use the word "mere" carefully, because if God is left out, our mercy will be mere social agenda. We do no one good in the end if we are not worshiping and leading them to worship in the acts of mercy that we do. If our good deeds are not expressing the worth of God, then our deeds are not worship, and in the end, will not be merciful. Making people comfortable or helping them feel good on the way to everlasting punishment, without the hope and the design that they see Christ in your good deeds, is not mercy. Mercy must aim to make much of Christ. No one is saved who doesn't meet and make much of Christ. And not to care about saving is not merciful.

"Before we give ourselves in mercy, we give ourselves in worship."

Therefore, it is absolutely essential that Paul put worship before mercy and that he define the Christian life as *worshipful* before he defines it as *merciful*. Or to put it more carefully, Paul defines the Christian life as worship *so that* it can be merciful. If we are not worshiping in our behavior — that is, if we are not making much of God's mercy in Christ in and alongside our behavior — we are not giving people what they need most. And that is not merciful. A merciful lifestyle depends on a worshipful lifestyle. So before Paul defines Christian living as merciful, he defines it as worshipful.

So let's look more closely at what Paul means by a lifestyle of worship. Verse 1: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is *your spiritual worship*." What is this "spiritual worship"?

Sacrifice to God

First, Paul says it is a presenting of a sacrifice to God. "Present your bodies as a sacrifice . . . to God." This is the language of worship from the Old Testament. In coming to God, the

worshiper brought a sheep or a bull or a pigeon and sacrificed it on the altar as an offering to God. There were different kinds of sacrifices but at the heart of it was that sin demanded punishment, and the slain animal represented God's willingness to accept a substitute so that the worshiper might live and have an ongoing relationship of forgiveness and joy with God.

But all the Old Testament believers knew that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). They pointed beyond themselves to Christ, who was the final sacrifice for sin. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." That was the final sacrifice for sin, because it was perfect and sufficient for all who believe. Most clearly of all Hebrews 10:12 says, "When Christ had offered *for all time* a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." So Christ brought to an end the Old Testament sacrifices for sin. He finished the great work of atonement. His death cannot be improved on. All we have to do now is trust him for that great work. We do not add to it.

So when Paul says that our worship is to present our bodies as a sacrifice he does not mean that we die and atone for our sins. Well what does he mean? Let's take the four words he gives and see what each contributes to understanding a lifestyle of daily worship: *bodies*, *living*, *holy*, *acceptable to God*.

1. Your Bodies

"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

The point here is not to present to God your bodies and *not* your mind or heart or spirit. He is going to say very clearly in verse two: "Be transformed in the renewal of your *mind*." The

point is to stress that your body counts. You belong to God soul and body, or you don't belong to him at all. Your body matters.

Someone might think: Why would God be interested in my body? It's overweight, or underweight, wrinkled, blotchy, achy, diseased, impulsive, nervous, unattractive, lazy, awkward, disabled, near-sighted, hard-of-hearing, stiff, and brittle. What kind of sacrifice is that? The Old Testament demanded a flawless sheep. I don't measure up.

That kind of thinking totally misses the point. The sacrifice of our bodies to God is not a sacrifice for sin. That is done already in the sacrifice of Christ. Which is why bodies like ours are acceptable. Peter makes this really clear in 1 Peter 2:5 where he says something similar to Romans 12:1: "Offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God" — then he adds these words: *through Jesus Christ*. It's because of Jesus that our sacrifices to God are acceptable. So put out of your mind any thought that your body will ever deserve acceptance with God. It won't. If you are acceptable, it is "through Jesus Christ." Through his perfection, not your perfection.

But that kind of thinking misses the point in another way: The offering of our bodies is not the offering of our bodily looks, but our bodily behavior. In the Bible, the body is not significant because of the way it looks, but because of the way it acts. The body is given to us to make visible the beauty of Christ. And Christ, at the hour of his greatest beauty, was repulsive to look at. Isaiah 53:2–3 describes him: "He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." The beauty of Christ is the beauty of love, not the beauty of looks. His beauty was the beauty of sacrifice, not skin.

"The body is given to us to make visible the beauty of Christ."

God doesn't demand our bodies because he wants models for *Mademoiselle* or *Planet Muscle*. He demands our bodies because he wants models of mercy. I think we should pray

that God's perspective on our bodies become imbedded deep in our sons and daughters — and in ourselves — as one very powerful antidote to the kinds of eating disorders that plague so many young women, and even now some men today. What God wants from us is a body that does mercy, not the body of Britney Spears or Mr. World.

God wants visible, lived-out, bodily evidence that our lives are built on his mercy. Just as worshipers in the Old Testament denied themselves some earthly treasure (a sheep, a goat, a bull), and carried their sacrifices to the altar of blood and fire, so we deny ourselves some earthly treasure or ease or comfort, and carry ourselves — our bodies — for Christ's sake to the places and the relationships and the crises in this world where mercy is needed. It may be your own home, or it may be Senegal.

2. Living

"Present your bodies as a *living* sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

A life of visible, lived-out, physical actions of mercy might result in the death of a believer. There have always been martyrs. But that is not mainly what Paul has in mind here. Here he has in mind a lifestyle. Present your bodies a *living* sacrifice. It is your *living* that is the act of worship.

Let every act of your body in living be an act of worship. That is, let every act of your living body be a demonstration that God is your treasure. Let every act of your living body show that Christ is more precious to you than anything else. Let every act of your living body be a death to all that dishonors Christ.

3. Holy

"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, *holy* and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

Probably the best explanation of holy bodies comes from Romans 6:13, where Paul said almost the very same thing he says here, using the very language of "presenting" our bodies to God — only he refers to our bodily "members" and not just our bodies. "Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life [i.e., a *living sacrifice*], and your members to God as instruments for righteousness."

"Present a living holy body to God" means give your members — your eyes, your tongue, your hands and feet — give your body to do righteousness, not sin. That's what would make a body holy. A body is holy not because of what it looks like, or what shape it's in, but because of what it does. Is it the physical "instrument" of a hunger for righteousness? Is it the physical instrument of meekness and mercy and peace?

"The aim of showing mercy is showing God."

Here are three examples where the body being used as an instrument of righteousness and mercy is called a "sacrifice." In Philippians 4:18, Paul says, I "have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a *sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God*." Your work and giving and Epaphroditus's bringing this gift to me is a sacrifice of worship to God. It shows God's worth in your heart.

Hebrews 13:15: "Through [Christ] then let us continually offer up a *sacrifice* of praise to God, that is, *the fruit of lips* that acknowledge his name." When the lips join the heart in praise to God, the body becomes a holy, living sacrifice.

Hebrews 13:16: "Do not neglect to *do good* and to *share what you have*, for such *sacrifices* are pleasing to God." When you do good, in Jesus's name, with your mouth or your hands or your presence, your body becomes a holy, living sacrifice of worship. A body becomes a holy sacrifice of worship when it is devoted to God's purposes of righteousness and mercy.

4. Acceptable to God

"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and *acceptable to God*, which is your spiritual worship."

Does this add anything to the word "holy"? If the sacrifice of our bodily life is holy, then it is acceptable to God. So what do these words add? They add God. They make God explicit. They remind us that the reason holiness matters is because of God. They remind us that all of these words are describing an act of worship — "which is your spiritual worship" — and God is the center of worship.

So it's fitting that we end where we began and stress that before Romans 12 is a call to live a merciful life, it is a call to live a worshipful life. Or better: In calling us to live a *merciful* life (built on the mercy of God in Christ), the aim is that it be a *worshipful* life. The aim of showing mercy is showing God. The aim of having bodies is to make the glory of God more visible. And he does not shine through our muscles and curves, but through our merciful behavior.

You Are Not Your Own

I close with two statements from the apostle Paul. First, his own testimony of desire: "It is my eager expectation and hope that . . . Christ will be honored *in my body*, whether by life or by death" (Philippians 1:20). Second, his exhortation to us from 1 Corinthians 6:19–20: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

In other words, "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your *spiritual worship*." Show the worth of Christ by the way you use your body.

John Piper (@JohnPiper)

THE MAJESTY AND WONDER OF GOD

If I have one passion in life, it is to communicate the majesty and wonder of Who God is.

How can you or I do this?

We cannot.

It remains for the Word of God to accomplish this supernatural undertaking.

Within the deepest part of my soul, where no man can see and even I do not comprehend, I believe this is the greatest error within the Church today.

Please forgive the personal nature of this writing, but to me, this truth of God's majesty, missing from the lives of the body of Christ today is very personal and close to my heart.

If my heart could give voice to its longing, my heart would cry out to all who would listen: "Do not be robbed of the greatest joy of this earthly life." Beholding the majesty, the splendor, the wonder of our God is worth whatever it takes to be acquainted with, to live in, to come to know His magnificence.

"*The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; the LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength; indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting*." **Ps. 93:1, 2**

"*Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering Yourself with light as with a cloak, stretching out heaven like a tent curtain. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He makes the clouds His chariots; He walks upon the wings of the wind; He makes the winds His messengers, flaming fire His ministers*." **Ps. 104:1-4**

- **How can this psalmist write of something so divine as God's majesty?**

He is under the divine guidance of God Himself to "see" what man cannot see. The writer then communicates in language we use in order to give a rough translation of an appreciation we can only glimpse here.

"*Listen to this, O Job, stand and consider the wonders of God…Now men do not see the light which is bright in the skies; but the wind has passed and cleared them. Out of the north comes*

golden splendor; around God is awesome majesty. The Almighty – we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power and He will not do violence to justice and abundant righteousness. Therefore men fear Him; He does not regard any who are wise of heart." **Job 37: 14, 21-24**

"And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When he had made purification of sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." **Heb. 1:3**

The writer of Hebrews does not experience this glory firsthand, but he is a faithful scribe to the truths which the Holy Spirit of God has revealed to him.

"*Because God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, it is appropriate that our theology be constructed with His greatness and goodness as the primary reference point.*"

Christian Theology, Millard J. Erickson, p. 82

We see glimpses of God's glory and majesty here on earth. There are many ways of seeing His splendor. But the method of greatest transparency of this magnificence is in His Word. Some may say that they see His hand in the works of nature or the miracle of birth, but Scripture reveals Who God truly is. Any human being can see how special a birth is or a beautiful sunset, but only the redeemed child of God, in covenant relationship with Him, can truly "see" His majesty. When the word of God transforms the mind of a disciple of Christ, he is then equipped to witness the reality of God's glory.

The poet in **Psalm 119:18**, asks God to "*open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law."*

He further says*, "Make me understand the way of Your precepts, so I will meditate on Your wonders."* **119:27**

- **What is involved in manifesting God's glory?**

Even judgment is a revelation of Who God is. This, to the untaught mind, seems harsh and cruel. But to the mind molded by God's word, to an understanding deepened by divine disclosure, the believing heart acknowledges the perfectly just act of God in His righteous judgment.

"*But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment, and the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness*." **Isaiah 5:16**

Speaking of His coming judgment, “The pride of man will be humbled and the loftiness of men will be abased; and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.” Is. 2:17

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; *because* His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bondservants on her.” Rev. 19:1b-2

Note here *when* and *why* the shouts of “Hallelujah” come.

Even the judgment that awaits many rebellious people will cause God to be regarded as majestic and glorious. This seems unnatural to us because *it is* unnatural; it is supernatural and only a heart and mind that yields itself to the truths of Scripture will accept it as good and true.

- **What is the glory of God?**

The word “glory” is *doxa* in Greek. It comes from the verb *dokeo* which means “to seem.” The word primarily means opinion, reputation or value. It indicates the worth one sees in another, the estimate and the honor resulting from a good opinion.

In biblical terms, the word *doxa* takes on special meaning as it relates to Christ. There is a clear message in the writers of the New Testament choosing the same word- *doxa*- in referring to God’s glory and to the glory of Christ. (**1 Tim.3: 16; Rom. 6: 4; Lk. 2: 14; Acts 7: 55; Heb. 13: 21; 1 Cor. 2: 8; James. 2: 1**)

In another sense, God’s “glory” means the bright light that surrounds God’s presence. Since God is spirit, and not energy or matter, this visible light is not part of God’s being but is something that was created. We may define it as follows: God’s glory is the created brightness that surrounds God’s revelation of himself.” W. Grudem, Systematic Theology

- **Our response**

“*Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; speak of all His wonders. Glory in His holy name; let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad…Remember His wonders which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth*.” **Ps. 105: 2, 3, 5**

“*On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.”*

Ps. 145:5

“*Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul observes them.”* **119:129**

Here it is not just a mere admission that God is right. The psalmist does not just acquiesce with mental assent; his very *soul* keeps and obeys God’s truths.

We are His! "*Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made*." **Is. 43: 7**

We learn **Rom 3: 23** as young Christians: "*For all have sinned and fall short of the GLORY of God."*

- ✓ God made us for His glory. We were to be glorious representatives of His on earth. But we have failed in this. Praise be to our Priest, Prophet and King Who did not fail in representing God's glory to the world.

"*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*." **John 1:14**

"*I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was*." **Jn. 17: 4, 5**

- ❖ *Humility*

The only way to truly "see" God in His glory and majesty is to come in humility and submission, saying, "Lord, only You can reveal truth."

As the Church, we are far from the capability of seeing our God.

Even Isaiah was unable to see Him at first. In **Is. 6**, the prophet tells us that he was driven to cry out, "*Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."* As Isaiah saw the glory of God, he realized his own unworthy nature before a holy God. His response was not one of awe and wonder, but fear and recognition of his sin.

Apart from this humble response, we will not see God's glory. Jesus tells us that the poor in spirit are blessed to be a part of the kingdom of heaven. Not the intelligent, proud or talented, but the poor in spirit, only those who acknowledge their deep dependence on a King's benevolent love will enter His kingdom.

In order to see the contrasting natural response to Who our Lord is, note the way Jesus was viewed by man. "*For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."* **Is. 53:2, 3**

But God did not leave Him in obscurity and neglect. **Phil. 2: 9-11** tells us, *"For this reason also, God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the*

earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Rev. 5:13 echoes this*, "And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."*

Because David had a heart for God, he could write, "*Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in! Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory."* **Ps. 24: 8-10**

One of the saddest things in Scripture to me is the progression of the word *glory* in the book of **Ezekiel**. We see the glory of the Lord in **Ez.3:23. Read Ez. 10:1-5; 15, 18, 19; 11:22, 23**. As you read these verses, you will see the glory of God reluctantly leaving His temple. "*Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. The glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city."*

- But never fear, God will prevail. In the end of the book, Ezekiel gives us a glimpse of the future.

Read Ez. 43 and note the return of the glory of God to His temple.

"And the city has no need of the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." Rev. 21:23

DOCTRINE OF MAN

"*God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female, He created them*." **Gen. 1:28**

"Adam" perhaps means red earth and is the initial Hebrew name for man in the Old Testament.

- "Man came into existence by a distinct act of creation. He bore originally, and in an important sense still bears, the image and likeness of God." Unger's Bible Dictionary

The story of man is aptly summed up by the terms of G. Campbell Morgan: generation, degeneration and regeneration.

Why was man created by God?

Man was not created by God because of any lack or need of God's. God created man because it pleased Him to do so. **Is. 43:7** "Everyone who is called by My name, and **whom I have created for My glory,** whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

The first question in the Westminster larger Catechism is "What is the chief and highest end of man?" The proper response is, "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever."

How was man created?

Man was created by a divine, direct and definite act of God. He was created in the image of God.

"*Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth*." **Gen. 1:26**

"Man's body was formed from the lower elements-the divine Spirit was inbreathed-a living soul resulted from the union of the first two." Herbert Lockyer, All the Doctrines of the Bible

Through this **body** man has a *world consciousness*. The five senses are the connecting agent to the world. The non-believer senses the world through the same senses as the believer. But the believer in Yahweh has the distinct advantage of seeing, hearing, touching, etc., the world with the divine insight which God alone offers him. **Gen. 2:7b,** "*The Lord breathed … the breath of life and man became a living soul.*"

Man was not created as an infant, he was fully and perfectly functioning in intellectual ability.

Gen. 2:20

While the **body** represents *world consciousness*, the **soul** is the source of *self-consciousness*.

1 Cor. 2:11

- There are many emotions within the soul of man.

"*I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my **soul** will exult in my God*." **Is. 61:10a**

"*Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his **soul** when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore the distress has come upon us*." **Gen. 42:21**

Animals do not enjoy this faculty: "Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding." **Ps. 32:9a**

- Within the **spirit** of man lies the *God-consciousness* divinely sparked by the very life of God.

"*We had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of **spirits** and live*?" **Heb. 12:9**

"*But it is a **spirit** in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding*." **Job 32:8**

"*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*." **1 Th. 5:23**

- You may also think of these likenesses to God in this sense: **spirituality**, God is Spirit and we are like Him in spirit; **personality**, God is Person and we also have personality;

holiness, God is holy and has called His children to bear the family resemblance of holiness; **love**, God is love and has endowed us with great propensity to love and be loved to reflect this aspect of His being; **dominion**, God is sovereign and He created man to rule, but first man must rule himself through the power of God's Spirit.

"God meant the body to be the servant of the soul, and the soul, the servant of the spirit: and spirit, soul and body all servants of His and avenues along which He can journey to a lost world." Herbert Lockyer

Unlike certain postmodern philosophical perspectives, man is not just a thinking animal. The distinction between man and animal is considerable. What animal can properly use tools to the degree that a four year-old child does? More outstanding, what animal can create a tool for complex use? This act of creating things is a direct reflection of our being made in the image of our Creator. A bird continues to build the nest the same way he did thousands of generations ago; look at the complexity of architecture in the buildings man erects.

What animal has the gift of expressing articulate thought? Certain animals can mimic speech, but none can express complicated thought or converse on basic topics. Animals can learn to repeat particular acts because of rewards or punishments. But man acts based on far more sophisticated reasoning. Sometimes his reasons are not moral, but his actions are not motivated purely by instincts. If man is only an animal, then why not transfuse an animal's blood into a human when we run low on blood donors?

One of the most flawed ways of regarding man it that of *materialism*. This view holds that man is only material and that indeed all life is no more than the material from which it derives its life. In contrast, the man God created has a soul in addition to his body; he has a spirit which can commune with Almighty God.

Man is not just an animal. Man is not just material. Man is the pinnacle of God's creative activity because he is made in the image of God.

Why did man fall?

Eccl.7:29 "*Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices*." God declared His work at creation to be very good in **Gen. 1:31**.

The fall of man was due to his unbelief in what God said. "The serpent said to the woman, 'You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." **Gen. 3:4-6**

Man alone is represented in scripture as sinful. A future judgment and an immortal destiny lie before man.

What did man lose at the fall?

"*Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned*." **Rom. 5:12**

"*But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised*." **1 Cor. 2:14**

"*For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.*" **Rom. 8:6, 7**

- ✓ According to **Eph. 4:19**, man's understanding has been darkened.

He is spiritually dead. **Eph. 2:1**

He is under wrath and judgment. **John 5:28, 29**

"*But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear*." **Is. 59:2**

"*Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man*." **Gen. 9:6**

"*With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God*." **James 3:9**

Man continues to be regarded as made in the image of God, although that image is now distorted. Even though men are sinful, there remains enough likeness to the Creator that to murder another person is to violate the part of creation that most resembles God.

What is the only hope of man?

"*So also it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living soul.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit…The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven…Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will bear the image of the heavenly."*

1 Cor. 15:45, 47, 49

"*For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ*." **Rom. 5:17**

"*Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* **2 Cor. 5:20, 21**

"*If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you."* **Ro. 8:10, 11**

"*Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*" **Matt. 19:28**

What is the blessed privilege of man?

It should give us a profound sense of dignity and significance as we reflect on the realization that God created man when He desired to create something in His own image and likeness. He created wonders of our universe … remarkable and majestic worlds, yet we are more like our Creator than any of His other works. Because of this great truth, every human being, no matter how marred by sin, how small, how old, how weak, how different than the elite, each human being is made in the image of God. The grave implications for our own conduct demand that we regard every human with dignity and significance. Human life, made in His image, is the great privilege and honor we possess; we must never devalue this life.

"*You have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One Who created him*." **Col. 3:10**

"*Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."* **Eph. 4:24**

"*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You have crowned him with glory and majesty*!" **Ps. 8:3-5**

The ultimate image of God is seen in our Lord Himself.

"*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation*." **Col. 1:15**

"*He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*." **Heb. 1:3**

MARRIAGE

"The measure that Christ extends grace to you should be the measure that you extend grace to your spouse." – John Piper, drawing from Colossians 3:12-13 "[12] Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. [13] Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

"Jesus hastened to honor marriage with His first miracle." – Charles Spurgeon

Marriage is the first established institution before the fall… before sin entered the world. God-ordained union of man and woman was custom designed by God. Before humans decided to live on their own terms and do it their own way, God was already setting the foundation for what would be one of the greatest ways He would model the love of Christ for His people. It may feel like we're getting ahead of ourselves here in the story of the Bible… but we're not. The entirety of the Bible from the first line to the last is thread with incredible themes that don't stop at chapter breaks. Marriage is one of them. To pluck a verse out of the Bible about marriage is to not fully realize the depth of Christ's love for us and therefore our proper response. From the first Genesis scroll through the Revelation, God is modeling through marriage what Christ's headship to the church would be.

How many married couples do you know? If you're past the age of 25, that answer is probably most of your friends and family. How many of those people are Christians? For this group, that answer is again… most or many. If we simply look around at the people we know in our lives, we are going to see within the church God intended marriage to be a massive tool for evangelism. If Christ is to the church what the husband is to the wife… If you're married, you are modeling to the world who Christ is and how He loves His people. Will they want to join?

Women: How I speak about my husband to other women is communicating something about Christ? Yes.
Men: How I speak to other men about my wife is communicating something about Christ? Yes.

Key verses (in NASB):

CHRIST is to THE CHURCH as HUSBAND is to WIFE

Genesis 2:24 - [24] For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Ephesians 5:23-33 - [22] Wives, *subject yourselves* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. [24] But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, **26** so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **27** that He might present to Himself the church [g]in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. **28** So husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; **29** for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, **30** because we are parts of His body. **31** FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND HIS MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. **32** This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. **33** Nevertheless, as for you individually, each *husband* is to love his own wife the same as himself, and the wife *must see to it* that she respects her husband.

Jeremiah 31:31-32 - **31** "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **32** not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

Isaiah 54:5 - **5**For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called

Matthew 26: 28 - **28** for this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

1 Peter 3:1-7 - **1**In the same way, you wives, be subject to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won over without a word by the behavior of their wives, **2** as they observe your pure [a]and respectful behavior. **3** Your adornment must not be *merely* the external—braiding the hair, wearing gold *jewelry*, or putting on apparel; **4** but *it should be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable *quality* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. **5** For in this way the holy women of former times, who hoped in God, also used to adorn themselves, being subject to their own husbands, **6** just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; and you have proved to be her children if you do what is right [b]without being frightened by any fear.

7 You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with [c]someone weaker, *since she is* a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Revelation 19:7 - **7** Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready

Romans 8:28 - **28** And we know that [g]God [r]causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Christ	Church	Husband	Wife
- Creates ***new Covenant*** with church (Matthew 26:28, among many others) (Jeremiah 31:31-32 – God actually refers to Himself as a husband here, Israel is the "bride")	- Subject to Christ (Eph 5:24)	- Leaves father & mother, "two shall become one flesh" ***Covenant Promise*** (Gen 2:24, later quoted by Paul in Eph 5:31)	- Subject to Husband (Eph 5:22,24) (1 Pet 3:1)
- Loves the church (Eph 5:25) (1 John 4:19) (1 John 4:16) (Col 3:12-13) (Rom 8:38) *There are so many verses that express Christ's love for His church, too many to list. But it will bless you to look some up!	-Recognize Christ as head of the body (Eph 5:30)	- Loves wife as his own body (Eph 5:28) (Eph 5:33)	- Respect husband (Eph 5:33)
- Head of church (Eph 5:22)	Understands that Christ is for her, not against her (Eph 5:29) (Romans 8:28, 31)	- Head of wife (Eph 5:23)	- Gentle and quiet spirit (to model for husband) (1 Pet 3:1-6)
- Savior of the body (Eph 5:23)		- Recognizes her as fellow heir of the grace of life (1 Pet 3:7)	
- Sacrificed Himself for the church (Matt 20:28) (Col 1:24)	Obedient to Christ (Eph 5:24)	- Puts wife first (Phil 2:1-4)	
- So He may sanctify her (Eph 5:26)		- Can present his wife as blameless before God (Eph 5:25)	
- Nourishes the church, cares for her needs (Matt 20:28) (Eph 5:30)		- Honors wife and has a humble attitude to her (1 Peter 3:7)	

Covenant

The old Covenant was subject to the flesh and would fail. While God had made Israel his “bride” (Jeremiah 31), Israel broke the marriage covenant time and again. Therefore, God sent Christ to live and die for his bride (now the church as well as Israel) and establish a new and better covenant with His people (Heb 6:8). This is a betrothal period and “marriage” wouldn’t be fully realized until Christ’s return.

“To understand, we must know something about marriage customs in biblical times. Couples initially became engaged—betrothed—with a customary shared cup of wine. This betrothal was not like engagements today, which can easily be broken off. A Jewish betrothal was a *binding contract* with obligations on both parties. It required a divorce to break it.

During this betrothal period the couple was already considered married and regarded as husband and wife. We see this reflected in Matthew 1:18-20 where Joseph and Mary are "betrothed," but already referred to as husband and wife. Breaking that betrothal contract would have required a divorce (verse 19, NIV).

Although considered husband and wife, the couple did not live together as husband and wife until after a public wedding celebration, usually some months after the betrothal agreement. As happens today, the couple would use this betrothal period to prepare for their actual wedding and subsequent life together.

With this as background, we can better understand the New Covenant relationship. Jesus initiated the New Covenant—He proposed marriage, we might say—to His true followers. As we've seen, the Old Covenant arrangement was not good enough. Even Christ's disciples, the most faithful people of His day, were still carnal and condemned because of their sins. They needed to be changed into a new, spiritually converted people to enter this new relationship with Jesus Christ.

This was accomplished through Christ's death and resurrection and their receiving God's Holy Spirit, which enabled this spiritual transformation to begin (Romans 7:1-4; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:16-17; Romans 8:5-10). This also made them the Church of God, the true "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16)—that is, the faithful remnant of Israel according to God's grace (compare Romans 11:1-5).

Having agreed to the New Covenant, the Church is now betrothed to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). It is under the terms of the New Covenant but still awaiting the coming *fullness* of the New Covenant marriage to begin at "the marriage of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:6-9). Being betrothed to Him, the members of His Church submit to His loving leadership and guidance as the head of that Church (Ephesians 5:22-32), preparing for an eternity with Him.” - Church of God, Canada

Key verses (in NASB):

Revelation 19:6-9 - **6** Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

7 Let's rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His [a]bride has prepared herself." **8** It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the [b]saints.

9 Then he *said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.'" And he *said to me, "These are the true words of God."

Jeremiah 31:31-32 - **31** "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **32** not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

Matthew 26: 28 - **28** for this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

<u>Do not make marriage an idol</u>

Key verses (in NASB):

Luke 14:26, **26** If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own Father and Mother and wife and children and brother and sister, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Ephesians 5:25 - **25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

1 Corinthians 7:29 - **29** But this I say, brothers, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none;

Marriage isn't the *only* institution where God is glorified. We should be careful not to idolize marriage to the point where we are "using" God as a handy way to glorify our marriages. In fact, it's the opposite – We use our marriages to glorify God. Francis Chan says it well, "Maybe the best thing for your marriage is to enter the battlefield together. Being focused on the mission is what brings your family together." He goes on to say that "we are called to find the balance in the tension between Ephesians 5:25 and 1 Cor 7:29. Don't forget the words of Jesus in Luke 14:26, 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own Father and Mother and wife and children and brother and sister, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.' "

This concept ties into today's cultural misuse of marriage and identity. See below "Marriage in Culture today… Disposable" for more.

Grace

Under Christ, Grace is received as an individual… then grace is *extended* to the husband or wife by the husband or wife. It's difficult, maybe even impossible, to work through Ephesians 5 without receiving grace (vertical) and then extending grace (horizontal) first. After all, we seek the kingdom first, then all these things will be added unto you. (Mat 6:33)

John Piper describes a great chasm between our own sin and where Christ wants us to be. It's in fact an infinite chasm. Christ paid the price to atone for our sin and bridge that chasm through His death and resurrection. He goes on to explain, if we look at the place where our spouse is and where we want them to be… its truly not that far. We can certainly extend grace to cover this small distance when Christ extended His grace to cover our chasm.

Our sin *Infinite chasm in between* Where Christ wants us to be
|----------|

Where our spouse is Where we want them to be
|----|

Christ's return for His bride

Oh, but wait, we're not through yet! As if being tethered to Christ through the saving work of His grace isn't enough, we also have a future and a hope to look to when Christ returns! It is surely no coincidence that Jesus uses a wedding parable to illustrate the need for His church to be ready upon His return.

Matthew 25:1-13 - **1** Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. **2** Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. **3** For when the foolish took their lamps, they did not take *extra* oil with them; **4** but the prudent ones took oil in flasks with their lamps. **5** Now while the groom was delaying, they all became drowsy and *began* to sleep. **6** But at midnight [a] there finally was a shout: 'Behold, the groom! Come out to meet *him*.' **7** Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. **8** But the foolish *virgins* said to the prudent ones, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' **9** However, the prudent ones answered, '*No*, there most certainly would not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the merchants and buy *some* for yourselves.' **10** But while they were [b] on their way to buy *the oil*, the groom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. **11** Yet later, the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' **12** But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' **13** Be on the alert then, because you do not know the day nor the hour.

Key verses (in NASB):

Romans 8: 7-8 – **7** because the mind [h]set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, **8** and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Ease of a wife's obedience to her husband

When you look at the Christ/church/husband/wife chart above, when you consider the great and heavy responsibility of the husband to love his wife as himself… to nurture her with one goal in mind – so that she is blameless before Christ… When you look at the proper and right way that Christ intended a husband to be, it is natural and joyful for the wife to be obedient to her husband. So too is our response to Christ!! Charles Spurgeon wrote a beautiful letter to his wife, Susannah, in 1869 as they were preparing to relocate to a new home. Susannah had undergone surgery and she was not well enough to take care of many of the things she needed to get ready for the move. Read below and note the following (think about each one as an attribute of Christ to His church as well):

1) He Knows her well
2) He Cares for her
3) Bringing her comfort brings him joy
4) He is preparing a home for her
5) He Paid for it all
6) As a wife, it is easy to be obedient because of 1-5!

Letter from Charles Spurgeon to Susannah Spurgeon, 1869.

"I have been quite a long round today, if a "round" can be "long." First, to Finsbury, to buy the wardrobe—a beauty. I hope you will live long to hang your garments in it, every thread of them precious to me for your dear sake. Next, to Hewlett's, for a chandelier for the dining room. Found one quite to my taste and yours. Then, to Negretti & Zambra's to buy a barometer for my very own fancy, for I have promised to treat myself to one. On the road, I obtained the Presburg biscuits, and within their box I send this note, hoping it may reach you the more quickly. They are sweetened with my love and prayers.

The bedroom will look well with the wardrobe in it; at least, so I hope. It is well made; and, I believe, as nearly as I could tell, precisely all you wished for. . . I bought also a table for you in case you should have to keep your bed. It rises and falls by a screw and also winds sideways, so as to go over the bed, and then it has a flap for a book or paper, so that my dear one may read or write in comfort while lying down. I could not resist the pleasure of making this little gift to my poor suffering wifey, only hoping it might not often be in requisition, but might be a help when there was a needs-be for it.

Remember, all I buy, I pay for. I have paid for everything as yet with the earnings of my pen, graciously sent me in time of need. It is my ambition to leave nothing for you to be anxious

about. I shall find the money for the curtains, etc., and you will amuse yourself by giving orders for them after your own delightful taste."

Marriage in culture today… Disposable marriage = disposable Christ

"The intimacy and sacredness of the love relationship between believing marriage partners are to be a visual expression of the love between Christ and His church." – John McArthur Ephesians 5:33 McArthur Bible Commentary

Culture today has put heavy emphasis on being "happy." It essentially says, do what makes you happy and when something comes up against that, shame it to submission. Where past generations needed to simply turn on their TV, now we don't even have to get out of bed to see this messaging. We can just pick up our phones! Instagram, Tik-tok, Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook… these are all easily accessible social media tools used to yes, do some amazing things by staying in touch with old friends and communicating gospel truths to far corners of the earth… but they are also places where we go to seek out identity. There are enough studies done now to know that validation through social media drives users. Likes, loves, followers, etc… Each click is an affirmation from someone other than Christ. Seems innocent at first and certainly there is a place for social media in measure, but what happens when the pendulum starts to swing and we're placing more weight on what others think of us vs. what Christ says about us? The result is we seek to please ourselves, not God. When this concept seeps into the church, we aren't placing emphasis on extending grace to our husbands and wives, because Christ extended grace to us. Instead, we see broken marriages, deeply scared individuals who seek their own happiness. If the gospel of Christ is being broadcasted worldwide through the institution of marriage, then what marriage looks like within the church should be a shining light.

So what happens when the eyes of the world are on the church?

*What the *casual* Church goer says when they conform: My marriage isn't what I wanted it to be, I deserve to find my true happiness in someone else. My marriage is disposable.*

What the world sees: Christ is disposable.

The Gospel Coalition did a fact check on one of the most quoted statistics on marriage by Pastors today – the fact that the divorce rate among church goers is higher than non-church goers (or equal to). They note that while on its face this is true, when you dig down to studies done that separate "frequent" church goers vs. people who just affiliate themselves as Christian, the numbers tell a different story. They note below a quote from a team of social scientists at the Oklahoma Marriage Study,

"Whether young or old, male or female, low-income or not, those who said that they were more religious reported higher average levels of commitment to their partners, higher levels of marital satisfaction, less thinking and talking about divorce and lower levels of negative interaction. These

patterns held true when controlling for such important variables as income, education, and age at first marriage."

Take away from this? There is still so much hope! Christ *loves* His church! To say its all doom and gloom would be diminishing the finished work on the cross and God's devotion to His image bearers. Yes, the world has seeped into the church (the Kingdom has come after all but it is still contested by sin until Jesus returns!)… but there are many real transformed Christians out there living out their faith through their marriage and broadcasting to the world what the love of Christ for His church looks like. If you've ever heard the hashtag #relationshipgoals, you'll know that most of those tags are either hyper focused on self (ignoring Christ) or hyper focused on their spouse to the point of making them an idol (ignoring Christ). YET, there are many in the church who as God calls them to deeper relationship with Him and greater sanctification, they are truly living out what

#relationshipgoals are … Christ centered, Christ first, grace received, grace extended, self-sacrificial, obedient love.

Kelly Allen 2022

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Why does a doctrine like this exist?

What possible benefit does it afford?

As with all doctrine, God has a purpose in conveying to His people a particular truth. The Lord always wants to edify, build up, encourage, correct, and prepare us. This is His reasoning behind the dispensing of doctrine.

- ✓ **First let's look at the word "perseverance."**

In Greek, it is *proskarteresis*. The verb form means "to be steadfast, to continue steadfastly in a thing and give unremitting care to it, to endure in"

This word is used many times in regard to "continuing in prayer."

As with all doctrines it is helpful to ask: What good can come from this doctrine's impact on my thinking or what harm?

The issue with how to view this particular doctrine will flow out of your view of salvation.

Do you believe that your salvation depends on you?

Do you believe that your salvation depends entirely on God?

Can you save yourself?

- ✓ ***Monergism* is the teaching that says that God is the One Who saves. He initiates, He draws, He quickens, He gives grace, He regenerates, He redeems, He justifies, He seals, He sanctifies, He completes and He glorifies.**

<u>He alone</u> will receive the glory of each and every saint who comes to Him in saving faith.

Isaiah 42: 8 – "*I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images*."

If we indeed do persevere, it is because He has enabled us to do so, not because of our own determination. What a blow to our autonomy and independence!

- ❖ **Keep in mind – Salvation is Someone not something and that Someone is committed to "keeping" you. John 17: 11-12**

What peace of mind and heart is ours if we know that we are saved for all eternity!

For some, this doctrine is referred to as Eternal Security. Let those words marinate for a minute. You are E-T-E-R-N-A-L-Y S-E-C-U-R-E!

- **There is a counter belief to this doctrine called ***Arminianism***. The founder of this view is named Arminius (A.D. 1560-1609). He taught, as his adherents profess, "that the final triumph of the Christian is dependent upon his own steadfastness and diligence." Lockyer**

Arminianism **uses the following verses as their proof texts: Matt. 7: 24-25; 25: 1-46; John 15: 2-6; 17: 12; Heb. 6: 4-5; 10: 23, 26- 29; 1 Chron. 28: 9; Ezek. 3: 20; 33: 12 among other verses.**

To counter these views, the Reformed opinion is supported by the following verses: 1 John 2: 19; Jude 24

Louis Berkhof - : "*Perseverance may be defined as that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion*."

John 10: 28-29; Rom. 11: 29 "*For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."*

Phil. 1: 6 – "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus*."

2 Thes. 3: 3 – "*But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."*

2 Tim. 1: 12 – "*For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day*."

2 Tim. 4: 18 – "*The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*"

The question remains concerning the verses that describe "falling away" as well as those Paul mentions in 2 Timothy regarding those who have deserted him, or indeed Judas who most definitely fell away, are we to see these "deserters" as ever being truly saved and sealed with God's Spirit?

Had they been exposed to truth and momentarily even embraced truth, but later when hard times came, they abandoned what knowledge they had?

- **Matthew 13 – the Parable of the Sower – sheds some light here.**

  Four different soils are described, four different responses but only two outcomes:

- **Seed sown beside the road went into his heart but the evil one snatches it**

- **Seed sown on rocky places, hears the word with joy but this is temporary, there is no root, falls away**

- **Seed sown among the thorns/the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word and it becomes unfruitful (worry chokes the word out so obviously the word was there)**
- **Seed was sown on the good soil and produced fruit according to God's designation – some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred-fold.**

Keep in mind, warnings regarding remaining faithful until the end frequently appear throughout Scripture. These warnings and encouragements are the manward side of the perseverance of the saints. There is a Godward perspective and then the manward perspective so that we, who cannot see all the twists and turns of our own salvation, can be prepared and equipped to face what comes our way.

- **Key for the believer to remember: the promises in regard to our coming salvation are secure and eternal.**

"So that whoever believes will in Him have *eternal* life." John 3: 15

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 3: 36

"Having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of *eternal* salvation." Heb. 5: 9

"And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained *eternal* redemption." Heb. 9: 12

Ask yourself: How can these possessions be eternal in nature if we can have them today and lose them tomorrow?

"Communion with the Lord can be ruptured but union with Him can never be severed." Lockyer (John 1: 11-13; 3: 7, 16; 10: 27-30)

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out… This is the will of Him Who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." John 6: 37

Why is the Believer's Security so Secure?

1. **By the Redemption of the Cross**

Eph. 1: 7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."

Col. 1: 14, "In Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Is. 38: 17. "Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; it is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back."

Is. 44: 22, "I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me for I have redeemed you."

Ps. 103: 12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Heb. 10: 17, "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

2. **Through Christ's Heavenly Advocacy**

Heb. 7: 25, "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

Heb. 4: 14, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

Heb. 2: 17, "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

Jude 1, "Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ."

1 John 2: 1-2, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

3. **Because of the Indwelling Holy Spirit**

Eph. 1: 13-14, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. Who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

Eph. 4: 30, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

1 Cor. 3: 16, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

Rom. 8: 9

4. **Because of the Coming Revelation of Christ When He Returns**

1 Cor. 1: 7, "*So that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

1 Pet. 1: 5, "*Who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*."

1 Pet. 1: 13, "*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*."

Jude 24, "*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy."*

John 6: 38-40

John 17: 24

John 14: 3, "*If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am , there you may be also*."

So we can see that the beauty and strength of this doctrine is not about us at all – it is ALL about the LORD! It is His doing from beginning to end. So He alone receives the praise – this is as it should be.

Wayne Grudem says, "*The perseverance of the saints means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again."*

A grave mistake would be to look at all these wonderful promises of our eternal security as an invitation to sin or become slothful in regard to diligence and vigilance in our walk of faith. This is why we see so many warnings and encouragements blended into these precious truths of our state with our Lord.

"For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm to the end." Heb. 3: 14

PRAYER

"Help me."

"Save me."

"Teach me."

"Revive me."

"Incline my heart to Your testimonies."

"Give me understanding that I may observe Your law."

So much has been written on the discipline of prayer. We can all learn more about prayer, but the real education for this discipline is accomplished in "the school of prayer."

This is one of the most talked about and read about practices, yet one of the least exercised.

- **Follow the practice of Christ**

When asked to teach His disciples regarding prayer, our Lord offered a simple yet profound example. He did not tell them "about" prayer, He prayed.

"Our Father Who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." **Luke 11:1-4**

Each point in this prayer can be a stopping point to dwell and talk with the Lord. This is called an *index prayer*, meaning each point is one which can be elaborated upon.

For instance, "Our Father." Stop here and thank the Father that He has called you His own. Thank Him that He will provide, protect, love and guide you as a father does his beloved child.

"Who is in heaven" reminds us that our Father is the Sovereign God of all the universe.

- **Pause to praise and adore Him.**

"Hallowed be Your name." God is holy. He is altogether other than we are. We must approach a holy God with the reverence and awe He deserves. The only reason we can boldly enter the holy place is because of "the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh." **Heb. 10:19, 20**

"Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." **Heb. 4:16**

As you progress through each point of the prayer Jesus gave as an example,

- **Allow the Spirit Who lives in you to speak.**

  "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He Who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." **Rom. 8:26, 27**

- By the way, the disciples had probably prayed all their lives. So why did they ask Jesus how to pray? Because they heard **Him** pray and it was not like anything they had ever heard! Do not be satisfied with vain, empty Santa Claus prayers. Do not bring God your grocery lists.

  - **To deepen your prayer life, go throughout the Scriptures and learn from the prayers – the people who prayed.**

    Start with Cain in **Genesis 4:13-15**. If God can hear the prayer of Cain, that should give you confidence that He will certainly hear you. Look at **Gen. 5:24**. "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."

Is walking with God similar to prayer?

Read the Bible in this manner, searching and asking God to teach you everything He wants to reveal to you about talking with Him. Literally talk out loud to God as you read the Scriptures.

What do you learn about prayer?

- Another hindrance to prayer is lack of discipline and lack of planning.

"*We Protestants are an undisciplined people. Therein lies the reason for much of the dearth of spiritual insights and serious lack of moral power*."

Albert Edward Day

While lip service is given to the practice of prayer, in actuality, prayer is always demoted to non-essential status. We think we can manage without prayer. Therefore prayer is never planned, but sporadic. Would you plan a two week vacation which has a far less significant impact on your life? Then why do you not plan for prayer?

"*As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray*." Martin Luther

The average believer prays less than five minutes a day. (From a survey taken while attendees participated in a seminar on spiritual awakening)

Christian, we are in a battle. John Piper encourages us that "***prayer is a walkie-talkie for warfare, not a domestic intercom for increasing our conveniences***." If you are not in constant communication with your Commander, you are at RISK!

Colossians 4:2 tells us to "Devote yourselves to prayer."

- ✓ How do you know if you are devoted to prayer?

When you are devoted to something or someone, you make sacrifices for them, you make time with them a priority, you will give energy and resources to them.

1 Thes. 5:17, "Pray continually."

Prayer, in a sense, in the Christian's expression of an unbroken relationship with the Father, with Abba.

Eph. 6:18, "With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for the saints."

So after all of this encouragement, WHY DO WE NOT PRAY?

Prayer is learned and we have not been "With Christ in the School of Prayer." (a book by Andrew Murray)

❖ We learn to pray by:

1. Praying
2. Praying with others who have a passion for prayer **Prov. 13:20**
3. Meditating on Scripture {there should be a smooth, almost unnoticeable transition between Scripture input and prayer output as we move closer to our Father}
   We learn to pray by meditating on Scripture, for ***meditation*** is the missing link between Bible intake and prayer.
4. Reading about prayer and those who are devoted to prayer … and then, pray
5. Examining the content of our prayers to ensure their content is in line with Scripture
6. Expecting God to answer
7. Continuing in faithful prayer regardless of what we see with our eyes
   Ask, Seek, Knock **Matt. 6:7, 8** These verbs are in the present tense, which means they are continuous. Remember, faith would never grow if all prayers were answered immediately.

Many books have been written *about* prayer; put them aside … and pray!

PROPITIATION

"*Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make* ***propitiation*** *for the sins of the people*." **Heb. 2:17**

"*And He Himself is the* ***propitiation*** *for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world*." **1 Jn. 2:2**

"*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the* ***propitiation*** *for our sins*." **1 Jn. 4:10**

Christ Jesus was "displayed publicly as a **propitiation** in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." **Rom. 3:25, 26**

- Propitiation: *hilasmos* means "a sacrifice that bears God's wrath to the end and in so doing changes God's wrath toward us into favor." Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology

Hilasterion is the Greek word for mercy-seat. This was the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant. Once a year expiation or atonement was made on this mercy-seat on the Day of Atonement.

David tells us in **Ps. 32:1**, "*How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."*

Many of the doctrines are woven together. The doctrines of sin, atonement, covenant, God's holiness, justice, righteousness and wrath are some of the related teachings associated with propitiation.

The holiness of God demands His attention to the sin which is resident in man. The justice of God requires Him to punish the sinner for his offence. God's righteousness has been violated by the sin. His wrath will without doubt fall upon the sinner. Yet the atonement is His answer to the dilemma of His justice **and** His lovingkindness toward His covenant children.

- To remove us from the wrath of God that we deserved because of sin, Christ died as a propitiation for our sins.

The propitiation of Calvary thereby clearly demonstrated that God is perfectly righteous: "*it was to prove at the present time that He Himself is righteous and that He justifies him who has faith in Jesus"* (**Rom.3:26**).

- This concept of substitution was clearly indicated in the Old Testament.

Is. 53: 6, "*All of us like sheep have gone astray, each one of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him*."

"*Surely our griefs He Himself bore and our sorrows He carried*." **Is. 53: 4a**

The entire system of Old Testament sacrifices pointed to the substitutionary nature of the offering.

> *"He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf."* **Lev. 1: 4**

For a poignant type of Christ's substitutionary work, we may look at **Gen. 22.**

Here Abraham is instructed to sacrifice his son. Isaac was the promised son, the son born after Abraham was as good as dead. The patriarch was obedient though and proceeded to trust that God could raise Isaac from the dead if need be.

"*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, 'In Isaac your descendants shall be called.' He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type*." **Heb. 11: 17-19**

God did not require the life of Isaac, but instead God Himself provided a ram for the offering. **Gen. 22: 14** records the name we have come to rely upon: **Jehovah-jireh, the LORD will provide**.

Christ is seen in the ram offered up as Isaac's substitute. Christ was offered in our place as well.

Is. 53: 10, "*But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a* ***guilt offering****, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand."*

"*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*.'" **Gal. 3: 13**

- The idea of the substitution is seen in the Passover. Christ is our Passover Lamb.

"*The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt*."

Ex. 12:13

"Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed." **1 Cor. 5:7b**

"The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!'" **Jn. 1:29**

"And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." **1 Pet. 2:24**

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses." **Acts 13:38, 39**

The psalmist in **Psalm 119:122**, asks God to be his **surety** … his **guarantee** for good. God has answered this prayer through the life and work of Jesus Christ.

Have you truly beheld the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world?

He is your Propitiation.

REDEMPTION

Some doctrines are inter-related with other key teachings. The doctrine of redemption falls into this category. The need for redemption was required because of sin. The willing response of Almighty God to achieve this redemption was due to His unfailing covenant love: His *hesed*. The actual reality of redeeming was put into effect by the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. By His work we are redeemed, justified and regenerated. So the doctrine of redemption touches on the doctrines of man, sin, covenant, propitiation, justification, regeneration and the work of the Trinity in attaining the purchase of man's immortal soul.

*"Knowing that you were not **redeemed** with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."* **1 Pet.1:18, 19**

*"For you have been **bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body."* **1 Cor.6:20**

*"And they will call them, 'The holy people, the **redeemed** of the LORD;' and you will be called, 'Sought out, a city not forsaken.'"* **Is. 62:12**

*"In Him we have **redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace… The Holy Spirit is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the **redemption** of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."* **Eph. 1:7, 14**

*"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and **purchased** for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.' "* **Rev. 5:9**

*"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, Who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and **redemption**."* **1 Cor. 1:30**

Words used regarding redemption

**Lutroo (Greek)*: to loose by a price, the price paid for freeing a captive, release from bondage or captivity

"*Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time."* **1 Tim. 2:6**

"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." **Matt. 20:28**

**Exagorazo (Greek):* to purchase out, to buy up out of the possession of any one, this is a legal term, paying a ransom demanded by the law; the "agora" was the forum or marketplace from which slaves were purchased; *ex*: means "out;" so this means "out of the marketplace"

"*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*.'" **Gal. 3:13**

**Padah (Hebrew)*: to set free, to let go

"*When God liberated His oppressed people in Old Testament days, He set them free by the substitution of a spotless lamb to bear the merited stroke of death in their place and stead*."

H. Lockyer

" '*Forgive Your people Israel whom You have redeemed, O LORD, and do not place the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of You people Israel.' And the bloodguiltiness shall be forgiven them."* **Deut. 21:8**

"The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned." **Ps. 34:22**

"So I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem you from the grasp of the violent." **Jer. 15:21**

**P'dooth* (Hebrew): division; this is the bloodword redemption; the "division" is made by the sprinkled blood of the spotless lamb

"*He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever; holy and awesome is His name."* **Ps 111:9**

"O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is lovingkindness, and with Him is abundant redemption." **Ps. 130:7**

Our redemption by the precious blood of Jesus Christ should result in a **division** between the believer's lifestyle and that of the world.

**Panrak* (Hebrew): to break off, to wear away, rescue, deliver, there is understood a certain element of violence in the breaking off due to the Deliverer's power

"*He has rescued us from our adversaries, for His lovingkindness is everlasting*." **Ps. 136:24**

**Ga'al* (Hebrew): to redeem, ransom, recover, avenge; this word points to the office of the one who was kinsman, deliverer, redeemer, husband and avenger

"*Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments*.' " **Ex. 6: 6**

"*As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth."* **Job 19: 25**

"*Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion."*

Ps. 103: 4

"*A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the Lord*. **Is. 59: 20**

Redemption here has more in mind than the act of buying back. The aspect of avenging wrongs done to the injured party is expressed in this term. For the Christian, this will occur when Christ judges the nations at His coming.

The Old Testament gives us many pictures of the concept of buying someone out of slavery.

God purchased His own people out of bondage to Egypt.

The sacrificial lamb offered as atonement was in effect buying the offender out of the debt to death.

The practice of redeeming is seen in the occurrence of Jubilee.

"If there are still many years, he shall refund part of his purchase price in proportion to them for his own **redemption;** and if few years remain until the year of jubilee, he shall so calculate with him. In proportion to his years he is to refund the amount for his **redemption.**"

Lev. 25: 51, 52

- **How does God redeem?**

"*They are Your servants and Your people whom You redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand*." **Neh. 1: 10**

"*For thus says the LORD, 'You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money.'*" **Is. 52: 3**

"*And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption*." **Heb. 9: 12**

- **Why does God redeem?**

"*But because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt*." **Deut. 7: 8**

"*In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old."*

Is. 63: 9

"Jesus gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." **Tit. 2: 14**

- **Can a man redeem himself**?

"*No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever.*" **Ps. 49: 7, 8**

"*Then he shall have redemption right after he has been sold. One of his brothers may redeem him.*" **Lev. 25: 48**

"*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin*." **Rom. 7: 24, 25**

The redemption of souls is not in question here. This is referring to actual legal redemption from bondage. But in reading **Heb. 2:14-18**, we find that our elder Brother, the Lord Jesus, has indeed redeemed His brethren! He has become our *Goel*, our Kinsman-Redeemer. The *Goel* in Old Testament times would not only purchase his brother out of bondage, he would avenge his affliction or death. Christ, by His own death, destroyed man's murderer: Satan himself.

John 8:44

"*Jehovah is the redemptive and covenant-keeping name of God*." H. Lockyer

There remains but one more question for the believer: do you value your redemption?

Do you constantly walk in grateful surrender to the One Who purchased you from bondage to sin and death?

Do you constantly talk of your Redeemer and His tremendous work on your behalf?

Do you long to honor His redeeming love by serving Him with a pure heart?

Redemption is the main story of the Bible from beginning to the end. The Redemption song **(Rev. 5:9**) of God is the music on every page of scripture. Your life, from beginning to end, is another movement in this symphonic masterpiece composed by God Himself.

"*But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, and He Who formed you, O Israel. 'Do not fear for I have redeemed (ga'al) you; I have called you by name;* ***you are Mine****!'"*

"*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and that* ***you are not your own****? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body*." **1 Cor.6:19, 20**

REGENERATION

"*Regeneration (the new birth) is the work of the Holy Spirit (**John 3: 3- 8**), accomplished on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection on our behalf (**John 3: 14- 15**)".* Reformation Study Bible

"*The change wrought by regeneration in the converted Christian is so great that other people often find it difficult to believe he is the same person*." Tasker, regarding the blind man in **John 9**

Regeneration is the spiritual change wrought in the heart of man by the Holy Spirit in which his/her inherently sinful nature is changed so that he/she can respond to God in Faith and live in accordance with His Will (Matt. 19:28; John 3:3,5,7; Titus 3:5). J I Packer

Titus 3:5 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

It extends to the whole nature of man, changing his disposition, illuminating his mind, freeing his will, and renewing his nature.

Regeneration, or new birth, is an inner re-creating of fallen human nature by the gracious sovereign action of the Holy Spirit (**John 3:5-8).**

5 *Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

The Bible reveals salvation as the redemptive renewal of man on the basis of a restored relationship with God in Christ, and presents it as involving a radical and complete transformation taking place in the soul (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23)

Ephesians 4:23 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[23] and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

- *by God the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5; Eph. 4:24),*

Ephesians 4:24 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[24] and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

- by virtue of which we become 'new men' (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10),

Colossians 3:10 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[10] and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—

- no longer conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9),

Colossians 3:9 New American Standard Bible (NASB)
[9] Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices,

- but in knowledge and holiness of the truth created after the image of God (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Rom. 12:2). Regeneration is the "birth" by which this work of new creation begins, as sanctification is the "growth" whereby it continues (I Pet. 2:2; II Pet. 3:18).

Regeneration in Christ changes the disposition of a lawbreaker, a Godless self-seeking individual (Rom. 3:9-18; 8:7) which pictures man in Adam. Regeneration transforms this individual into one of trust and love, of repentance for past rebelliousness and unbelief, and loving compliance with God's law. It enlightens the blinded mind to discern spiritual realities (I Cor. 2:14-15; II Cor. 4:6; Col. 3:10).

1 Corinthians 2:14 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*
[14] But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

2 Corinthians 4:6 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*
[6] For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

- Regeneration liberates and energizes the enslaved will for free obedience to God (Rom. 6:14, 17-22; Phil. 2:13).

Philippians 2:13 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

"*The use of the figure of new birth to describe this change emphasizes two facts about it. The first is its decisiveness. The regenerate man has forever ceased to be the man he was; his old life is over and a new life has begun; he is a new creature in Christ, buried with him out of reach of condemnation and raised with him into a new life of righteousness* (see Rom. 6:3-11; II Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:9-11). " J I Packer

2 Corinthians 5:17 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Romans 6:3-11 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

- The second fact emphasized is the monergism of regeneration. Infants do not bring about, or cooperate in, their own procreation and birth; no more can those who are "dead in trespasses and sins" prompt the quickening operation of God's Spirit within them (see Eph. 2:1-10).

Ephesians 2:1-10 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Made Alive in Christ

2 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, [2] in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. [3] Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. [4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), [6] and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; [9] not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

- Spiritual vivification is a free, and to man mysterious, exercise of divine power (John 3:8), not explicable in terms within human language (John 3:6),

John 3:6 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit

- not caused or induced by any human efforts (John 1:12-13)

John 1:12-13 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[12] But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, [13] who were [a] born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

- or merits (Titus 3:3-7),

Titus 3:3-7 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[3] For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. [4] But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, [5] He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, [6] whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs [a] according to the hope of eternal life.

- and not, therefore, to be equated with, or attributed to, any of the experiences, decisions, and acts to which it gives rise and by which it may be known to have taken place.

Biblical Presentation
In OT prophecies regeneration is the work of God renovating, circumcising, and softening Israelite hearts, writing his laws upon them, and thereby causing their owners to know, love, and obey him as never before (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 31:31-34; 32:39-40; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:25-27).

Deuteronomy 30:6 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

6 "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Jeremiah 32:39-40 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

39 and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. 40 I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.

Ezekiel 11:19 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

19 And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within [a] them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

Psalm 51:10 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Regeneration is a sovereign work of purification from sin's defilement (Ezek. 36:25; cf. Ps. 51:10), effected by the personal energy of God's creative out-breathing the personal energy of God's creative breath ("spirit": Ezek. 36:27; 39:29). Jeremiah declares that such renovation on a national scale will introduce and signal God's new messianic administration of his covenant with his people (Jer. 31:31; 32:40).

In the NT the thought of regeneration is more fully individualized, and in John's Gospel and First Epistle the figure of new birth, "from above" (*anothen*: John 3:3, 7, Moffatt), "of water and the Spirit" (i.e., through a purifying operation of God's Spirit: see Ezek. 36:25-27; John 3:5; cf. 3:8), or simply "of God" (John 1:13, nine times in I John), is integral to the presentation of personal salvation.

The verb *gennao* (which means both "beget" and "bear") is used in these passages in the aorist or perfect tense to denote **the once-for-all divine work** whereby the sinner, who before was only "flesh," and as such, whether he knew it or not, utterly helpless in spiritual matters (John 3:3-7), is made "spirit" (John 3:6), is enabled and caused to receive and respond to the saving revelation of God in Christ. In the Gospel, Christ assures Nicodemus that there are no spiritual activities, no seeing or entering God's kingdom, without regeneration (John 3:1ff.); and John declares in the prologue that only the regenerate enter into the privileges of God's children (John 1:12-13). In John's First Epistle, he insists that there is no regeneration that does not issue in spiritual activities. The regenerate do righteousness (I John 2:29) and do not live a life of sin (3:9; 5:18) the present tense indicates habitual law-keeping, not absolute sinlessness, (cf. 1:8-10); they love Christians (4:7), believe rightly in Christ, and experience faith's victory over the world (5:4). Any who do otherwise, whatever they claim, are still unregenerate children of the devil (3:6-10).

1 John 3: 6-10

6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Paul clarifies the Christological dimensions of regeneration by presenting it as (1) a life-giving co-resurrection with Christ (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13; cf. I Pet. 1:3);

Ephesians 2:5 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Colossians 2:13 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

[13] When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

1 Peter 1:3 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

(2) a work of new creation in Christ (II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10; Gal. 6:15).

Galatians 6:15 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[15] For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Ephesians 2:10 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Peter and James make the further point that God "begets anew" (*anagennao*: I Pet. 1:23)

1 Peter 1:23 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[23] for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

and "brings to birth" (*apokyeo*: James 1:18) by means of the gospel.

James 1:18 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[18] In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruit among His creatures.

It is under the impact of the word that God renews the heart, so evoking faith (Acts 16:14-15).

Acts 16:14-15 *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

[14] A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. [15] And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Another word for *regeneration* is *rebirth*, similar to the biblical phrase "born again." Our rebirth is distinguished from our first birth, when we were conceived physically and inherited a nature of sin. The new birth is a spiritual, holy, and heavenly birth that results in our being made alive spiritually. Man in his natural state is "dead in trespasses and sins" until he is "made alive" (regenerated) by Christ. This happens when he places his faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:1).

Regeneration is a radical change. Just as our physical birth resulted in a new individual entering the earthly realm, our spiritual birth results in a new person entering the heavenly realm (Ephesians 2:6). After regeneration, we begin to see and hear and seek after divine things; we begin to live a life of faith and holiness. Now Christ is formed in the hearts; now we are partakers of the divine nature, having been made new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17).

God, not man, is the source of this transformation (Ephesians 2:1, 8). God's great love and free gift, His rich grace and abundant mercy, are the cause of the rebirth. The mighty power of God—the power that raised Christ from the dead—is displayed in the regeneration and conversion of sinners (Ephesians 1:19–20).

Without regeneration we cannot stand in the presence of God.

Regeneration is not optional, for "flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit" (John 3:6).

Physical birth fits us for earth; spiritual rebirth fits us for heaven.

See Ephesians 2:1; 1 Peter 1:23; John 1:13; 1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18.

Regeneration is God's making a person spiritually alive, as a result of faith in Jesus Christ.

Regeneration is part of what God does for us at the moment of salvation, along with sealing (Ephesians 1:14), adoption (Galatians 4:5), reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18–20), etc.

Prior to salvation we were not God's children (John 1:12–13);

rather, we were children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3; Romans 5:18–20).

Before salvation, we were degenerate; after salvation we are regenerated.

The result of regeneration is peace with God (Romans 5:1), new life (Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17), and eternal sonship (John 1:12–13; Galatians 3:26).

Regeneration begins the process of sanctification wherein we become the people God intends us to be (Romans 8:28–30).

The only path of regeneration comes by faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. No amount of good works or keeping of the Law can regenerate the heart.

"*By works of the law no human being will be justified in [God's] sight" (Romans 3:20*).

Only Christ offers a cure for the total depravity of the human heart. We don't need ***renovation or reformation or reorganization***; we need rebirth.

As an exercise in doctrinal foundations, place the following in the order of salvation.

Adoption

Glorification

Justification

Election

Death

Perseverance

Sanctification

The Gospel Call

Regeneration

Conversion

Number 1- 10 and place these in the order of salvation.

RESURRECTION

Has the truth of the Resurrection gripped your heart?

Ask the Lord to grip your heart with this truth and you will walk in resurrection!

"*Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe*?'"

John 11: 25, 26

Our faith, the Christian faith, rises or falls on the Resurrection. According to the apostle Paul, "*If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless, you are still in your sins … If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.*" 1 Cor. 15: 17, 19

So since this one truth is so vital to our faith, where and when and how did it come about?

Is there allusion to Resurrection before the New Testament?

First of all, <u>Jesus taught that there was a Resurrection</u>.

There was no New Testament when Jesus taught, so He gained His understanding from the truths of the Old Testament.

In **Genesis,** Abraham fully intended to sacrifice Isaac, but according to **22: 5,** he told the attendants that they both (Abraham and Isaac) would return. Abraham knew God could raise his son from the dead, if need be. **Heb. 11: 19** makes that clear by telling us, "H*e considered God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type*."

Job also (who most likely lived before Abraham) tells us, "*As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself will behold, and Whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me*!" **Job 19: 25, 26**

Isaiah writes, "*Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. Come, my people, enter your rooms and close your doors behind you; hide for a little while until indignation runs its course*." **Is. 26: 19, 20**

Daniel 12: 2, "*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt*."

Ezek. 37: 1-28 tells us about the Valley of Dry Bones – later to be raised by God into living men.

So the teaching of the Old Testament makes clear the existence of Resurrection.

- ✓ Yet we are told that the Sadducees and Samaritans of Jesus' time did not believe in the Resurrection from the dead. They only valued the first five books of the Bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy, and according to them, there was no mention in those books of the Resurrection.

Consider the remarks of Jesus Himself in answer to that argument: "*But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him*." **Luke 20: 37-38**

Martha, the sister of Lazarus, even knew of the Resurrection – before Jesus tells her that He is the Resurrection and the life, she says, "*I know that he (Lazarus) will rise again in the resurrection on the last day***." John 11: 24**

❖ **Much of the message of the writers of the New Testament involves the Resurrection. Let's see what they focused on.**

- ✓ **Jesus' Resurrection was a divine act involving all three Persons of the Godhead.**

John 10: 17, 18 "*For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."*

Acts 13: 30-35 "*But God raised Him from the dead … that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised Jesus, as it is written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You… You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.***'"**

Rom. 1: 4 "*Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."*

- ✓ **Jesus predicts His own Resurrection.**

Mk. 8: 31; 9: 9; 10: 34, "*And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again… As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead…*

They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

- ✓ **Unnatural Occurrences at the Crucifixion Validated the Resurrection**

Matt. 27: 52, 53, *"The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many."*

Matt. 27: 51 – the veil in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks were split.

- ✓ **The message of the Gospel itself is included in 1 Cor. 15: 1-8 which relies on the Resurrection as "the hinge on which the door of faith opens and closes."**

The Resurrection was the crucial point to the gospel message.

Acts 1: 22, "*Beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us – one of these must become a witness with us of His Resurrection*."

Acts 26: 23*, "That the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."*

- ✓ **Jesus' Resurrection demonstrated His victory over death.**

Acts 2: 24 *"But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."*

- ✓ **The Resurrection provides for the pre-eminence of Christ.**

Col. 1: 18*, "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."*

Prototokos = first, pre-eminent

- ✓ **Resurrection Points to the Value of the Body in Christianity**

Unger's Bible Dictionary

"The resurrection of our Lord is set before us in the New Testament as the miraculous restoration of His physical life, the reunion of His spirit with His body, and yet in such a way that the material limitations, in which He had previously confined His life, were set aside. The resurrection was the beginning of the glorification."

Unger's also tells us that the scriptural teaching of the resurrection points to the fact that both body and soul "are destined to immortality… It has great religious and ethical value, inasmuch as it recognizes the dignity of the body and its true relation to the soul in union with it, and opens to us the hope of complete glorification."

*"Christ's resurrection was not simply a coming back from the dead (Lazarus). As the 'first fruits' (*1 Cor. 15: 20, 23*) of a new kind of human life, a life in which His body was made perfect, no longer subject to weakness, aging, or death, but able to live eternally."*

Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem

*By "spiritual body" in **1 Cor. 15: 42-44**, Paul does not mean "immaterial," but rather "suited to and responsive to the guidance of the Spirit." Pneumatikos (spiritual) means in the Greek, "consistent with the character and activity of the Holy Spirit." It never means "non-physical."*

The body of the resurrected Lord was clearly a physical body.

It was a transformation of Jesus' humanity that enabled Him to appear, vanish and move unseen from one location to another.

In His resurrected body, Jesus was able to do things the natural body does not do.

"*Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight… While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you."* **Luke 24: 31, 36**

Christ's glorified body was not clearly similar to His earthly body, "*When she (Mary Magdalene) had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus… After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the door having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.'*" **John 20: 14, 26**

- **What Doctrines stand with the Resurrection?**

- **Who is God?**

Obviously the first is that there is a God and the God of the Bible is the only and true God. So there is indeed a God, but what kind of God is He?

Every effect must have a cause. The only cause adequate to account for the Resurrection of Christ is God. **John 1: 18** tells us "*No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him*."

Hebrews 1: 1-3, "*God after He spoke long ago … in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, through Whom He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature …"*

Is. 53: 10*, "But the LORD was pleased to crush Him putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand."*

As hard as this passage is to fully grasp, Jesus, by His very life, death and resurrection has "explained" the Father's heart.

Throughout His life, Jesus proclaimed Who God was. He continues to do that today through His people because of the resurrected life which dwells in each of His disciples.

- **The Deity of Christ**

"*At Pentecost and in the other sermons recorded in Acts, the early disciples used the resurrection to prove Christ's divinity."* J.M. Boice

Resurrection was a messianic sign. **Matt. 11: 5***, "The blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."*

- **The Seal on Justification**

Rom. 4: 24, 25 tells us that we are justified based on the approval of God evidenced in the Resurrection.

Rom. 4: 25, *"He Who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification."*

Rom. 5: 9, 10*, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."*

Greek for "resurrection" *anastasis* # 386 *ana* = up/ *histemi* = to cause to stand

- **The Seal of Sanctification - Relating the Resurrection to the Equipping of the saints**

Rom. 6: 4 tells us that "we have been raised to walk in newness of life."

Rom. 6: 5, *"For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection."*

Rom. 8: 34*, "Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He Who died, yes, rather Who was raised, Who is at the right hand of God, Who also intercedes for us."*

2 Cor. 5: 15*, "And He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him Who died and rose again on their behalf."*

Phil. 3: 11*, "In order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."* ***Exanastasis***

1 Pet. 1: 3, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*

Col. 3: 1-3, "*Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God... For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God*." **Col. 2: 9-15**, *"… Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead*…"

Those who believe in Christ are united with Him so that His life becomes available to them.

Our spiritual renewal is connected to the Risen Lord through which our new life originates.

Rom. 8: 11, "*But if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you."*

Victory is no longer a question of our strength but of His power.

- **The Seal on Eternal Life – the Pledge of the Resurrection and Glorification of the True Believer**

The Resurrection of Jesus is evidence that there is life after death. Death is not the end of this life. **John 14: 3, 19**

"This is the will of Him Who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." **John 6: 39**

"And you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." **Luke 14: 14**

1 Thes. 4: 14, *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."*

Heb. 11: 35 says, *"Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection."*

"*Who (Jesus) will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself***."**

Phil. 3: 21

- **The Seal on Judgment**

Acts 17: 31 "*Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man Whom He has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."*

Keep in mind, the world resists the teaching of the Resurrection.

Acts 17: 18. "*And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, 'What would this idle babbler wish to say?' Others, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,' – because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection."*

Acts 24: 21, *"Other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, 'For the resurrection of the dead, I am on trial before you today.'"*

John 5: 28, 29*, "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."*

Revelation 20 *speaks of a Resurrection to come in which martyrs are raised. There will be a first and second Resurrection.* **Rev. 20: 6***, "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."*

Paul made clear that there was a division between those who believed in the Resurrection and those who did not.

Acts 23: 6-8, *"But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees Paul began crying out in the Council, 'Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead.' As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all."*

Acts 24: 15*, "Having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked."*

- **The Resurrection was the divine seal of approval on Christ's atoning work.**

Rom. 1: 4 "*Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."*

1 Cor. 15: 20*, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead."*

1 Cor. 15: 35 -58*, describes the resurrected body that awaits the faithful ones: imperishable, glorified, powerful, spiritual, from heaven, transformed (**v. 51**), immortal, victorious!*

Proofs of the Resurrection

While this is not an article intending to address the validity of the Resurrection, below you will find topics to explore which have traditionally been used for such a purpose.

The Resurrection Narratives themselves

The Empty Tomb

The Condition of the Grave clothes

The Post-Resurrection Appearances

The Transformed Disciples

The New Day of Christian Worship

If this resurrection life that began in Christ and that will become ours is a reality, may we expect there to be some evidence of it in His followers now?

Resurrection is a key teaching in the early apostolic church.

The Apostles' Creed

It has received this title because of its great antiquity; it dates from very early times in the Church, a half century or so from the last writings of the New Testament.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;

He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

The teaching or doctrine on the Righteousness of God is critical for the believer to understand. This attribute of God is the pivot on which His ways operate. If our God were not righteous, we would have no need for a savior. If our God were not righteous, we could never depend on His faithful carrying out of His promises. If our God were not righteous, His communicated word to us would be untrustworthy.

Sir Walter Scott says, "*Righteousness is the necessary basis of God's dealing with saint and sinner; the ground too, on which grace gloriously sways its scepter (Rom. 5:21), and the super-structure on which all Christian life, progress and service repose. It underlies every position and relation of the arch of divine revelation.*"

"God always acts rightly, in perfect harmony with His nature in all His actions." Herbert Lockyer

We greatly need to see His righteousness before we can acknowledge that we are devoid of it.

A proper vision of God in His righteous state will forever abolish the idea of my own merit before Him.

"*For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."* **Rom. 10: 3**

Deut. 32: 4, "*The Rock! His work is perfect. All His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He*."

Ps. 96: 13, "*Before the LORD, for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness*."

Ps. 97: 2, "*Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne."*

Ps. 97: 6, "*The heavens declare His Righteousness and all the peoples have seen His glory*."

Ps. 98: 2, "*The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His Righteousness in the sight of the nations."*

Ps. 111: 3, "*Splendid and majestic is His work, and His Righteousness endures forever*."

- God is the absolute and final standard of righteousness, therefore no standard outside of God exists by which we measure righteousness or justice.

Grudem's Systematic Theology tells us that "*God's righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is Himself the final standard of what is right.*"

"*For the sake of My name I delay My wrath, and for My praise I restrain it for you, in order not to cut you off."* **Is. 48: 9**

"*For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy garment."* **Is. 64: 6a**

"*Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*." **Is. 6:5**

"*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*." **Rom. 3: 23**

"But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment and the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness." **Is. 5: 16**

"*A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness*." **Is. 10: 22b**

- It is established; we need a Savior.

"*Declare and set forth your case; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me."* **Is. 45:21**

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

Rom. 8:3

To be a Righteous Judge, our God must deal with sin. With the atoning work of Jesus Christ, God has dealt with sin. The debt is paid. But there remains the problem of our righteousness.

Jesus Himself tells us in the Sermon on the Mount, "*Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."* **Matt. 5: 20**

"*But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, Who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption*." **1 Cor. 1:30**

(Jesus Christ) "*Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."* **Rom. 3:25-26**

"*He made Him Who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* **2 Cor. 5:21**

When Adam sinned he *imputed* (legally transferred) to us his sin. When Christ lived and died, He *imputed* (legally transferred) to us His righteousness as He took on our debt for sin. As He was transferring "His funds" to our account, He transferred our debt to Himself!

- Now what?

"*And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin, as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God*." **Rom 6:13**

"*Present your members as slaves to righteousness resulting in sanctification*." **Rom. 6:19b**

"*For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness*." **Gal. 5:5**

"*If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness*." **Rom 8:10**

Westminster Confession: "**Faith, receiving and resting on Christ and His Righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification, yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces."**

"*As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many*." **Is. 53:11**

"*For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness."* **Is. 61:10**

Our Righteousness is not Something but Someone.

Jer. 23:6b, "*And this is the name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness."*"

Jehovah-tsidkenu

SALVATION

"*May Your lovingkindnesses also come to me, O LORD, Your salvation according to Your word*."**Ps. 119:41**

What is salvation?

Webster's tells us that salvation is 1) **a saving or being saved from danger, evil, difficulty, destruction, etc. 2) a person or thing that is a means, cause, or source of preservation or rescue**

3) a spiritual rescue from the consequences of sin; redemption

As always, biblical terms require an understanding of the original language in which they were first used. A familiarity with the word in Hebrew or Greek will better enable the reader to grasp the meaning with confidence and cause less confusion when discussing the text in question.

The above reference is in the Old Testament which is primarily written in Hebrew. So we will look for the meaning of salvation in this context.

Here in **Psalm 119:41**, salvation is *teshuw'ah*, which means deliverance, help, safety, victory. It comes from the verb which means to rescue; it is related to *yasha*, a verb which means to free. This is the word from which we get our word for "savior".

Much is written in the New Testament regarding salvation, so finding the Greek word for salvation will aid us in further study of the word.

Ephesians 1:13, 14 tells us, "*In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your **salvation** – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory*."

The Greek here is *soteria.* This word means deliverance from danger or destruction; deliverance from sin and its spiritual consequences. Jesus uses this word only twice **(Luke 19:9** and **John 4:22**). For Jesus, to have salvation was to have the kingdom of God within oneself. This indicates salvation to be a present experience.

Jesus taught that when one possesses salvation (also termed by Jesus as eternal life), death would cause no interruption in the communication of the person with God. This is why God can be referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the God of the living and not of the dead. They are all currently in the presence of God Himself and enjoying a resurrection life with their God. (**Luke 16:22; 20:37, 38; 23:43**)

Now that we have the original languages' definitions and the English definition of this term, we can begin to examine scripture references to salvation with more clarity.

Why do we need a savior?

In brief, because God is holy and we have fallen short of His holiness.

God is our Creator and has authority to designate what sin is and He has the authority to demand our obedience to His standard.

Rom. 3:23, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

When was salvation, in essence, created?

There is another amazing element to the beauty of salvation: God planned it long ago.

"What a marvelous origin the salvation of your souls has! It antedates creation, being conceived in the mind of God in the dateless past. It came to us according to the eternal purpose of God." Herbert Lockyer

"*This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."* **Eph 3:11**

"Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."

2 Tim. 1:9

"In the hope of eternal life, which God, Who cannot lie, promised long ages ago." **Tit. 1:2**

What a tremendous calm it gives the soul to know that our all-knowing, all-powerful, all-gracious God, not only has provided our salvation but He has provided it for all time and since before time began! If He can create a universe like ours how can we doubt that He can save our eternal souls?

Why would Jesus, Who was one with the Father, resplendent in glory, lay aside His garments of majesty and come to our aid as a mere man, clothed in humanity?

"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost." **1Tim. 1:15**

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost." **Luke 19:10**

By the way, the previous verse, **Luke 19:9***, is one of the two occasions where Jesus uses the term soteria. "And Jesus said to him, 'Today* ***salvation*** *has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.'"*

Read Philippians 2:5-13 This passage explains the attitude of our Lord in coming to save His sheep.

- *He did not leave His glory above to become a model for obedience or a teacher of truth. He came to save the lost from their future and current destruction.*

Even His name designates His purpose in coming to us*: "You shall call His name Jesus; for He will save His people from their sins."* **Matt. 1:21**

God has chosen His Son to be the provider of salvation.

How do we obtain salvation?

"*And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be* ***saved.***" **Acts 4:12**

Believing in the "name" of Jesus means believing in the Person of Jesus. One must know Who He is in order to believe in His name. A basic understanding of Who Jesus is plays a role in salvation. For genuine salvation to exist, God alone knows to what degree this understanding of

Who Jesus is must take place. But the evidence of the truth of salvation is in the new believer's resurrection life.

"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be **saved**; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in **salvation**." **Rom. 10:9, 10**

"*Of Him the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins*." **Acts 10:43**

"*Jesus answered him, 'Truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God… The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit*.'" **John 3:3, 8**

"*And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life***." 1 John 5:11-13**

Who is able to receive salvation?

"***It is freely offered to all men, but is conditioned upon repentance and faith in Christ***."

Unger's Bible Dictionary

"*He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit Whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life***." Titus 3: 5-7**

God our Savior "*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth*." **1 Tim. 2:4**

Unger's Bible Dictionary: ***"Salvation proceeds from the love of God, is based upon the atonement wrought by Christ, is realized in forgiveness, regeneration, sanctification, and culminates in the resurrection and glorification of all true believers."***

How are we to regard salvation?

- We are to regard salvation as eternal and unshakeable.

"*Lift up your eyes to the sky, then look to the earth beneath; for the sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants will die in like manner; but My **salvation** will be forever, and My righteousness will not wane."* **Is. 51:6**

"*Israel has been saved by the LORD with an **everlasting salvation**; you will not be put to shame or humiliated to all eternity*." **Is. 45: 17**

- We are to regard salvation with gravity and gratitude.

"*How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.*" **Heb. 2: 3, 4**

- We are to see our **salvation** as **Someone** not something.

"*Behold, God is my **salvation**, I will trust and not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and song and **He has become my salvation***." **Is. 12: 2**

Elohim Yeshuah

"*The LORD is my light and my **salvation**; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread*?"**Ps. 27:1**

"*He only is my rock and my **salvation**, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken*." **Ps 62:2**

"*God is able to keep what He has committed unto us, seeing that what He committed was Himself*." Herbert Lockyer

SANCTIFICATION

This particular doctrine, we will use as a training exercise in how to build an understanding of a doctrine.

Beginning with a definition is always a good starting point.

"According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby, we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness." Reformed Study Bible

When looking at doctrinal points, it is preferential to search for certain background information.

1. In the case of this word – "sanctification" – find the word in the original language.

Sanctification - Greek *hagiasmos:* from *hagiazo*, to sanctify

It can be translated as holiness, separation unto God.

This word points to the activity of the Holy Spirit in setting man apart to salvation, redeeming him, and also refers to the work of the Holy Spirit enabling him to be holy even as God is holy.

2. Now that you are armed with the definition of the word in its original intent, the next step is to compare its use in many cross references in Scripture. This will show you how each author, as inspired by God, intends for the word to be used.

Check a concordance which indicates the verses which use the word "sanctification" or "sanctify."

Sanctify, sanctifies: **Jn. 17: 17, 19; Eph. 5: 26; 1 Thes. 5: 23; Heb. 2: 11; 9: 13; 13: 12; 1 Pet. 3: 15**

Sanctified: **Jn. 10: 36; Acts 20: 32; 26: 18; Rom. 15: 16; 1 Cor. 1: 2; 6: 11; 7:14; 1 Tim. 4: 5; 2 Tim. 2: 21; Heb. 10: 10, 14**

Sanctification: **1 Cor. 1: 30; 1 Thes. 4: 3, 4; 2 Thes. 2: 13; 1 Pet. 1: 2**

Sanctify generally means to set apart for God's use.

A comparison is a helpful tool as well.

Here sanctification is compared to regeneration.

Regeneration is birth; sanctification is growth.

Regeneration is a momentary act, bringing a person from spiritual death to life. It is exclusively God's work. Sanctification is an ongoing process, dependent on God's continuing action in the believer, and consisting of the believer's continuous struggle against sin.

2 Cor. 7: 1; Phil. 3: 10-14; Heb. 12: 14

As we grow in sanctification, we are constantly asking the Lord to enable us to do the works He has prepared for us to do.

Eph. 2: 10; 5: 2; Col. 1: 11; 1 Tim. 1: 12; 2 Tim. 1: 7; 2: 1; Rom. 13: 10; 1 Pet. 2: 21

After reading and noting each use of the word "sanctification", you will have a better understanding of its meaning in regard to the doctrine.

This may seem laborious, but it is a safeguard against false teaching based on misuse of a term that is not clearly understood.

Bottom lines on where this doctrine will be helpful. This is up to you many times. For instance, here, Sanctification offers a changed life but not an easy life. *"Conflict and frustration will be with Christians as long as they are in the body. Yet by watching and praying against temptation, and cultivating opposite virtues, they may through the Spirit's help 'put to death' particular bad habits (Rom. 8: 13; Col; 3: 5)."* RSB

So while you may never totally eradicate sinful behavior from your life, you will learn how to grow in loving response to your Lord, being transformed into His image daily.

3. Then it is helpful to discover any information you may glean from Bible dictionaries or commentaries. A good Bible dictionary is inexpensive and a great resource. Online sites offer help as well.

Unger's Bible Dictionary is a standard tool used for many decades.

This source provides helpful information regarding **sanctification.**

The following information comes from Unger's.

This word (and its counterpart in Hebrew: *qadash*) indicates a separation from the secular and sinful, and the setting apart for a sacred purpose.

The New Testament presents the doctrine of sanctification in three aspects: positional, experiential and ultimate.

Positional is the possession of everyone "in Christ." Positional sanctification is just as complete for the weakest and youngest believer as it is for the strongest and oldest. All believers are "saints" and are "sanctified." **Acts 20: 32**; **Rom. 12: 1; Eph. 4: 1; Col. 3: 1; 1 Cor. 1: 2; 5: 1, 2; 6: 1-8, 11; Jude 1: 1**

Experiential is the phase of sanctification effected by faith. (This is the growth and process part of sanctification.) **Rom. 6: 1-11**

Ultimate sanctification is the glorification or complete conformity to Christ at His coming.

1 John 3: 1-3; Rom. 8: 29, 30; Jude 1: 24, 25

4. Now research any theology sources you may have available.

Sanctification is defined in Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology as: *a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives.*

From this definition, we see that God and man work together for the purpose of the sanctified nature of the believer. When there are two forces at work, in this case God and man, we say that the work of sanctification is *synergistic* (combined efforts for the end goal). Not covered here but mentioned as a contrast is justification. This particular doctrine is *monergistic*. In the act of justification, the traditional view is that God alone works on man's behalf. God working alone is *monergistic*. These two theological terms may appear in certain works which you consider.

Because you have invested much time and energy into your research concerning the **doctrine of sanctification**, you are better equipped to agree or disagree with the things which man may say regarding this doctrine. You do not need to rely on other's opinions. You have done your own investigation and you can draw your own conclusions based on the truth which God Himself has shown you.

*A word of advice is appropriate here, though.

If you come up with a theory which has escaped the notice of centuries of Christians and you alone are now privy to this jewel of theological mystery, you may have wandered down a road less traveled and stumbled on an unturned rock. Some rocks are unturned for good reason.

The danger of the novice theologian is that we do not always see the extrapolated ramifications of our "discoveries." That is why a good, sound systematic theology is a tried and true treasure.

Find a source you feel is trustworthy and check out your views with those of the trusted source.

You may differ on some points and not others, but you are armed with the tools to **think** through most all of your own questions now.

You may never be a theologian in the classical sense, but you will be a **thinking** Christian dependent on no one but the Spirit of God. Christians have for too long abdicated the intellectual role in society, even in Christian society. It is time we take back the influence in our churches, homes, schools and communities.

Think, Christian!

SATAN

The doctrine of Satan is a difficult study to undertake on many levels. It can be ignored, which is a mistake, or it can become a priority, which also is in error. To properly attempt a biblical view of the enemy of our souls, we must approach this study as any other. The scriptures must lead the way.

"*God, Christ, prophets, apostles and Satan-bound souls had no doubts as to the reality of this enemy of man.*" Lockyer

While we encounter Satan early in the book of Genesis, there are actually passages which infer some information about his existence prior to the Garden of Eden.

Is. 14:12-24, "*How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascent to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, they will ponder over you, saying, 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities, who did not allow his prisoners to go home?' All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb. But you have been cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch, clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword, who go down to the stones of the pit like a trampled corpse… just as I have planned so it will stand."*

Ez. 28:11-19, "*… you had the seal of perfection … you were in Eden, the garden of God … you were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God… you were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you."*

The Prince of Tyre foreshadows the Beast. (**Dan. 7: 8; Rev. 19: 20)**

"*As the anointed cherub, he covered God's throne; he guarded it. But instead of covering it, he coveted it and so fell.*" Lockyer

And He (Jesus) said to them, "*I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.*" **Lk. 10:18**

- The name, "Satan", means *adversary* in the Hebrew.

"*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them."* **Job 1:6** Satan goes on to accuse Job of not being a blameless man and requests of God permission to torment him.

"*Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel***." 1 Chron. 21:1**

*"Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.***" Zech. 3:1**

- Satan bound people with infirmities. "And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" **Lk. 13:16**

- He is also referred to as the devil or *diabolos* in the New Testament. This word means accuser.

He is the accuser of God's people. **Rev. 12:9, 10**

He is also referred to as Apollyon which means "destroyer" in **Rev. 9:11.**

He is the tempter in **Matt. 4:3; 1 Thes. 3:5.**

He is the "wicked one" in **1 John 5: 18, 19.**

He is the "ruler of this world" in **John 12:31, 14:30; 16:11.**

He is "god of this world" in **2 Cor. 4: 4.**

He is seen as presiding over mankind's anti-God lifestyles in **Eph. 2: 2; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 12:9.**

He is the father of lies in **Jn. 8:44.**

He is the serpent who fooled Eve in **Rev. 12: 9; 20: 2.**

He disguises himself as an angel of light in **2 Cor. 11: 14.**

He is described as a roaring lion in **1 Pet. 5: 8.**

He is a dragon in **Rev. 12: 9.**

He is the enemy of Christ in **Matt. 4: 1-11; 16: 23; Luke 4: 13; 22: 3.**

He is now the enemy of the followers of Christ. **Luke 22:32; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11: 3-15; Eph. 6: 16**

He is defeated by Christ. **Matt. 12:29**

He is resisted by the followers of Christ. **Eph. 6: 10-18; James 4: 7; 1 Pet. 5: 9, 10; 1 John 4: 4**

He is destined for the lake of fire. **Rev. 20: 10**

Since Satan is a "liar and the father of lies", distortion or denial of the truth is always present in false religions, especially those with a strong demonic influence. Grudem

"*But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?*'" **Acts 5:3**

"*During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray him.*" **Jn. 13:2**

"*I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*." **1 Cor. 5:5**

"*Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme*." **1 Tim 1:20**

"*And they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will*." **2 Tim. 2:26**

Demons

While there is one devil, there is more than one *daimon,* Greek for demon. It can refer to evil spirits. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, this word denotes the spiritual agents acting in all idolatry. The idol itself is nothing, but every idol has a demon associated with it who induces idolatry with its worship and sacrifices.

1 Cor. 10: 20, 21; Rev. 9: 20; Deut. 32: 17; Is 13: 21; 34: 14; 65: 3, 11

"*Demons are evil angels who sinned against God and who now continually work evil in the world."* Grudem

"*We are to consider Satan and the demons as one doctrine because they were one in their rejection of God's claim, and have remained one since their deposition from heaven in their*

diabolical purpose to thwart God's benign purposes on man's behalf. Had Lucifer not become Satan, there would have been no demons." Lockyer

Demons try to seduce believers.

"*But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons*." **1 Tim. 4:1**

"*Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God*." **Lev. 19: 31 (See Lev. 20: 6, 27)**

"*Or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead*."

Deut. 18:11

"*When they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?*

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn." **Is. 8:19, 20**

Demons act under the supervision of Satan.

"*And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty."*

Rev. 16:13, 14

Demons tremble before God.

"*You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder*." **James. 2:19**

Demons recognize Christ as Lord and coming Judge.

"*And they cried out, saying, 'What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?*'" **Matt. 8: 29**

"*Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.*'" **Lk. 4:41**

"*And the evil spirit answered and said to them, 'I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you*?'" **Acts 19:15**

Jesus rebuked demons.

"*And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once."*

Matt. 17:18

"When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: 'He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases.'"

Matt. 8:16, 17

There are varying degrees of wickedness with demons.

"*Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."* **Matt. 12:45**

Future for Satan and the demons

"Who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God… The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders." **2 Thes. 2:4, 9**

"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." **Rev. 2:9**

"And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a place of every unclean bird." **Rev. 18:2**

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'" **Matt. 25:41**

"And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day." **Jude 6**

"For God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment." **2 Pet. 2:4**

How does all of this affect us?

"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." **Eph. 2:2**

"To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." **Acts 26:18**

"You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." **Acts 10:38**

"Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death, He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." **Heb. 2:14**

"I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father." **1 Jn. 2:13**

What is our response to the power of Satan?

"*So that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes."*

2 Cor. 2:11

"These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them." **Mk. 4:15**

"But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." **2 Cor. 11:3**

"The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for the purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." **1 John 3:8**

"Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded." **James 4:7, 8**

"And do not give the devil an opportunity." **Eph. 4:27**

"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out." **John 12:31**

"And concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged… These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." **John 16:11, 33**

God is at work through His people building His kingdom. As we labor in this great work, God's enemy and ours will also be at work to thwart the plans of our Sovereign. We need not tremble or fear this accuser; his fate is already assured. We need not ignore his existence; he is committed to dishonoring our Lord. He is committed to his agenda of destruction and we need to be more committed in following our mandate to win the world for the kingdom of our Heavenly King.

SIN

There are several words for "sin" in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, "iniquity" is # 5771 *awon*: guilt, evil, iniquity, punishment; it refers to the idea of deliberate twisting or perverting; it conveys the idea of conscious sin

This word is used in **Gen. 4: 13; Ex. 20: 5; 34: 7; Is. 53: 11; Jer. 11: 10; 13: 22**

Also an Old Testament word, "transgression" is # 6588 *pesha*: transgression, rebellion; this word primarily displays a rebellion against God and His laws (**Is. 58: 1; 59: 12; Amos 5: 12**)

"Trespass" is # 817 *asham*: this word refers to the idea of guilt or offense due to wrongdoing; this term may also refer to the offering associated with a sin and the ensuing guilt (**Lev. 5: 6**)

"Sin" is # 2403 *hatta't*: sin, transgression, sin offering, punishment; this word can refer to sins committed against God or man

Mirrored in the New Testament, there are four primary words for sin as well.

They are:

93 *adikia*: injustice, what is not conformable with justice, that which is wrong

1 John 5: 17 says, "All unrighteousness (*adikia*) is sin (*hamartia* # 266). Whatever does not meet God's justice is missing God's goal for us.

266 *hamartia*: sin, missing the mark, missing the true goal of our lives, which is God; aberration from the truth, error, it stands in opposition to the truth (**John 8:46**), used in **Rom. 3: 9; 5: 12, 20, 21; Gal. 3: 22; Heb. 3: 13** *Hamartia* is missing the mark ordained by God and not by us.

458 *anomia*: lawlessness, not merely the absence of the law but the violation of the law

In **1 John 3: 4**, "Whosoever commits{on a continual basis} the sin (*hamartia*) also commits {continuously} lawlessness (*anomia*) and the sin (*hamartia)* is the lawlessness (*anomia*)".

So here, it is evident that lawlessness is missing the mark set by God. He has a standard for His people.

#4189 *poneria*: evil, malice, wickedness (**Matt. 22: 18; Luke 11: 39; Rom. 1: 29; 1 Cor. 5: 8; Eph. 6:12)**

In addition to the above words used in the New Testament for sin, there are two more that are of interest.

3847 *parabasis*: from the verb *parabaino*, *para* implies nearness or proximity, beyond or contrary to; *baino*: to go, walk, step; *parabasis* is going beyond, false-stepping, transgressing, violating God's standard **Rom. 2:23; 4:15; 5:14; Gal. 3:19; 1 Tim. 2:14**

2549 *kakia*: bad, wickedness as an evil habit of the mind, inherently evil

See **Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Tit. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:1**

That is a lot on the words meaning sin, but it is imperative to be very clear when discussing this word. Our culture admits no existence of sin, so we must be very definite when using this supposedly archaic word.

Now that we have seen what God's word means by sin, we can observe the dictionary definition of sin.

Webster defines sin as: "the breaking of religious law or a moral principle … to break a religious law or moral principle … to commit an offense or fault or any kind; do wrong"

Unger's Bible dictionary tells us that "the underlying idea of sin is that of law and of a lawgiver. The lawgiver is God. Hence sin is everything in the disposition and purpose and conduct of God's moral creatures that is contrary to the expressed will of God."

What is sin?

Rom 3:20 "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."

Rom 7:7 "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'"

James 4:17 "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin."

Sin is against God.

Gen. 39:9b "How then could I do this great evil (commit adultery) and sin against God?"

Ps. 51:4 "Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge."

Self is put in the place of God.

2 Tim. 3:1, 2 "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy."

Gen. 3:5 "For God knows that in the day **you** eat from it **your** eyes will be opened, and **you** will **be like God**, knowing good and evil."

All have sinned.

Rom. 5:12, 13 "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned – for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law."

Rom. 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

1 Kings 8:46 "When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near …"

Sin brings death.

Rom. 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

James 1:14, 15 "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."

Our lives are affected by sin. Before becoming saved, we are children of wrath.

Eph. 2:1-3 "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 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. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

Col. 1:21, 22 "And though you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach."

What can be done about our sin?

Matt. 7:11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father Who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"

Matt. 19:25b, 26 "Then who can be saved? And looking at them Jesus said to them, 'With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"

James 4:12 "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One Who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?"

Rom. 5:6, 8 "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly…But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Rom. 5:19 "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

As our representative head (or federal head) Adam's sin was imputed to us. Imputation basically means "put that on my account." We face the penalty of sin's wages, which is death. Christ, acting as our representative, has paid that debt. We now have His righteousness imputed to us. (**Rom 5:12, 17-21; 2 Cor. 5:21**)

More on this when we discuss *justification.*

Grudem's Systematic Theology offers this: *sin is failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature. Sin is here defined in relation to God and His moral law.*

"We should note that all sin is ultimately irrational. Though people sometimes persuade themselves that they have good reason for sinning, when examined in the cold light of truth on the last day, it will be seen in every case that sin ultimately just does not make sense."

The doctrine of sin is crucial to the Christian faith. What we do with the subject of sin will determine whether we see the need for a Righteous, Loving, Merciful Savior and Lord.

It is to be remembered that we not only need God's mercy prior to the point of salvation, but now, moment by moment we are completely dependent on His loving compassion. *"The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."* **Lam. 3:22, 23**

"*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* **Matt 5:3**

"*Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted*." **Matt. 5:4**

Recognize your condition before a holy and just God and recognize your only hope of life is the sacrificial offering of His only Son. Sin serves a purpose: it drives us to our knees before the Sovereign Judge and Lord. Once on our knees, He draws us to Himself as our Father and Champion of our souls. Praise be to the One and only One Who can remove our sin once and for all!

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Refrain

Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my pardon, this I see,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
For my cleansing this my plea,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Refrain

Nothing can for sin atone,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
Naught of good that I have done,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Refrain

This is all my hope and peace,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
This is all my righteousness,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Refrain

Now by this I'll overcome—
Nothing but the blood of Jesus,
Now by this I'll reach my home—
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Refrain

Glory! Glory! This I sing—
Nothing but the blood of Jesus,
All my praise for this I bring—
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Refrain

SOVEREIGNTY

"*I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted*." **Job 42:2**

"*The Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes."* **Dan. 4:25b**

"But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases." **Ps. 115:3**

The doctrine of the sovereignty of God should be a comfort to His people. But this truth only comforts those who know and trust Him.

- How do we come to trust our God as Sovereign?
- How do we see Him clearly enough to realize He truly knows what He is doing?

As with anything else in life, we observe closely the object of our interest.

There are many ways to observe, study, contemplate this attribute of God.

The first way to observe is to "see" Him in Scripture where He has ordained His own revelation to us.

"*There is only one Lawgiver, the One Who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor? Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'*

But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin." **James 4:12-17**

Our God is omnipotent (all-powerful). Within this attribute of the Lord's omnipotence is the idea of His sovereignty. Latin *omni* = "all" *potens* = "powerful.

"God's omnipotence means that God is able to do all His holy will."

Grudem's Systematic Theology

The Lord's power is frequently mentioned in Scripture.

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

Ps. 24: 8

"Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstreteched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You." **Jer. 32: 17**

"For nothing will be impossible with God." **Luke 1:37**

"And looking at them Jesus said to them, 'With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" **Matt. 19:26**

It was well known among the Lord's servants that He is omnipotent.

"*And do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham*." **Matt. 3: 9**

"And we know that God causes all things to work out together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren." **Rom. 8: 28, 29**

Many times in both Old and New Testaments, the Lord is referred to as "Almighty."

"*I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty*." Greek = *pantokrator*

It is important in mentioning God's omnipotence that, as the above definition states, God can do "all His holy will." This clarifies the terms of His exertion of power. He cannot lie, sin, deny Himself, be tempted with evil, cease to exist or act in a manner contrary to His attributes. His will is holy and is always consistent with His character.

God also exercises power over His creation.

"*Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.'"* **Is. 46:9-11**

"Daniel said, 'Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He Who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He Who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power; even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, for You have made known to us the king's matter.'" **Dan. 2:20-23**

"See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I Who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I Who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand."

Deut. 32:39

"The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles, and inherit a seat of honor; for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and He set the world on them." **1 Sam. 2:6-8**

God's power is not always exerted to bless and comfort, but at times to discipline.

"Let me sing now for my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning His vineyard on a fertile hill. He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it; then He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones.

'And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?

Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones? So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. I will lay waste; it will not be pruned or hoed. But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress." **Is. 5:1-7**

God's sovereign will does not always make sense to us.

"*When David came to Bahurim, behold, there came out from there a man of the family of the house of Saul whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he came out cursing continually as he came. He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; and all the people and all the mighty men were at his right hand and his left. Thus Shimei said when he cursed, 'Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, and worthless fellow.' …Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, 'Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life; how much more now this Benjamite? Let him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him.*'" **2 Sam. 16: 5-11**

"*I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God… that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is*

no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD Who does all these."

Is. 45:5-7

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has asked permission to sift you like wheat."

Lk. 22:31

"So Pilate said to Him, 'You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?' Jesus answered, 'You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.'" **John 19:10, 11**

"Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!" **Matt. 18:7**

Job 1 reveals to us that Satan is not free to torment us. He must ask permission to inflict us with any of his schemes.

"Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life… God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance, now therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt." **Gen. 45:5-8**

"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." **Gen. 50:20**

We can trust God's covenant, sovereign will.

"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." **1 Cor. 10:13**

"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." **1 Thes. 5:18**

"In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?" **Ps. 56:11**

"Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us."

Ps. 62:8

"Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it." **Ps. 37:5**

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Prov. 3:5, 6

"Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." **1 Pet. 5:7**

Another way to develop your trust of your Sovereign God is to "see" His work in the lives of others.

We can remain more objective when looking at the life story of someone else. Also that life has the advantage of looking back with gained insight and perspective. We are in the midst of our own lives. The Lord knows this to be true of us; I believe this is why there are so many narratives in the Scriptures about people like Joseph, Daniel, Job, Abraham and above all the life of our Lord. These lives give us direction, hope and understanding in the ways of God. Also reading biographies of those who trusted their Sovereign God is a great inspiration. The lives of

people like Corrie ten Boom, Hudson Tayor, William Carey, Jim Elliot and many others, can help you "see" how a Sovereign God can be trusted with your own life.

We also can gain understanding of God's sovereignty by looking with the help of the Holy Spirit at our own lives.

"But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him Who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" **Dan. 4: 34, 35**

"The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, 'Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand … For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched out hand, who can turn it back?'" **Is. 14: 24, 27**

Basically God's sovereignty means that He reigns over all.

There is nothing at all that can happen in God's universe without His permission. To see this truth in its proper balance, we must ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us. Otherwise, with an improper view of God's reign, we might develop an unhealthy resentment and lack of trust in our Sovereign God. When we are tempted to doubt God's covenant love in the light of His sovereignty, we must ask ourselves if we value our own wills and desires more than His sovereign will. His will must win out at all times because He knows the end from the beginning. He tells us, "I am the Alpha and the Omega Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty." **Rev. 1:8**

"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." **Rom. 11:33-36**

He is our "El Shaddai," our all-sufficient God .

He is Adonai, Lord.

He is Elohim, the Creator.

He is El Roi, the God Who sees.

He is El Elyon, the Most High God.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

There are many ways to approach any study.

We will simplify this involved study by breaking it down using the 5WH.

We will start with:

<u>What</u> are spiritual gifts?

Spiritual gifts are the abilities the Lord provides for His Church through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. These gifts are determined by the Lord. These gifts are selected by the Lord for His specific purposes. These are not gifts which can be gained through development or tutelage alone. These are gifts supernaturally delivered to a particular Spirit-filled individual.

This is not a natural talent, but a gift given by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the Church.

<u>Who</u> is given spiritual gifts?

Every believer in Christ will be given one or more gifts. There is no distinction as to who receives which gift other than the discretion of the Holy Spirit.

The disciples were remarkable because they were unlearned men yet because of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, they even impressed the hard-hearted Pharisees.

<u>When</u> are you given spiritual gifts?

Gifts are bestowed on those people the Lord has deemed appropriate for the service of the Church in that particular gifting. Gifts are given when the Lord determines the need within a particular body of believers. There are certain gifts which are always needed, but again, the Lord is at liberty to bestow when, on whom and however He chooses.

The timing of the gift is according to the Lord's term of service as well. One does not possess a gift permanently – it does not belong to the recipient. The gift is at the disposal of the Lord.

Otherwise, pride of "ownership" could develop.

<u>Where</u> are gifts given?

The gifts are needed within the body of Christ and that is where they will be found.

The local church functions best on these gifts. If those in certain roles are not gifted with the appropriate gift for that ministry, the ministry will suffer, and believers will be less than spiritually healthy.

<u>Why</u> are gifts given?

Spiritual gifts are given because they are spiritual. In other words, in our fallen state, we are ill equipped to function in any spiritual capacity. Therefore, the Lord provided a way for the believer to function in a way which could achieve eternal results. In the natural state, no eternal benefits can be realized.

Spiritual gifts are also given so that we can function as the body of Christ here on earth.

The Lord does not intend the Church to live based on merely human abilities. This is weak and ineffectual. The Lord intends for His people to be exceptional and extraordinary – we are a reflection of our heavenly Father. We are to live on a different plane from this world.

<u>How</u> do spiritual gifts work?

Spiritual gifts are given, administered and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God.

Apart from the grace of the Lord, we would never know what it is to minister through His Spirit. But because our God is so very gracious, His believers can experience what it is to show the mercy of Christ, offer the encouragement of the Lord, open our homes with the hospitable heart of our Savior, lift up prayers from the very heart of the Great Intercessor Himself!

When we function in the Lord's Spirit, we are connected to Him as at no other time.

Rejoice in the use of the gifts with which God has graced you.

Do not miss the fellowship with Jesus which comes when we operate in the gifts He has provided.

Go through each of these passages on spiritual gifts and mark to the side which question the verse answers: who, what, when, where, why or how.

1 Corinthians 12:7

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 14:1

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

1 Corinthians 12:4

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

Romans 12:6

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

1 Timothy 4:14

Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

1 Corinthians 12:30

All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

1 Corinthians 12:8

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

1 Corinthians 12:9

to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

1 Corinthians 12:11

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

1 Cor. 14: 12

So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

1 Corinthians 12:10

and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:31

But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 12:6

There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

Romans 1:11

For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

1 Corinthians 12:28

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:5

And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

1 Corinthians 14:32

and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

Exodus 31:3

I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship,

1 Corinthians 1:7

so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Corinthians 13:2

If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

Acts 8:18

Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

Ephesians 4:7

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

2 Timothy 1:6

For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

1 Corinthians 2:12

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,

1 Corinthians 14:22

So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.

Isaiah 11:2

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him,

The spirit of wisdom and understanding,

The spirit of counsel and strength,

The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Romans 11:29

for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Romans 12:7

if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;

1 Corinthians 9:11

If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

1 Corinthians 1:5

that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge,

1 Corinthians 12:3

Therefore, I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 3:2

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

1 Corinthians 2:13

which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

Hebrews 2:4

God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

1 Corinthians 2:14

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

Source: https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Spiritual-Gifts

Passages which describe the gifts are:

Romans 12: 3-8

Ephesians 4:7-13

1 Cor. 12 and 14 (entire chapters)

1 Peter 4:9-11

The fact that no one passage lists ALL of the gifts indicates that these are not commodities to be purchased or managed. These are "gifts" to be gratefully accepted for the duration of their life within the believer.

Realize that there are many opinions on the gifts.

You will need to search the Scriptures for your own view from the Lord.

Do not take the opinion of men in regard to these gifts or any other eternal truth.

Seek His face and His truth regarding your questions.

The Church promises to be an amazing gift to the Bridegroom; may she be ready at His coming.

As we grow into the Bride He longs to spend eternity with may we live and walk based on His Spirit more and more.

Suffering and Affliction

by Janis Hylton

It is inevitable that all people will suffer in this fallen world. To suffer is to bear or endure something painful or to have a hardship. There are degrees of suffering, as you may have a severe trial, be hard-pressed, have a misfortune or trouble, be persecuted or afflicted, or be struck down. None of it feels good, and we all need the endurance that the Lord supplies to get through it. Paul said in Romans 15:5, "May the God Who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had."

Affliction is trouble or pain that often lasts a long time. It can be a condition of mental or physical distress. Paul said in Romans 12:12, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." He knew well about affliction. Not only did Paul suffer from a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him humble and dependent on God's power in his weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9), but he also was persecuted in various ways and endured hardship repeatedly, even "left for dead" as he was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, flogged severely, etc.(2 Corinthians 11). Paul's suffering came as a result of other people's actions because of his ministry as an apostle. He was a bond slave of Jesus, a soldier and an athlete running the race for Jesus Christ. Paul told us in 2 Timothy 2: 3-4, "Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer." Paul said in Romans 8:17, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory."

We can suffer because of our rebellion against God, our walking in the flesh instead of the Spirit, and our willful sinful actions. It all started in the Garden of Eden with Satan's deception of Eve -- and Adam's sin. We can misuse God's gift of free will, sow to the flesh, and reap devastation and maybe death. God is a redeeming God, who saves us from the penalty of our sins through Jesus' death and resurrection and forgives us as we repent and turn to Him in humility. The consequences of our sin remain though.

Suffering may not be the direct result of our sin, but may result from natural disasters or natural living in this world with diseases and illnesses. It can also be caused by Satan and his demonic forces, as in Job's life. Job's friends speculated aloud that all these terrible events in Job's life were the fruit of Job's unfaithfulness and sin. This was not true entirely, as Job was a righteous man, though not perfect. It was only after the intense season of suffering, prayer and waiting that a transformed Job got to see God for who He really is. Job's words are recorded in Job 42:5-6: "My ears had heard of You, but now my eyes have seen You. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Affliction is a terrible thing. It includes misery and poverty and the idea of being trapped under a heavy burden. The Bible teaches that God cares us in our afflictions. He hears the cries of His people. From Exodus 2: 24-25, we read that, “God heard their groaning, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.” Peter tells the suffering Christian in 1 Peter 5:7, “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” It's a real comfort to know that the God who controls the universe is the God Who cares for us. We can be assured that He is working in every situation to bring about what is good for His people. Paul says in Romans 8:28 that “we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” Jesus encouraged people to give Him their burdens, follow Him, and take His burdens. They would find that His burdens were completely different than the afflictions and suffering they carried. Jesus' words are in Matthew 11:28-30: “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

Jesus' suffering was greater than we can fathom or that we will ever endure. Not only did He experience a slow and cruel death on a Roman cross, but He was separated from His Father for a period of time when He bore the sins of the world. Isaiah prophesied about Jesus and His death on the cross over 700 years before Jesus lived on earth by saying in Isaiah 53:3a, “He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.” God used Jesus' suffering to bring about the ultimate blessing. We are now reconciled to God, forgiven, our sin debt paid in full, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Luke wrote Jesus' words to the men walking on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:25-26: “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter into His glory?” Luke told us of Jesus after His resurrection in Acts 1:3: “After Jesus' suffering, He presented Himself to His apostles and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”

What are some of the benefits for the follower of Jesus of suffering? Paul says in Romans 5:3 that “we glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Suffering brings humility and brokenness in our lives, both of which are beneficial for the Lord to use us. We become dependent on Him in greater ways, and we experience His faithfulness. We also develop a sensitive heart to reach out to others who are hurting. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1: 3-5: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.” As members of the body of Christ we are to be united, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:25-26, “so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

We are instructed by Paul in Hebrews 12: 1b-3: "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him Who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." James said in James 1:2-3, 12, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. . . . Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

Hudson Taylor, a missionary to China in the 1800s, is an example of one who lived his life surrendered to the Lord as he lived out God's call on His life. He suffered in many ways, including the death of his young wife and the loss of three of his six children. He learned the secret of not only surrendering to the Lord, but an awareness of the Lord living through him. In his own words, Taylor said, "The sweetest part . . . is the rest which full identification with Christ brings. I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realize this; for He, I know, is able to carry out His will, and His will is mine. It makes no matter where He places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest position He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult, His grace is sufficient."

Jesus is with us in our suffering, and God is always at work in the suffering of His people. He is capable of using great pain and suffering to fulfill His good purposes for the world. Joseph realized his suffering led to blessing his people (Genesis 50:19-21), so although suffering is not good in and of itself, it may lead to greater good. God is glorified as we walk in His peace and trust Him in our suffering. He will never leave us or forsake us. He shines brightly to a watching world as we rest in Him during hard times. From 2 Corinthians 12:9, we see that God's power is completed and shows itself most effectively in our weakness. Jesus said in John 16:33, "I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Wendell Kimbrough, a contemporary Christian worship leader and composer, wrote a song called *The Weight of Glory,* based on 2 Corinthians 4:17, where Paul said, " For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that outweighs them all." Here are the lyrics:

Now the days and hours and moments
Of our suff'ring seem so long
And the toilsome wait and wond'ring
Threaten silence to our song
Now our pain is real and pressing
Where our faith is thin and weak

But our hope is set on Jesus
And we cling to him, our strength.

Oh eternal weight of glory!
Oh inheritance divine!
We will see our Lord redeeming
Every past and future time
All our pains will be transfigured
Like the scars of Christ our Lord
We will see the weight of glory
And our broken years restored

For behold! I tell a myst'ry
At the trumpet sound we'll wake
Death is swallowed up in vict'ry!
When we meet our King of Grace
Every year we thought was wasted
Every night we cried "How long?"
All will be a passing moment
In our Savior's vict'ry song

We will see our wounded Savior
We'll behold him face to face
And we'll hear our anguished stories
Sung as vict'ry songs of grace

For behold! I tell a myst'ry
At the trumpet sound we'll wake
Death is swallowed up in vict'ry!
When we meet our King of Grace
Every year we thought was wasted
Every night we cried "How long?"
All will be a passing moment
In our Savior's vict'ry song.

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Wendell Kimbrough *Psalms We Sing Together Songbook*

TEMPLE

By: Kelly Allen

What is the Temple?

In the garden at Eden (yes, the Hebrew is "at" Eden, not "of" Eden!), God designed us to dwell with Him. After we tried to do things our own way and sin entered the world, we were separated from God. God did not destroy man (what a mercy!), but He sent us out of Eden. We therefor had to either 1) get back in or 2) have a way to dwell with the Lord once again. We will one day be back in the garden when Jesus returns but until that time, we would need a way to dwell with the Lord. The story could have ended there… but it didn't.

> God's heart is to be with His people

God's desire is to be with us. The Temple was a way for God to dwell with us once again. It would also put on display the holiness of God. On Mt. Sinai, Moses was able to physically see the heavenly tabernacle (can you even imagine!) and he was instructed to make a "pattern" of it. Because humans are sinful and therefore not holy like the Lord, there must be an atonement for our sins… so that we are able to enter into His presence, blameless. God gave Moses very specific instructions on how to account for this sin. The sacrificial system was put in place by God so that blood offerings could "pay" for our sin and we would once again be able to commune with the Lord.

To clarify terms, let's quick look at the difference between **Synagogue, Tabernacle, and Temple.**

<u>Synagogue</u>

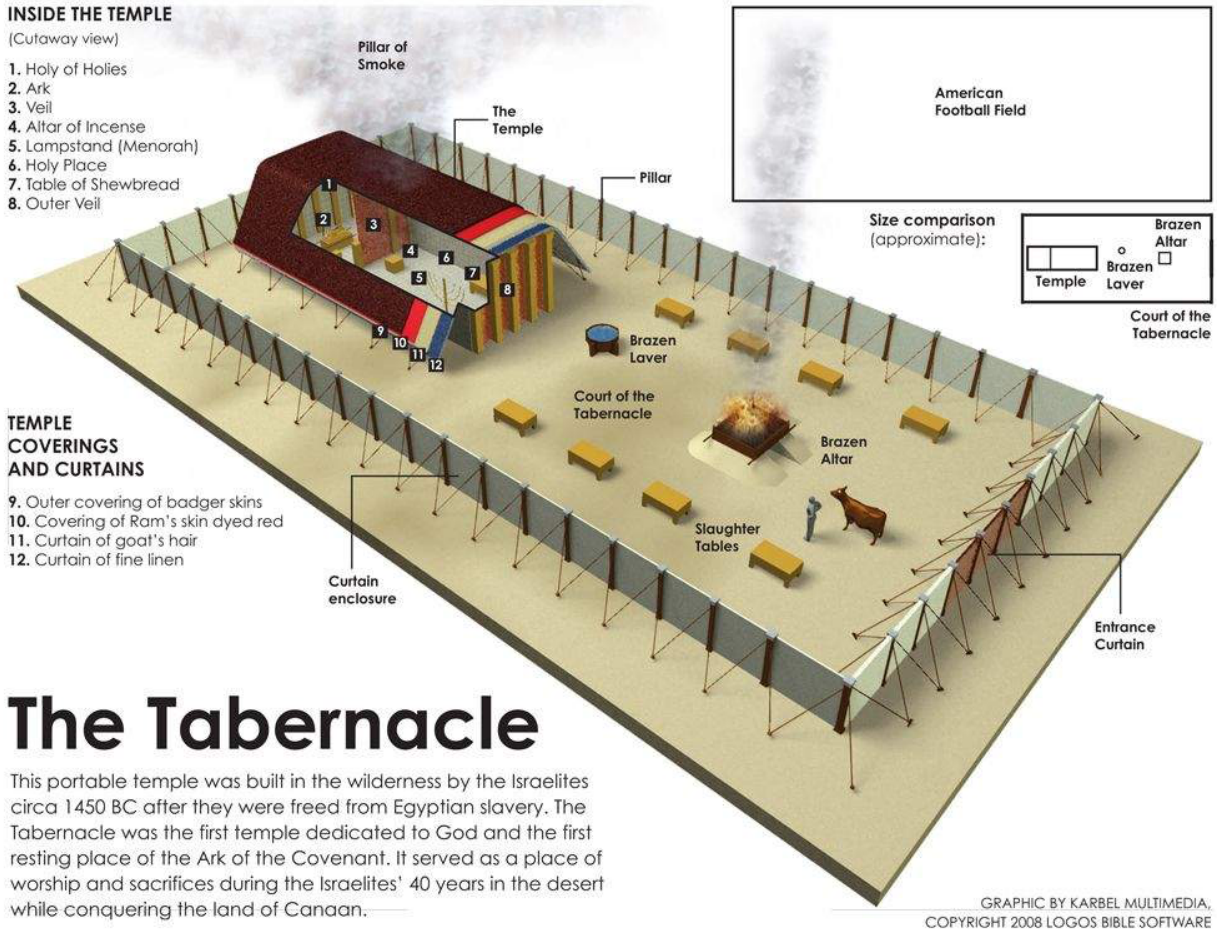
We won't dive too much into Synagogue other than to define it. The term synagogue is the Greek translation for "beit Knesset", meaning house of assembly. Jesus met at many synagogues during His ministry. Today Jews meet at synagogues and that is why we are so familiar with this word, rather than "temple" as a place of meeting for most Jews. There is no temple to gather at, therefor they gather in a synagogue.

<u>Tabernacle</u>

The tabernacle is what God instructed Moses to build. On the top of Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses instructions to build a "tent of meeting" where He would dwell with His people (Exodus 27:9-19). It is a "mobile" dwelling place for the presence of God. Because we are sinful, there

needed to be a process in which His people could again dwell with Him. The sacrificial system at the tabernacle accomplishes this. **Careful to note – the entire sacrificial system was a *gift* and mercy from God to His people as a path to His presence. While His people offered sacrifices (surrender), remember He actually gave this system to them… Just as He "gave His only son" to everyone in John 3:16.**

The tabernacle was a tent or portable sanctuary where God could meet with His people. We will go into further detail regarding the contents and structure of the tabernacle (see pic below) but critical to the tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant, located inside the Holy of Holies. This is where the very presence of God dwelled. Access to this part of the tabernacle is extremely specific and leaves no room for "alterations" or "accommodations" to the process in which God is met. Again, more on that later… but inside the tabernacle was where God's presence was – on the Ark of Covenant.

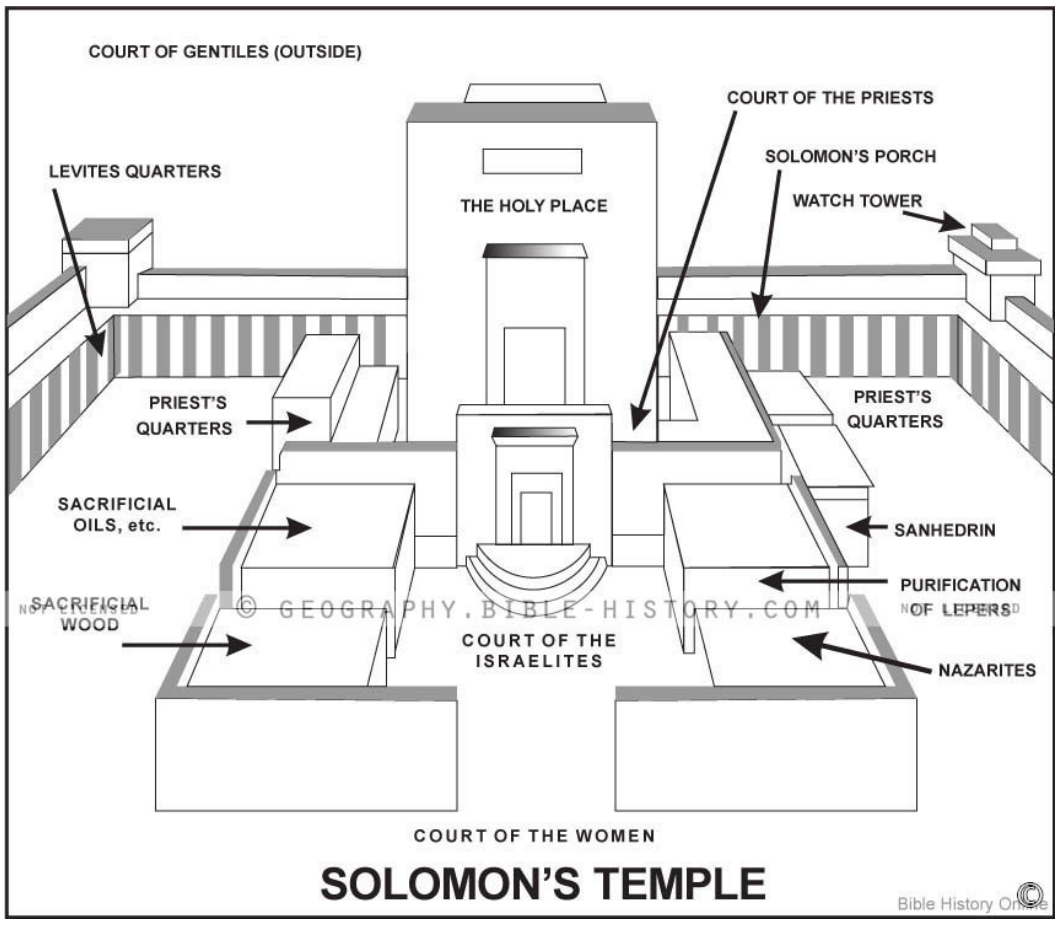


Temple

The temple is the building that David designed, and Solomon built. It would be a more permanent place for God's people to dwell with Him. Jews would make the trip to Jerusalem for feasts throughout the year and the Temple was active every day for sacrifices. The temple was destroyed multiple times as Jews went in and out of exile. The last time the temple was intact was shortly after the earthly ministry of Christ, in 70AD. The Romans destroyed the temple, and the Ark of the Covenant has been lost to history. In fact, today Jews do not make sacrifices in any "mobile tent" or sanctuary because they believe it would be a sin to offer sacrifices to God in any place not specifically designated by God for that purpose. Right now the Muslim Dome of the Rock is where the temple once stood.

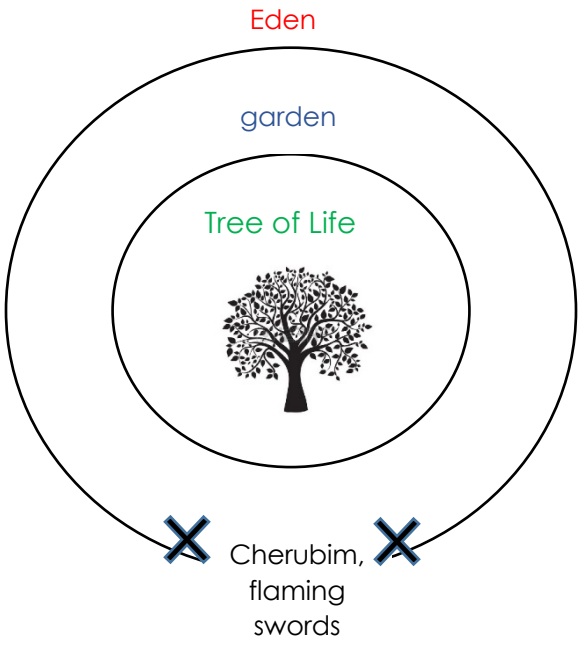
Of course Jesus came to fulfill the law, and His death as the perfect lamb for the atonement of our sin took away the need for a temple or any mediating priest (He IS the mediating priest)… but Jews today are still waiting for the messiah and the temple from their perspective is necessary.

Jesus shattered the need for a temple!



Fall from the Garden – the need for temple

Garden (no need for Temple, until the fall)→Tabernacle/Temple→Jesus as Temple→Believers as Temple→Return of Christ the King (no need for Temple again "I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" Revelation)



Garden

- God creates mankind in His image, calls it good (Gen 1:26-31)

- He walks freely with mankind (Gen 3:8) Sin enters the world, mankind is mercifully banished from the garden.

- Cherubim guard the entrance to the region and flaming swords are put there so that no one can access the tree of life (Gen 3:23-24)

Temple

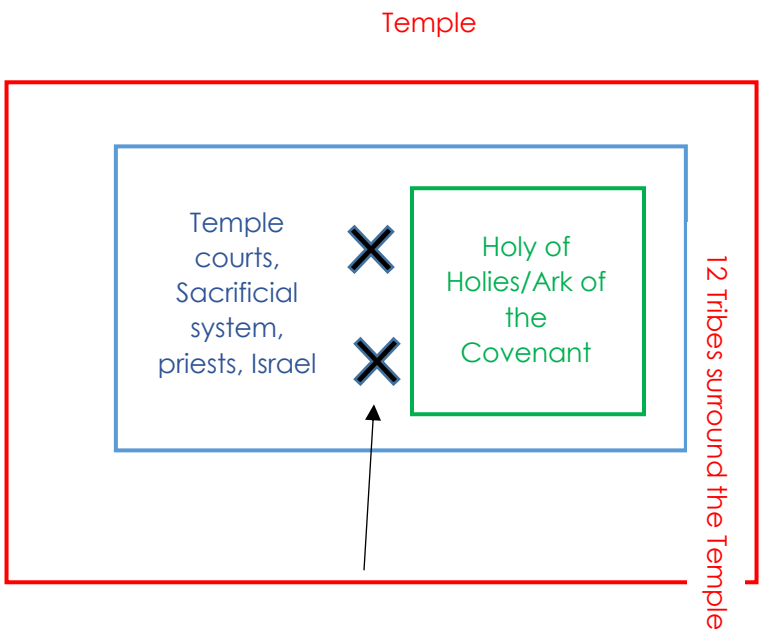
- God's love for us and His desire to dwell with His people, led him to *give* us a way to enter back into His presence

- His presence is on the mercy seat, inside the tent, inside the Holy of Holies

- Our sin needs atoning so that we may safely dwell with him (see below, "Sacrificial system and Day of Atonement")

- Cherubim guard the entrance to the Holy of Holies and Ark of the Covenant

- Priests now have very specific instructions on how to safely and properly serve Israel so that they can "re-enter"



Cherubim, woven into curtain. Also, Cherubim on either side of the mercy seat (inside Holy of Holies)

Sacrificial System & Day of Atonement

Sacrificial System

Hebrew word for "offering" means literally "bring it near." This points to the entire gift of the sacrificial system – to draw nearer to God. 5 Sacrifices – all pointing to Christ!

- **Burnt offering (Surrender)** – voluntary - wholly consumed, daily offered. Jesus surrendered His whole self. Application to us - Paul writes in Romans 12:1, "Therefore I urge you, brothers *and sisters*, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, [a]acceptable to God, *which is* your [b]spiritual service of worship."
- **Meal offering (Service)** – voluntary - unleavened fine flour, baked cakes, crushed roasted heads of new grain. Part was offered to God, part was kept for the priests. No honey or leaven was allowed, per the Passover requirements (they ferment, which is a symbol of sin). Meal offerings are associated also with God receiving a "sweet aroma" (Lev 2:9). The offering of Jesus was a sweet smell to the Lord as well - Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:2 - "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Jesus also compared Himself to a grain of wheat that had to die before it could live again in a better form (John 12:23-25)… as well as the bread of life (John 6:48).
- **Peace offering (Reconciliation)** – voluntary - any unblemished animal or various breads. This was a voluntary act of worship, usually offered as thanks for blessings received or thanks in anticipation of a blessing desired. Jesus made peace between man and God, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). He also reconciled – "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:19-20). Certainly, there are echoes here of the prodigal son and our reconciliation with our Father. It's a joyous occasion indeed.
- **Sin offering (Atonement of sin & cleans from defilement)** – mandatory – offering was an animal, but the type of animal depended on the person's status. These offerings were made outside of the tent, where an animal would be a "substitute" for the sins of the offender. Jesus was also killed outside the city of Jerusalem, "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the Holy Place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin are burned outside the camp. **12** Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the gate, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood. **13** So then, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. **14** For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come." (Hebrews 13:11-14) See more on Day of Atonement below.
- **Trespass offering (Satisfaction)** – mandatory – offering was a ram or lamb and the purpose was to bring right relationship between God or between people. The offender would not only have to make this (often expensive) offering, they also had to include one fifth back to the offended. Christ not only paid it all… He showered us with grace on top of mercy.

Day of Atonement

- The word "cover is the meaning of the Hebrew words kipper/kopher and was later translated into Old English as "atonement." Today this day is called Yom Kippur and it is perhaps the holiest day in the Jewish year.

- Two unblemished male goats were selected. One was chosen to have the sins transferred on to it ritually and be sent away into the wilderness (hence our term today, "scapegoat"). The other was chosen as a burnt offering, killed, and its blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, inside the Holy of Holies. This was to "cover" the sins of the people, as the blameless goat surely did not deserve death… but God's people did.
- Blood of an animal was a symbol of the animal's life itself (Lev 17:11)
- Symbolically washed the temple and God's people of death and defilement (that natural result of sin)

John Piper's Desiring God blog gives an excellent understanding of how Atonement points to Christ, tracking from OT to the NT:

"For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord from all your sins… And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest… shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary… for the tent of meeting… for the altar… for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins. (Leviticus 16:30-34)
This is the day the writer of Hebrews was talking about when he wrote,

These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section [of the tent/temple], performing their ritual duties, but into the second [the most holy place] only the high priest goes, and he but *once a year*, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. (Hebrews 9:6-7, emphasis mine)
The mind-blowing message and scandal of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that Yom Kippur was part of the copy and shadow (Hebrews 8:5) of the entire temple system and that Jesus completely and perfectly fulfilled the Day of Atonement and every other requirement of the law for us (Romans 8:4).

Israel was looking for a Messiah who would deliver them from their enemies. He came. But many did not realize that the primary enemy the Messiah came to conquer in this age was sin, the thing that made man the enemy of God.

Yom Kippur was both provisional and a pointer. It was meant to be in place "forever" until the consummation:

Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites [blood of sacrificed animals], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the

world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:23-26)

Jesus turned out to be far more than the Messiah had been expected to be. He was the consummate temple, Passover lamb, sacrificed goat, scapegoat, high priest, prophet and the King of kings.

Here is the good news for Yom Kippur: Jesus the Messiah has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. The Day of Atonement: it is finished."

Jesus is the Temple

"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John 2:19

Temple	**Jesus**
Exodus 25:8-9 – Description of tent God commands Moses to make – Hebrew noun for tent is same as Greek "dwelt"	John 1:14 – "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." – Greek word here for "dwelt" is same as Hebrew word used in Exodus 25
Constructed so God may dwell with us	Jesus = Emmanuel "God with us"
Temple will be destroyed, and God sends Jesus to be the Temple	Jesus describes His own body as the Temple in John 2:19-21. Says it will be destroyed and rebuilt in 3 days
Curtain/Veil to protect people/shield people from the Holy presence of God in the Holy of Holies	The veil is torn at the crucifixion of Jesus – He is the perfect sacrifice that the Temple could never offer
Sacrifices (& Atonement)	Perfect Sacrifice, once for all
Bread	Bread of Life (John 6:48)
Menorah	Light of the world
Incense	Jesus' Sacrifice – sweet aroma to God

We are the Temple

Because God is indwelt with us, *WE* are now the temples of His Spirit!

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 – "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."
1 Peter 2:5 – "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."
1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."
Ephesians 2:21-22 – "In whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."
Romans 8:9 – "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him."

John 14:23 – “Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

This is how God will reach the world! People don’t have to come to the Temple, the Temple comes to them. (evangelism)

The New Earth as Christ the King

There is no Temple in the new earth… because there is no need for one. Think of this like going back to the garden before the fall. Jesus is walking among His people freely and there is no “obstacle” to being in His presence.

Revelation 21:22 “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.”

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

First, as we approach this doctrine concerning man, let it be said that "total depravity" does not mean utterly evil, evil through and through, one who constantly thinks of killing, stealing or harming another. Total depravity refers to the condition of man as thoroughly tainted by the sin of his humanness. Rarely do you find someone utterly given over to evil. They still love their dog or help an elderly lady across the street. The Doctrine of Total Depravity could be termed "Radical Corruption." The point is that man has been altered from his created state and no longer has the stamp of God's original pronouncement: "And God saw that it (His creation) was good."

So how did this happen?

God created man good, but man made the conscious choice to disobey God and go his own way. This created a rift between God and man which the Lord has been working to restore since the Fall.

Virtually every church historically that has a creed or a confession has agreed that something very serious happened to the human race as a result of the first sin—that first sin resulted in original sin. That is, as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, the entire human race fell, and our nature as human beings since the fall has been influenced by the power of evil.

Therefore, original sin has to do with the fallen nature of mankind. The idea is that we are not sinners because we sin, but that we sin because we are sinners.

It means that the fall was so serious that it affects the whole person. The fallenness that captures and grips our human nature affects our bodies; that's why we become ill and die. It affects our minds and our thinking; we still have the capacity to think, but the Bible says the mind has become darkened and weakened. The will of man is no longer in its pristine state of moral power. The will, according to the New Testament, is now in bondage. We are enslaved to the evil impulses and desires of our hearts. The body, the mind, the will, the spirit—indeed, the whole person—have been infected by the power of sin.

R.C. Sproul

Adam has been referred to as our "federal head," our representative.

So what does this mean?

- ✓ Define "federal"- "designating, of, or having to do with a central authority in certain specified common affairs" Webster's

"In the latter half of Romans 5, Paul teaches that God deals with the human race under a system known as "federalism." Simply put, federalism has to do with representation, with one person acting on behalf of another."

Federalism, Boice says, is "a proof of God's grace," for while the failure of our first federal head brought terrible results, federalism "was the only way it would later be possible for God to save us once we had sinned." This is a difficult subject, and we must pray for grace to trust God's wisdom and the testimony of His Word as we study it.

Ligonier Ministries

In the discussion surrounding man's corruption, much of what we study is contained in the **Doctrine of Sin.** So looking at this area of truth would be beneficial.

- **First of all, God is without sin and can never be made to be responsible for anyone's sin.**

Deut. 32: 4, *"His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He."*

James 1: 13, *"God cannot be tempted with evil and He Himself tempts no one."*

Elihu correctly says **in Job 32: 10, "**Far be it from God that He should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that He should do wrong.**"**

Yet here we must consider with caution. To say that there are two equally powerful forces in the universe that duel against one another is false. This is the philosophy of dualism and it is nowhere found in the Bible. Our God is supreme Lord and Almighty in all His ways. We must affirm with Scripture that God does according to His purposes "*Who works all things after the counsel of His will."* **Eph. 1: 11**

God "*does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, 'What are You doing?'"* **Dan. 4: 35**

- **Adam and Eve succumbed to many lies in order to arrive at the decision they made to disobey God.**

-They listened to the lie that what God had said was not true**: "***You will not die***." Gen. 3: 4**

Eve decided to doubt God's truth.

-They listened to the lie that it was right to eat of the tree from which the Lord had explicitly told them NOT to eat. Eve trusted her own evaluation of what was right. She did not allow God's words to define right and wrong. She trusted in her own "sight."

-Also their sin challenged the concept of their identity as God's creatures. They now saw themselves as able to decide for themselves what would benefit them. They saw themselves as independent of God's care and instruction. They decided they wanted to be **"***as God***." Gen. 3: 5 They put themselves in the place of God.**

- **One thing that must be noted at this point is that all sin is irrational.** That means that all sin does not make sense. When we sin we are going against what is most healthful for us. We are turning in a future built on God's good provision for the tainted, corrupted allurements of this passing world. God created us and knows us. He knows what our purpose is in this life and in the next life. To walk independently of God is not only sin but it is foolishness**.**

Since God created us, He knows what He created us for.

We were created to worship.

Just as I do not dry my hair with a toaster or make toast with a hair dryer, I must yield to the purpose for which I was created. God alone knows what that purpose is and He will be the One Who reveals that to me.

- **Inherited sin –** we are counted guilty because Adam sinned**. "***Therefore … sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned***" Rom. 5: 12**

WE ARE NOT SINNERS BECAUSE WE SIN. WE SIN BECAUSE WE ARE SINNERS. —R.C. SPROUL

This viewpoint is also understood as imputation. Adam's sin was imputed, or credited to our account.

The conclusion which is drawn from these verses is that all member of humanity were represented by Adam in the Garden of Eden during the time of testing. As our representative, Adam sinned and God imputed that sin to us as well because he was our "federal head."

If this seems unfair, remember that God is the Judge of All the earth and whatever He does is just and right.

Also remember that you will held accountable for your own sins as well.

Rom. 2: 6 These will constitute the primary basis of our judgment on the last day, for God **"***will render to every man according to his works."*

"*The wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done***." Col. 3: 25**

- **If this still seems unfair, then consider if it is unfair for the Righteousness of Christ to be imputed to your account as a believer in Jesus Christ.**

The procedure by which God has imputed the sin of Adam to humanity is the same procedure as the one in which He considers you righteous because of the imputed Righteousness of Christ. Rom. 5: 12-21

David said in **Ps. 51: 5, "***Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."*

Ps. 58: 3 says, *"The wicked go astray from the womb, they err from their birth, speaking lies."* Paul affirms that before we were Christians *"we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."* **Eph. 2: 3**

This is not to say that man is as corrupt as he could be. There are constraints in play which somewhat control "the beast in man." The conviction of human conscience **(Rom. 2: 14-15),** the civil law, the expectations of family and society all play a part in curbing the tendency to sin.

- **What has happened to us?**

"Every part of our being is affected by sin – our intellects, our emotions and desires, our hearts (the center of our desires and decision-making processes), our goals and motives, and even our physical bodies." Wayne Grudem <u>Systematic Theology</u>

Jesus tells us **"***every one sho commits sin is a slave to si***n John 8: 34**

Jesus also says**,** *"Apart from Me you can do nothing."* **John 15: 5''**

We are incapable of doing anything spiritually good which would please God in our own efforts.

1 Cor. 2: 14, *"the natural man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned*."

We are also told that all people are sinful before God. *"They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt; there is none that does good, no, not one***." Ps. 14: 3**

This verse is repeated in the New Testament as well**: Rom. 3:10**

The First Epistle of John frequently refers to sin and how to deal with it properly.

Sin is a constant companion throughout the Old Testament. The sacrificial system of the Israelites explains to us how a follower of Yahweh could remain in fellowship with a Holy God. The sacrifice of a living animal would temporarily cause the offender to have the wrath of God canceled for a time. **But one day the cost of sin would need to be paid in full – not just temporarily dealt with.**

The one day coming was the day that Christ BECAME sin for us.

2 Cor. 5: 21, "*He made Him Who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the Righteousness of God in Him."*

Eph. 2:1 tells us that we were "*dead in your trespasses and sins*." Now how can a dead person hear, think, believe? They cannot until they are "quickened" by **God. Eph. 2: 4, 5** *"But God, being rich in mercy … even when we were dead in our transgressions made us alive …"*

We were unable to do any spiritual good until God, in His mercy, made us alive in Christ.

- When the unbeliever submits to the authority of God in his life, yielding to the Lord and agreeing with Him about his condition of lostness, that unbeliever has now inherited the kingdom of God as his home.

The issue of *inherited sin* or *total depravity* or *radical corruption* is no longer an issue. It doesn't matter what you call it! Now the Righteousness of Christ has been imputed to that former slave of sin. He is now a saint. **Eph. 2: 19**

- **But what happens when the saint sins? Does that mean his conversion was not legitimate?**

No, not at all! Even the saint will sin, ask for forgiveness and be restored. **1 John 1: 9**

The Holy Spirit will prompt the follower of Christ that all is not well. This will trouble the saint until the Lord shows him his error and what to do about it.

1 Cor. 6: 11, "*Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."*

1 Cor. 1: 2, 30 "*To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours… But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, Who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."*

We must be conformed to the image of Christ. This is no small adjustment. God must do far more than renovate an old man – God must raise a dead man up! God must regenerate us; He must make us new, quickened by His power. But remember this change continues to take place in our lives until we see Jesus face to face. **1 Cor. 15: 42-49, 53, 54; 1 John 3: 2, 3**

So buckle up and prepare for the journey. It promises to be quite an adventure!

TRINITY

Are there three Gods?

Is there one God and three modes?

Are the three Persons of the Godhead equal?

Is each Person of the Trinity a separate part of God?

Is the word "Trinity" in the Bible?

Some doctrines afford a certain amount of understanding even without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit – not this one. Apart from the light of the Holy Spirit, this teaching eludes the non-spiritual mind.

The easiest way to see the truth of this premise is when you attempt to deliver the message of the Trinity to unsaved people. They are totally confused or think you insane.

That's because it is utterly counter to our dimensional thinking. We are so limited in our thinking normally. We are not typically creative thinkers.

When approaching the study of the Trinity, we must rely on the Creator's imagination, His mind. **1 Cor. 2: 16**, "*For who has known the mind of the LORD, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ*." Earlier in **1 Cor. 2: 14-15**, it says, "*But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man."*

"*The doctrine of the Trinity is perhaps the most mysterious and difficult doctrine that is presented to us in the entire range of Scripture.*

The tri-personality of God is exclusively a truth of revelation and one which lies outside the realm of natural reason… the finite is dealing with the Infinite."

Loraine Boettner

Humility is indispensable when approaching the study of the Trinity for this very reason. We are utterly dependent on God revealing truth to us in this understanding. There is nothing quite like the concept we will be exploring here. Yes, there are analogies that may shed a minimum amount of light, but all of these analogies fall short at some point, because again, we have nothing in our consciousness or in the material world that relates even remotely to the Unity of God, yet the Three Persons of the Godhead. The subject of our study is transcendently sacred and holy – the inner most nature of Almighty God.

Apart from this absolutely necessary revelation, man's comprehension is the ceiling. With revelation from the Lord, there is no ceiling!

- ✓ **The great Christian thinker Anselm held that faith must precede all effort to understand.**
  The early Church Fathers had a saying: "I believe that Christ died for me because it is incredible; I believe that He rose from the dead because it is impossible."

  "The doctrine of the Trinity is truth for the heart. The fact that it cannot be satisfactorily explained, instead of being against it, is in its favor. Such a truth had to be revealed; no one could have imagined it." A. W. Tozer

➢ How Do the Scriptures Reveal God?

For one important point, the Scriptures reveal God as "One who exists eternally as Three Persons; these Three Persons, however, being one in substance and existing in the most perfect unity of thought and purpose."

"Doctrines vital to the Christian system, such as those of the Deity and Person of Christ, the Incarnation, the Atonement, etc., are so inextricably interwoven with that of the Tri-unity of God that they cannot be properly understood apart from it." Loraine Boettner

- ✓ Man's knowledge of God has been progressive. Both individually and corporately – we engage with God on His terms and He allows us into His realm when He determines we are ready and fit for His unveiling. It is always best to keep in mind **Deut. 29: 29**, "*The secret things belong to the Lord, but the revealed things belong to us*."

"**The existence of God is an intuitive truth universally accepted by the unprejudiced mind**." Boettner

"**The total New Testament presentation of salvation and all New Testament teaching rest on the Trinitarian understanding of the nature of God**." Expositor's Bible Commentary

Warfield, "The elements of the plan of salvation are rooted in the mysterious nature of the Godhead, in which there coexists a trinal distinction of persons with absolute unity of essence; and the revelation of the Trinity was accordingly incidental to the execution of this plan of salvation, in which the Father sent the Son to be the propitiation for sin, and the Son, when he returned to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, sent the Spirit to apply His redemption to men."

"The pagan religions, as well as all philosophical speculations, are based on natural religion and can, therefore, rise to no higher conception than that of the unity of God." Boettner

- ✓ "Trinity" is not a word found in the Scriptures. But the teaching of *God is one; the Father is God; Jesus Christ is God; the Holy Spirit is God,* are all found in the Bible.

Latin: "*trinitas*" means Threeness

"The historic formulation of the Trinity is not an attempt to explain it, that would be beyond us. It does provide a boundary and safeguard for our thoughts about this mystery, which confronts us with perhaps the most difficult thought that the human mind can know. It is not easy; but it is true."

Reformation Study Bible

➢ OBJECTIONS TO THE TRINITY

One of the most common accusations against the Trinity is that it involves ***tritheism*** (a belief in three gods). This is a false view of God – the Trinity does not suggest that we worship three gods.

"Scripture, reason and conscience are in perfect agreement that there is but one self-existent, eternal, supreme Being in whom all of the divine attributes or perfections inhere and from whom they cannot be separated." Boettner

Deut. 6: 4, "*Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!*

Is. 44: 6, "*Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and His Redeemer, the LORD of hosts; 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me*." Also **Is. 45: 21, 22**

Ex. 20:3, *"You shall have no other gods before Me." Literally "before My face" al-panai*

John 10: 30*, "I and the Father are one."*

James 2: 19, *"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder."*

1 Cor. 8: 4b*, "There is no God but one."*

Mark 10: 18*, "And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.'"*

1 Tim. 2: 5*, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*

Eph. 4: 5, 6*, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, on God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."*

Rev. 22: 13, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."*

Zech. 2: 10, 11*, "Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the LORD. "Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you."*

*"***Here the Lord Jehovah speaks of Himself as sent by the Lord Jehovah – the Lord of Hosts.**" R.A. Torrey

Definition of the Trinity in the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "There are three persons within the Godhead; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."

- The Father is God

1 Cor. 8: 6, *"Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him."*

Gal. 1: 1, *"Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)."*

John 6: 27*, "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."*

Matt. 11: 25*, "At that time, Jesus said, 'I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.'"*

1 Pet. 1: 2, *"According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure."*

Phil. 2: 11*, "And that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

John 20: 17, *"Jesus said to her, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"*

John 17: 11, *"I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are."*

John 11: 41*, "So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.'"*

Mark 14: 36*, "And He was saying, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.'"*

➢ The Son is God

Col. 2: 9, *"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."*

John 20: 28, *"Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'"*

Titus 2: 13, *"Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."*

2 Cor. 5: 19, *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."*

Matt. 16: 16, *"Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'"*

John 5:18, *"For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."*

Mark 2: 5, *"And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"*

John 1: 1, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

John 10: 30, *"I and the Father are one."*

John 14: 9, *"Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father."*

John 17: 21, *"Jesus prays that His disciples may be one as He and the Father are one."*

Ps. 45: 6, 7, *"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows."* **Heb. 1: 8**

Ps. 110: 1, *"The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'"*

*"*Unless they are willing to admit a plurality of persons in one God, Jewish interpreters of Scripture to this day will have no more satisfactory explanation of Psalm 110: 1 than they did in Jesus day.*"* Wayne Grudem

These last two Old Testament quotes give us an example of what Derek Kidner refers to as *"an example of Old Testament language bursting its banks, to demand a more than human fulfillment."*

❖ *ATTRIBUTES (which are only ascribed to God are ascribed to Christ)*

Holiness

John 6: 69, *"We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."*

2 Cor. 5: 21, *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

John 8: 46*, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?"*

Heb. 7: 26*, "For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens."*

1 John 2: 1*, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*

Eternity

John 8: 58*, "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.'"*

John 17: 5*, "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."*

Heb. 1: 8*, "But of the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.'"*

Heb. 1: 9*, "You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your companions."*

Heb. 1: 10-12*, "And, 'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands; they will perish, but You remain; and they all will become old like a garment, and like a mantle You will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end.'"*

Heb. 13: 8*, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and yes, forever."*

Life

John 1: 4, *"In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men."*

John 14: 6*, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'"*

John 11: 25*, "I am the resurrection and the life."*

Omnipotence

Matt. 28: 18*, "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."*

Rev. 1: 8, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

Omniscience

John 16: 30*, "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God."*

Matt. 9: 4, *"And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, 'Why are you thinking in your hearts?'"*

John 6: 64, *"'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him."*

Col. 2: 3, *"In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."*

Omnipresence

Matt. 28: 20*, "I am with you always."*

Eph. 1: 23*, "Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*

Creation

John 1: 3*, "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."*

John 1: 10*, "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him."*

Col. 1: 16, 17*, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."*

Heb. 1: 3, *"And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right had of the Majesty on high."*

Raising the Dead

John 5: 27-29*, "And He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 'Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His*

voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.'"

Judgment of all Men

Matt. 25: 31-46*, "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne… These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

Prayer and Worship are to be Directed to Christ

John 14: 14*, "If you will ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."*

Luke 24; 51, 52*, "While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy."*

John 5: 23, *"So that all will honor the Son even as they honor the father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the father who sent Him."*

Heb. 1: 6*, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."*

Phil. 2: 10, 11*, "So that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

2 Pet. 3: 18*, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."*

Heb. 13: 21, *"Equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Compare all of these statements regarding Jesus Christ to the following:

Isaiah 45: 22*, "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."*

Jer. 17: 5*, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD."*

- *When reviewing all of the above Scriptural references, it is clear that to worship anyone other than the Lord is idolatry. So why are we commanded to worship Christ?*

Sonship

- The Hebrew idea of sonship teaches the meaning that the father and the son are equal, "*For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God*." **John 5: 18**

Also see: Matt. 9: 27; 24: 36; Mark 8: 31; Luke 10: 22; John 9: 35-37; 11: 4

When the word "son' is used in theological terms of Semitic thought it is used in the sense of *sameness of nature*.

"It is, of course, the Semitic consciousness which underlies the phraseology of Scripture, and wherever the Scriptures call Christ the "Son" of God they assert His true and proper Deity… Father and Son are co-eternal and co-equal in power and glory, partaking of the same nature and substance, and have always existed as distinct Persons... In the divine sphere sonship is absolute, while in the human it is relative, very much as the attributes of wisdom, power, holiness, justice and love are absolute in God but relative in man. "

*"***In His state of humiliation, speaking from the standpoint of His human nature, He could say, 'The Father is greater than I.' (John 14: 28)… This subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Spirit to the Father and the Son, relates not to their essential life with in the Godhead, but only to their modes of operation or their division of labor in creation and redemption**.*"* *Loraine Boettner*

*"*Whatever underlies the conception of sonship in Scriptural speech is just 'likeness': whatever the father is that the Son is also… The adjunction of the adjective 'only begotten' (John 1: 14; 3: 16-18; 1 John 4: 9) need add only the idea of uniqueness, not of derivation (Ps. 22: 20; 25: 16; 35: 17)… To be the Son of God in any sense was to be like God in that sense; and to be God's own Son was to be exactly like God, to be 'equal with God.*'"* *Benjamin Warfield*

***Creed of Athanasius states, "Equal to His Father, as touching His God head; less than the Father, as touching His manhood**."*

"When we speak of subjection we do not mean inequality." J. M. Boice

"Eternal equality in being but subordination in role is essential to the church's doctrine of the Trinity.*"* Grudem

"Priority is not necessarily superiority." A. H. Strong

"**In the incarnation the Son veiled His deity, but He did not void it**." A.W.Tozer
Phil 2: 5-11

- ***The Holy Spirit is God***

Acts 5: 3, 4, *"Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? … Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."*

1 Cor. 2: 10, 11*, "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God."*

John 15: 26*, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me."*

Matt. 28: 19*, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."*

2 Cor. 13: 14 *(the apostolic benediction), "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."*

- *The distinct Personality of the Holy Spirit is seen in the facts of His personal words and actions.*

Acts 8: 29*, "Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot.'"*

Acts 10: 19, 20*, "While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Behold, three men are looking for you. But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself.'"*

Acts 13: 2, *"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

Luke 12: 12*, "For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."*

John 16: 13, 14*, "But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative but whatever He hears, he will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you."*

Eph. 4: 30*, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*

Rom. 8: 26, *"In the same way the Spirit also helps our weaknesses; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."*

Rev. 2: 17, *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it."*

Matt. 12: 31, 32, *"Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."*

*{*The language here used implies that it is impossible to commit a sin against a more divine personage than the Holy Spirit – this implies His eternal dignity and Deity.*} L. Boettner*

Gen. 1: 2, *"The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."*

Gen. 6: 3, *"Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."*

Num. 11: 26, 29, *"But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp. But Moses said to him, 'Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!'"*

Neh. 9: 20, *"You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, and You gave them water for their thirst."*

Ps. 139: 7-10, *"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?*

If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,

Even there You hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me."

Is. 61: 1, *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners."*

Ezek. 3: 12, 14, 15 *"Then The Spirit lifted me up, and I heard a great rumbling sound behind me, 'Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place'... So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away; and I sent embittered in the rage of my spirit, and the hand of the LORD was strong on me. Then I came to the exiles who lived beside the river Chebar at Tel-abib, and I sat there seven days where they were living, causing consternation among them."*

Luke 1: 35, *"The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.'"*

Matt. 3: 16, *"After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.'"*

He was promised as a Teacher and a Comforter **John 16: 7-13**

The Holy Spirit came on believers on the day of Pentecost and equipped them as witnesses.

Acts 2: 1-42

He directed Paul on where to go in his mission work. **Acts 16: 6-10**

He gives spiritual gifts to believers. **1 Cor. 12: 4-31**

He performs the supernatural work of regeneration. **Titus 3: 5; John 3: 5**

He inspired the prophets and apostles to write in God's will. **2 Pet. 1: 20, 21**

- ✓ Read the article on **the Holy Spirit** to see even more that the Spirit does for the believer!

  Further verses for study include: **Jer. 31: 33, 34; Heb. 10: 15-17; Ps. 95: 7-11; Heb. 3: 7-11; Is. 6: 9, 10; Acts 28: 25-28**

"Throughout the Scriptures the Holy Spirit is thus set forth as a distinct Person, with a mind, will and power of His own.

He is the very life element of Deity, and because so far as our relation to God is concerned God comes to us in a spiritual way pre-eminently through this Person, His Spirit communes with our spirits, speaks to our consciences, cleanses our hearts, and leads us in right paths." *Boettner*

"***The Bible is not a work on Systematic Theology, but only the quarry out of which the stone for such a temple can be obtained***." Boettner

God has not arranged the Bible in a particular system of theology which is reflective of the fact that He has neither given us a fully developed system of astronomy, biology, politics, philosophy or economics. As His children, we are to develop these systems as a reflection of our being made in His image.

Also the Bible provides a progressive revelation of all pertaining to our faith. A premature revelation of the Trinity could have done harm to the progress of this precious faith we so cherish. It was imperative to learn of the unity of the Godhead before being equipped to even entertain the concept of the Trinity. *Tritheism* most likely would have been the default of a premature unveiling of the truth of One God in Three Persons because stated as such, this is a very difficult understanding.

➢ Many Verses Where We See the Three Persons Working Together

2 Thes. 2: 13, 14; 1 Pet. 1: 2; Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 12: 4-6; Gal. 4: 6; Eph. 1: 3-14; 3: 14-19; 9: 14; Luke 1: 35; Matt. 3: 16, 17; Jude 20, 21; Is. 48: 16

Matt. 28: 19*, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."* Note that here we do not see "in the names" – plural – but "in the name," singular which shows unity and oneness*.*

Matt. 12: 28*, "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."*

*"It is in the Fourth Gospel that the strongest evidence of a coequal Trinity is to be found. The threefold formula appears again and again**: 1: 33-34; 14: 16, 26; 16: 13-15; 20: 21-22; (1 John 4: 2, 13-14**)"* Millard Erikson

➢ Infinite Love

"Thus we see that the Persons within the Godhead are so distinct that each can address the others, each can love the others*." Boettner*

This statement is important because we know God to be a God of love for all eternity. He has loved from an eternal point of view. He created us because He willed to do so, not because He "needed" someone to love – He already possessed the greatest objects of love there could be*.*

Because God is infinite, His love must also be infinite. To exert this infinite love, there must be an infinite object of love.

➢ Plurality of the Godhead

Gen. 1: 26, 27*; 3: 22; 11: 7; Is. 6: 8

These and other passages refer to God in the plural, *Elohim* with a singular verb performing the action. Even the *Shema,* which states*, "The LORD is one …" uses* Elohim

Jehovah, our Elohim is one Jehovah.

Other interesting accounts: **Gen. 18: 1- 19: 29**

***Some scholars have stated that the use of *Elohim* (the plural) is to refer to the majesty of God, as some royals employ the plural. This interpretation of *Elohim* as a plural of majesty would intend "*to elevate the status of a general representative of the class … the kings of Israel and Judah are all addressed in the singular in our biblical records*." Erikson**

"However in the Old Testament Hebrew there are no other examples of a monarch using plural verbs or plural pronouns of himself in such a 'plural of majesty.' So this suggestion has no evidence to support it." Kautzsch Hebrew Grammar

"Because God is Spirit, and numbers belong primarily to the physical world, and difficulty must arise when we attempt to conceive spiritual being in the forms of physical thought…" R.A. Torrey

"*So God created man in His own image,*

In the image of God he created him;

***Male and female he created them*." Gen 1: 27**

Some view this "Threeness" of the creation of man is reflective of the Trinity of the Godhead. "*The image of God in man (generic) is to be found in the fact that man has been created male and female (i.e., plural). This means the image of God must consist in a unity in plurality*." Millard Erikson

The Three Exhibit at Once Their Unity and Their Distinctiveness.

Rev. 4: 8 *says, "And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; day and night they do not cease to say, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD GOD, the ALMIGHTY, who was and who is and who is to come.'"*

- *Some see a direct relationship between the priestly formula of blessing the Israelite people,* **Num. 6: 24-26**

"Jehovah bless you, and keep you;

Jehovah make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

Jehovah lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

- *And the Apostolic Benediction of* **2 Cor. 13: 14**

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ

And the love of God

And the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

In the act of Redemption the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit entered into a covenant agreement – they each agreed voluntarily to undertake a specific work in order to achieve our Redemption.

➢ Person

The concept of personhood is marked by intelligence, will and individual existence.

"The word 'Person' as it is applied to the three subsistences within the Godhead, like the more important word 'Trinity,' is not found in Scripture itself; yet the idea which it expresses is Scriptural, and we do not know any other word that expresses so well the idea we have in mind … When we say there are three distinct persons in the Godhead we do not mean that each one is as separate from the others as one human being is from every other."

"The Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be distinguished, but they cannot be separated." Boettner

"One of our difficulties at this point is that we do not have an adequate word in English, or any other language, to express the nature of the different existences within the Godhead. The best word we have is 'Person…' The word used most often in the Greek language was *homoousias,* which literally means 'one being.'" J. M. Boice

"Each person has the whole fullness of God's being in Himself… The Father is all of God's being. The Son also is all of God's being. And the Holy Spirit is all of God's being." Grudem

✓ Yachid versus Echad (Hebrew)

Yachid means *"absolute one."*

Echad means *"united one."*

Here we find some clarity in regard to the word *"one."*

Gen. 1 *uses echad* when describing the end of each day and evening.

Gen 2: 24 a man and woman shall be *"one."* Again *echad* is used. *A "one" of unity.*

Gen 22: 2 refers to Abraham's one and only son – *yachid* is used here. Also **Ps. 25: 16; Jer. 6: 26; Zech 12: 10**

- ✓ **It may be of interest to you to know this passage from the most sacred Jewish book, the Zohar.**

In commenting on Deut. 6: 4, the Shema:

"*Hear O Israel, Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one*."

"Why is there need of mentioning the name of God three times in this verse?

The first Jehovah is the Father above.

The second is the stem of Jesse, the Messiah who is to come from the family of Jesse through David.

And the third is the way which is below (meaning the Holy Spirit who shows us the way) and these three are one."

➢ Substance, Essence

These are key words to the understanding of the Trinity.

"Substance or essence is that which the different members of the Godhead have in common, that in which the attributes and powers of Deity inhere; person is that in which they differ." *Boettner*

➢ Errors

Why would the Church be so concerned about the doctrine of the Trinity?

Is it really essential to believe in the full deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit?

To entertain faulty views of the nature of the Holy God is to walk in dangerous and treacherous paths.

Without the Trinity, "the atonement is at stake." Grudem

A mere creature could not bear the full wrath of God and thereby obtain the forgiveness of our sins.

"Justification by faith alone is threatened if we deny the full deity of the Son." Grudem

"The three personal 'subsistences' (as they are called) are co-equal and coeternal centers of self-awareness, each being 'I' in relation to two who are 'You," and each having the full divine essence of God, the specific existence that belongs to God alone. God is not one person who plays three separate roles; this is the error called 'modalism.'" Reformation Study Bible

"**But in the Trinity, each of the persons is not just a separate part of God, each person is fully God**." Grudem

Polytheism – God exists in a plurality of powers and personalities. This concept destroys the unity of God and worships each one in isolation, such as the sun, moon, rivers, trees, images etc.

Pantheism – God has no personal existence except as he comes to consciousness in man, that his only life is the sum of all creature life, and that his immediate participation in every thought and act of creatures makes him the author of sin.

- ✓ All false religions are a bastardization of the true faith. So polytheism has a corrupted view of the Trinity. This makes sense when you ask where the idea of multiple gods came from: a corruption of truth.

This is why we must guard our understanding of the Trinity from an idea of Three Gods. There is only One God.

"Athanasius understood that Christianity stands or falls with the confession of the deity of Christ and of the Trinity. In the confession of the Trinity throbs the heart of the Christian religion: every error results from or upon deeper reflection may be traced to, a wrong view of this doctrine." Herman Bavinck

"Science has done much for us; but it is a poor science that would hide from us the great deep sacred infinitude of Nescience, whether we can never penetrate, on which all science swims as a mere superficial film." A.W. Tozer

"Some persons who reject all they cannot explain have denied that God is a Trinity. Subjecting the Most High to their cold, level-eyed scrutiny, they conclude that it is impossible that He could be both One and Three. These forget that their whole life is enshrouded in mystery. They fail to consider that any real explanation of even the simplest phenomenon in nature lies hidden in obscurity and can no more be explained than can the mystery of the Godhead." W. Tozer

➢ Crucial Points of Trinity

1. **God is three persons.**
2. **Each person is fully God.**
3. **There is one God.**

Errors have come throughout Church history by denying any of these three crucial points.

"It is evident that three persons have subsisted in God from all eternity." John Calvin

"The idea of the Trinity illuminates, enriches and elevates all our thoughts of God." B. Warfield

It is clear from Scripture that God exists as a Trinity – that has been revealed. But what has not been revealed is the particular mode in which the Three Persons exist.

American King James Version (AKJV)
Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty to perfection?

We may not understand God's existence, but this does not negate Who God is. ***God's existence does not depend on our understanding.***

A God that can be fully comprehended by the human mind is not the God that can create this universe and sustain it. We are incapable of understanding Him or His ways unless He reveals Himself.
"*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it*." **Ps. 139: 6**

"Man can perceive only the hem of the garment of God; the cherubim cover the rest with their wings." Athanasius

Prov. 30:4, "*Who has ascended into heaven and descended?*
Who has gathered the wind in His fists?
Who has wrapped the waters in His garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is His name or His son's name?
Surely you know."

"The doctrine of the Trinity is above reason and could never have been discovered by man apart from divine revelation." Boettner

"Hence our primary reason for believing the doctrine of the Trinity is…not because of any general tendency of human thinking to go in that direction, nor because of any analogies in nature, but only because it is a clearly revealed doctrine of the Bible." Boettner

➢ Historical Value of the Trinity

Nicene Creed (325)

*"*We believe in one God – And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father – And in the Holy Spirit*."*

In the first two hundred years after the crucifixion, there was little attempt to explain the Trinity, but that the early believers saw the truth of the coequal existence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit was evident.

"Justin and Tatian stressed this unity of essence." Millard Erikson

Tertullian also held this view. Yet early on there was confusion and error that had to be worked through. Dynamic Monarchianism, Modalistic Monarchianism, Arianism, Sabellianism are just a few of the false teachings that had to be exposed; but these heresies actually worked in the favor of truth as they edged the faithful to the challenge of coming up with a better understanding of the Three in One.

Athanasius (293-373) was one of the first recorded to be a champion of the truth of the Trinity. Included in the list of early defenders of this truth are: Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa.

The Council of Nicea took place in 325 in which the topic of the Trinity took front and center stage among the fathers of the faith. Because of controversies and heresies, the position on the Deity of Christ had come to a head. This Council and the Council of Constantinople (381) formulated definitive statements which were held by most orthodox believers but which now became dogma. "The formula that expresses the position of Constantinople is 'one *ousia* in three *hupostaseis*.' The one Godhead exists simultaneously in three modes of being or hupostases. The Godhead exists 'undivided in divided persons.'"

"The Cappadocians emphasized – while the three members of the Trinity can be distinguished numerically as person, they are indistinguishable and inseparable in their essence or substance or being." M. Erikson

Homoousios/Homoiousias

***Homoousios* means "of the same nature"**

***Homoiousias* means "of a similar nature"**

The difference being one letter – the letter iota.

"The difference between the two words was profound, and the presence or absence of the *iota (*merely one *'iota')* really did mark the difference between biblical Christianity, with a true doctrine of the Trinity, and a heresy that did not accept the full deity of Christ." Grudem

➢ Benefits of the Doctrine of the Trinity

One clear benefit to this doctrine is the appeal which it makes to the inward sense of sin.

Without the Three Persons Who established the Redemption of man, the One who made the plan, the One who worked out the proposed plan and the One who applies the plan within the soul of each individual person, we would be left with a weakened view of this amazing achievement of the Almighty God.

A watered down version of sin lends toward the erroneous thought that we can accomplish our own redemption or freedom from sin. This is heresy.

The doctrine of the Trinity gives us a theocentric view of Christianity. We must never slight One Person of the Godhead. We must worship God in spirit and in truth.

The doctrine of the Trinity does not allow for man to come up with his own system of belief in regard to who God is.

The doctrine of the Trinity, by its very incomprehensibility, humbles man to his proper role of seeking child.

"**It is spiritually healthy for us to acknowledge openly that God's very being is far greater than we can ever comprehend. This humbles us before God and draws us to worship Him without reserve**." Grudem

The doctrine of the Trinity shows us the great love which our God has for us. To covenant together to achieve our salvation at such a great cost to all Three Persons, shows unending love.

Essentials in the Doctrine of the Trinity

1. The unity of God is basic.
2. The deity of each of the three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, must be affirmed.
3. The Threeness and Oneness of God are not in the same respect. (A contradiction occurs if something is A and not A at the same time and in the same respect.)
4. The Trinity is eternal. There have always been three.
5. The function of one member of the Trinity may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members, but that does not mean He is in any way inferior in essence.
6. In the final analysis, the Trinity is incomprehensible. We are finite; He is infinite.

Someone has said,

"Try to explain it, and you'll lose your mind;

But try to deny it, and you'll lose your soul."

Someone asked Daniel Webster how a man of his great intellect could possibly believe in the Trinity. His reply: “I do not pretend fully to understand the arithmetic of heaven now.”

Amen!

We may not understand the Trinity but the Bible teaches this amazing truth and the Spirit within us witnesses to the fact of its message.

Athanasian Creed

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1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith;

2. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

3. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

4. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.

5. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit.

6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.

7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit.

8. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.

9. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.

10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.

11. And yet they are not three eternals but one eternal.

12. As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.

13. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty.

14. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.

15. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;

16. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.

17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord;

18. And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord.

19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;

20. So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say; There are three Gods or three Lords.

21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.

22. The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten.

23. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.

25. And in this Trinity none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another.

26. But the whole three persons are coeternal, and coequal.

27. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

28. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

29. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

30. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.

31. God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of substance of His mother, born in the world.

32. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

33. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.

34. Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.

35. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of that manhood into God.

36. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;

38. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;

39. He ascended into heaven, He sits on the right hand of the Father, God, Almighty;

40. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;

42. and shall give account of their own works.

43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

44. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved.

THE WISDOM OF GOD

"The wisdom of God properly understood will revolutionize your life."

Chip Ingram God: As He Longs For You to See Him

"*Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him.*

It is He Who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings;

He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.

It is He Who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.

***To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power; even now You have made k*nown *to me what we requested of You, for You have made known to us the king's matter*." Daniel 2: 20-23**

"*Wisdom, which is an aspect of divine knowledge, is the virtue of God which manifests itself in the selection of worthy ends and in the choice of the best means for the realization of those ends… Wisdom is the right use of knowledge, therefore God never makes a mistake.*" Herbert Lockyer

While each of us can recall all too vividly times of wishing we had remained still or quiet, thus putting on display our very lack of wisdom, God created us in His image and He is All wise!

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could manage to live without regret, without failing in this area of wisdom.

The closer we become to the Lord, the more we listen to His voice and respond in obedience, the closer we return to being made in the image of God.

Louis Berkhof says, in regard to God's wisdom, that the "*final end to which He makes all things subservient is His own glory.*"

- **God's Attributes - Absolute**

God's attributes can be described as absolute. "*By absolute is meant those qualities belonging to God in, and of, Himself – those attributes God possesses apart from any relationship* He may sustain toward His creatures. These attributes reflect His own inherent excellency." Herbert Lockyer

Rom. 16: 27 calls God the "only wise God."

Job says that God is "wise in heart." Job 9: 4

"*With Him are wisdom and might; He has counsel and understanding***." Job 12: 13**

Ps. 104: 24 tells us "*O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your creatures***."**

1 Cor. 1: 24, 30 says that Christ is "*the wisdom of God***" to those who are called.**

Even though the word of the cross is "foolishness" to those who reject it and think themselves to be wise in this world 1 Cor. 1: 18-20

1 Cor. 1: 21, 27, 29

Anselm, one of the Church fathers has said that we do not reason in order that we might believe, but we reason because we already believe. If I have to reason myself into faith, then I can be reasoned back out of it again. "*But faith is an organ of knowledge; if I know something by faith, I will reason about it."* Tozer

As Paul closes his doctrinal masterpiece, he cannot help but sing the praises of the wisdom of God. "*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen***." Rom. 11: 33-36**

Eph. 3: 10 "*That the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."*

Another way of delineating God's attributes is:

What are the communicable and incommunicable attributes of God?

by Matt Slick

The incommunicable attributes of God are those that belong to God alone (omniscience, transcendence, etc.,) where the communicable attributes of God are those that we can also possess (knowledge, love, mercy, etc.,). However, we have to realize that all of our discussions about God's attributes are going to ultimately be inadequate. God is, after all, infinite in his perfections. Though we can understand the concept of omnipresence, we cannot experience it. We can understand the concept of transcendence, but we cannot experience it. Therefore, our understanding of God and his attributes is woefully insufficient. But that doesn't mean we can't know things about Him. Still, we are seeking to fathom the depths of the knowability of God, and this can obviously be problematic. He is infinite; we are finite. Furthermore, many theologians have disagreed on what is and is not proper categorization of the attributes of God and whether or not such categorization makes sense in the first place. The debates on this will continue. Nevertheless, let's take a look at some of the standard attributes of God that have been categorized as communicable and incommunicable.

1. Wisdom
1. People are capable of expressing wisdom, which is the proper use of knowledge. But this is best done in light of scriptural revelation. We can possess wisdom but not perfectly. God, however, possesses wisdom perfectly and always makes the right decisions as well as the best ways to accomplish his decisions.
    2. https://carm.org/communicable-incommunicable-attributes-of-god

- **God's Wisdom: Effects on the Believer**

"If the Christian church is faithful to God's wise plan, it will always be in the forefront in breaking down racial and social barriers in societies around the world, and will thus be a visible manifestation of God's amazingly wise plan to bring great unity out of great diversity and thereby to cause all creation to honor Him." **Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology**

2 Cor. 12: 8-10

We can ask God confidently for wisdom when we need it because of His promises in His Word:

James 1: 7

Ps. 19: 7

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: Ps. 110: 10

Prov. 9: 10

Prov. 1: 7

The possession of the fear of the Lord results in humility, not pride.

Prov. 11: 2

James 3: 13-18

The person wise in God's way will continually walk in dependence on the Lord, desiring to glorify Him.

"*God is infinitely wise and we are not, and it pleases Him when we have faith to trust His wisdom even when we do not understand what He is doing*." Grudem, <u>Systematic Theology</u>

<u>Imagine this: it is impossible to think too highly of God!</u>

- ✓ **Knowledge is different than wisdom.**

"*Knowledge is acquired by study, but wisdom results from an intuitive insight into things…*

Both are imperfect in man, but in God they are characterized by absolute perfection." Louis Berkhof <u>Systematic Theology</u>

-The wisdom of God is seen in creation

Ps. 19: 1-7

104: 1-34

Prov. 3: 19 – "*The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens.*"

Jer. 10: 12 – "*It is He Who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; and by His understanding He had stretched out the heavens*."

Wisdom: definition

Tozer – "*What is wisdom? It is the skill to achieve the most perfect ends by the most perfect means. Both the means and the ends have to be worthy of God. Wisdom is the ability to see the end from the beginning, to see everything in proper relation and in full focus."*

-in providence

Ps. 33: 10, 11

Rom. 8: 28

-In redemption

Rom. 11: 33

1 Cor. 2: 7

Eph. 3: 10

"*Our redemption begins and ends with God's wisdom*." Chip Ingram

When it comes to God's wisdom, we cannot fully comprehend anywhere near what it truly means. There is no need for God to learn anything. He has never needed to learn. "*In fact, if we are to take the scope of His knowledge at full value, it is necessary to say that God has never learned and cannot learn, for He already knows and has always known everything.*" J.M. Boice Foundations of the Christian Faith

Is. 40: 13-14

Job 38: 2-7

There is divine wisdom and there is creature wisdom. One belongs to God alone – the other cannot "see" God's way, but only its own way.

For example, it is divine wisdom that thought of the way of redemption: the holy Son of God offering Himself up to die for sinful man.

Creature wisdom would never have seen this as a viable option.

It has been observed that God's knowledge is ***primary,*** for He is the pattern and source of all knowledge from which others merely borrow; His knowledge is pure.

Ps. 147: 5 says "*Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite*."

This means that there is no end to the Lord's understanding; it is measureless!

Imagine that for a minute – there is no end to His understanding. Just worship Him for a while dwelling on that truth!

Eph. 1: 6, 8, 12, 14

Col. 1: 16

"*The idea of God as infinitely wise is at the root of all truth… our moral sanity requires that we attribute to the maker and sustainer of the universe a wisdom entirely perfect. To refuse to do this is to betray the very thing in us that distinguishes us from the beasts."* A.W. Tozer The Knowledge of the Holy

"*Until we grasp what it means that God is all-wise, we will never be able to trust and rest in His wise plan for our lives."* Chip Ingram

- Wisdom sees everything in focus.

God's wisdom means that He works in a manner which cannot be improved upon – especially by finite man.

Think of the many wise deeds of the Lord which were done in secret, in virtual silence and anonymity.

When God created the heavens and the earth, darkness was upon the face of the deep.

When the Eternal Son became flesh, He was carried for a time in the womb of an obscure peasant girl.

When our Lord died, He was in the darkness, seen by no one at the last.

When He arose from the dead, it was "very early in the morning."

No one saw Him rise.

Perhaps God was saying, "I need no witness other than the witness I Myself give. Who I am is all that need matter to you, for there lie your hope and your peace. I will do what I will do, and it will all come to light at last, but how I do it is My secret. Trust Me and be not afraid."

- God's Wisdom Revealed

Where is God's wisdom revealed in your life?

"*All that you and I have lived for, hoped for and dreamed over in our heart of hearts – life, safety, happiness, heaven, immortality, the presence of God – hinges on whether you're going to accept the ultimate wisdom of the Triune God, as revealed in the Scriptures. Will you dare to trust His eternal wisdom?"* Tozer

Man was originally made in the image of God. (**Gen. 1: 26**)

The moral qualities which belonged to the divine image were forfeit at the Fall. God's image has been marred in humanity.

But God has begun a work of redemption.

"*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror … the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit*." **2 Cor. 3: 18**

"*And have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One Who created him*." **Col. 3: 10**

Also look at **Prov. 8: 34-36**

Walk in wisdom

Eph. 5: 15ff

Col. 4: 5; 1: 9

James 1: 5

"*Not till we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty, acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours*." J.I. Packer Knowing God

"*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God*." **Col. 3: 16**

"When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom." **Prov. 11: 2**

The entire book of Ecclesiastes teaches us that all is vanity apart from God's wisdom.

"For the truth is that God in His wisdom, to make and keep us humble and to teach us to walk by faith, has hidden from us almost everything that we should like to know about the providential purposes which He is working out in the churches and in our own lives." J.I Packer

1 Cor. 1: 30 *says, "It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, Who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."*

These amazing gifts – righteousness, holiness and redemption – come from His wisdom.

When we ask God for wisdom, we must not doubt. The word "doubt" in **James 1: 7** actually means "double-minded." This would describe someone with a divided mind, a soul with split allegiances. We cannot ask for God's wisdom in order to evaluate our options and then do as we please. Rather truly wise living means relying on the source of wisdom and acting on His guidance decisively. This kind of living means we tell God that we sign on with Him even without seeing what the marching orders for that day are. No matter what – we will obey Him today and every day.

- **Wisdom means we trust God completely because He knows best.**

We need to approach every decision as an opportunity to seek God's wisdom. The single-minded attitude says: "I ask You to show me Your will and I am telling You in advance that I will follow Your guidance. I am signing the check and trust You to put in the particulars of what, when and where."

What is God after?

What is God's goal with us?

"*He plans that a great host of humankind should come to love and honor Him. His ultimate objective is to bring them to a state in which they please Him entirely and praise Him … He brings them to a state in which He is all in all to them, and He and they rejoice continually in the knowledge of each other's love*." Chip Ingram

In the book of Job **(28**) the writer compares gaining wisdom to mining for treasure. Job explains that his three "friends" assume they know the mind of God in regard to Job's condition. Job himself realizes that people are unable to ascertain God's wisdom fully. Man's inability to know God's wisdom is a first step to walking in humble reliance upon the Lord's wisdom.

Another source of Wisdom is the book of Proverbs.

Especially in **Prov. 8,** we encounter the contrast of Wisdom's ways and the ways of the adulteress. Here we find that wisdom existed before the Creation of the world.

We find at the end of this chapter on wisdom that this great gift leads to life, while folly leads to death.

Prov. 9 is another chapter which shows the path of wisdom versus the path of destruction.

"*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*" **Prov. 9: 10**

In **Prov. 9: 10** the word for *beginning* does not mean "where you start" but it means "pre-requisite." We cannot go further until we establish that we reverence our Lord.

"Wisdom"= *hokma*h # 2451 a noun meaning wisdom, skill, experience, shrewdness

God alone knows where wisdom dwells and where it originates (**Job 28: 12, 20**); no other living being possesses this knowledge about wisdom (**Job 28: 21**)

God employed wisdom as His master craftsman to create all things (**Ps. 104: 24; Jer. 10: 12**)

Wisdom keeps company with all the other virtues: prudence, knowledge, and discretion (**Prov. 8: 12**). The portrayal of wisdom in **Prov. 8: 22-24** lies behind Paul's magnificent picture of Christ in **Col. 1: 15, 16**, for all the treasure of wisdom are lodged in Christ (**Col. 2: 3**).

The Complete Word Study Dictionary Old Testament Baker and Carpenter

- Certain books in the Bible are termed **Wisdom Literature**: Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Proverbs. These books teach us much about the wisdom of God.

Devote much time to these books if you desire to walk in the Lord's wisdom!

THE WORD OF GOD

There are many terms which writers of Scripture use for "word." One of the most powerful words in the Old Testament for God's word is "law" or *torah*.

"Law (*torah)* in the broad sense refers to any "instruction" flowing from the revelation of God as the basis for life and action…The goal of revelation is the *internalization* of God's word in the heart of man so as to transform his way of life: 'The law (*torah*) of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.'" (**Ps. 37:31; 40:8; Jer. 31: 33**) Expositor's Bible Commentary

The expression of internalization is delight in God's revelation.

God's word is faithful (**Ps. 119:43**), righteous (**119:160**), a lamp to my feet (**119:105**), a light to my path (**119:105**). His word sustains me during adverse times (**119:114**).

The godly acknowledge that God's laws give order within the community. **Ps.18:22**

"***As he has felt the sun, perhaps in the desert, searching him out in every nook of shade where he attempted to hide from it, so he feels the Law searching out all the hiding-places of his soul***." C.S. Lewis

The most common term for "word" in the New Testament is *logos*.

- ✓ According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, *logos* is the expression of thought – not the mere name of an object as embodying a conception or idea. It is also the word which designates Jesus as the Personal Word, a title of the Son of God.

Logos in the original language means "to explain" or "to reckon." Even Plato and Socrates used this term to mean "a harmony between the *logos* of reason and the *logos* of reality."

Rhema denotes that which is spoken, what is uttered in speech or writing. In Eph. 6:17, when the believer is enjoined to take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word (*rhema*) of God, the meaning is that he is to take up and use an individual scripture which the Spirit brings to the regenerate, sanctified mind.

According to Vine's, *logos* is reasoned speech and *rhema* is an utterance, the articulated expression of a thought.

Revelation

"The New is in the Old concealed;

The Old is in the New revealed."

Herbert Lockyer, referring to revelation in the Old and New Testaments

What do we mean by *revelation*?

The word actually means "flinging or drawing back the veil" so as to remove any hindrance to complete vision.

Human search can never discover God.

"*The Bible is not primarily a record of man's thoughts of God, but a record of what God has done and revealed of Himself to man*." Herbert Lockyer

Each book of the Bible proceeded from the same divine mind, so the instruction of the Bible's sixty-six books is complementary and consistent. Scripture never contradicts Scripture instead, one passage explains another.

"***By the word*** *of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of His mouth*." **Ps. 33:6**

Heb. 1:3 tells us that Christ is continually "upholding the universe **by His word of power**."

God's words of *personal address* are His communications with people on earth. An example of this would be His encounter with Adam and the instructions which God gave to Adam.

God's words spoken through human lips were considered to be just as authoritative and just as true as God's words of personal address.

Also, God has provided His *written word*. The first example of this is in Exodus with the narrative concerning the giving of the Ten Commandments. **Ex. 31:18; Deut. 31:24-26; Josh. 24:26; Is. 30:8; Jer. 30:2**

Since the Bible is a progressive revelation, it is wise to read it as a whole, comparing one part with another. This will result in a true perspective. Partial examination will result in partial understanding; only careful and complete comparison of Scripture will show the complete mind of God.

Inspiration

"*I thought age should speak, and increased years should teach wisdom. But it is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding."* **Job 32:7, 8**

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." **2 Tim. 3:16**

The word "Scripture" here is *graphe* and refers to the Old Testament written Scripture. Each use of *graphe* in the New Testament refers to the Old Testament Scriptures in every other occurrence in the New Testament. Also look at the previous verse (15) and see how Paul refers to the "sacred writings".

The term which theologians have used many years is *plenary inspiration*. This means that the words of Scripture are God's very words. (Plenary means "full.")

Jesus refers to the words of God in **Matt. 4:4** when He says to the devil, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by <u>every word that proceeds from the mouth of God</u>*."

Illumination

This is the work of the Holy Spirit as He gives understanding to the follower of Christ.

"*I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."*

Jn. 16:12, 13

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." **Ps. 119:18**

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us? ...Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." **Luke 24:32, 45**

*"Sanctify them in truth (aletheia); Your word is truth***." Jn. 17:17**

Jesus here does not say that God's word is true *(alethes* or *alethinos*), but He says that God's word is truth itself. The Bible is not simply true, but we must think of the Bible as being itself the final standard of truth.

"*The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting*."

Ps. 119:160

"*Thus we are to think of the Bible as the ultimate standard of truth, the reference point by which every other claim to truthfulness is to be measured.*" Grudem's Systematic Theology

Because of the sin of man, his thinking has been distorted. Sin is ultimately irrational and sin makes us think incorrectly about God and about creation. If our world were free from sin, we would be equipped to think properly about the world and about the Bible, but because of our handicap we do not recognize the truths of the Bible as God's word apart from God's Spirit.

"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For 'who has know the mind of the LORD, that he will instruct Him?' But we have the Mind of Christ." 1 Cor. 2:14-16

When studying Scripture, you may run across the following terms concerning interpretation. Interpretation involves the meaning of the passage in question.

Hermeneutics: the study of correct methods of interpretation (study of interpretation itself)

Exegesis: the process of interpreting a text of Scripture (application of interpretation; actually explaining a particular text)

The major teachings of the Scriptures which concern the content itself can be classified into four characteristics.

1 **– the authority of Scripture**

"*But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*." **2 Pet. 2:20, 21**

2 – **the clarity of Scripture**

"*The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."* **Ps. 19:7**

"The unfolding of Your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple." **Ps. 119:130**

3 **– the necessity of Scripture**

"*For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For 'all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the LORD endures forever.' And this is the word which was preached to you."* **1 Pet. 1:23-25**

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." **Heb. 4:12**

4 - **the sufficiency of Scripture**

Grudem says, "The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly."

"*The secret things belong to the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."* **Deut. 29:29**

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." **2 Tim. 2:15**

"So that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." ***2 Tim 3:17***

In Scripture, when "*thus says the Lord*" is used, it is reflective of a formula used by royalty. This phrase was used when an edict was made. This edict was final, authoritative and could not be challenged or questioned. The only response was to obey it. When the prophets say, "*Thus says the Lord,"* they are claiming to be messengers of the King of heaven.

"*The Scriptures were given, not to tell us how the heavens go, but to teach us how to go to heaven."*

Herbert Lockyer

What is to be our response to God's Word?

"Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." **Ps. 119:89**

"Thus says the LORD, 'Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being,' declares the LORD. 'But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit and who trembles at My word.'" **Is. 66:1, 2**

WORSHIP

According to A.W. Tozer, the reason Christ came, the reason He suffered and died was to "make worshipers out of rebels… We were created to worship, worship is the normal employment of moral beings."

When we read passages about heaven, the consistent activity there is worship.

Look at **Ez. 1:1-5** or **Isaiah 6:1-6** or **Rev. 4 and 5.**

Tozer says that "you cannot worship a Being you cannot trust."

The church is not well because we do not see God as He is … in His majesty.

"The God of the modern evangelical rarely astonishes anybody… He is very much one of us."

Are you captivated by God? Are you fascinated by Him? Are you struck with His splendor?

If not, then you have not been dwelling in His presence because that is where His splendor, His majesty, His perfection abides.

Worship is the only time we truly live and experience Reality. When we worship, we are responding to the heart of God.

When we look at worship in the Bible, we see a people who expected to hear from God. They were waiting to hear the *Kol Yahweh*, the voice of God.

Acts 2:2, "*And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting."*

Acts 4:31, *"And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness."*

Read Acts 5:1-11; 9:36-43; 20:7-10 to see more of this God we worship.

God was among them and they were aware of it. The response to His Presence was worship.

Are you aware of His Presence?

Worship is the activity of glorifying God in His presence with our voices and hearts.

Grudem's Systematic Theology

Worship happens when the creature understands that he is not the Creator and bows in adoration and submission before the One Who is the Creator.

Worship is not nor was it ever intended to be a spectator sport.

The Origins of Worship

In early times, our ancestors worshiped in simple ways. We are not told in Scripture the nature of the worship offered by our first parents; but we understand from the early records that their sons were motivated to offer a portion of the product of their labor in sacrifice to God. Worship appears to be an appropriate act toward a divine benefactor.

Later in biblical accounts, a simple form of worship occurs. Wherever Abraham and his progeny would pitch their tents for a protracted amount of time, they would build altars and call upon the name of the Lord. **Gen. 12:8**, "*Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of*

Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD."

As time went on, the direction for worship became more specific. The Mosaic ritual included a description of the place of worship, a distinct order of sacred functions, religious ceremonies, and observation of particular feasts. Included in worship, the offerings of sacrifices demonstrated the worshiper's symbolic devotion and utter surrender to the Lord. For the most part Mosaic worship was expressed in outward form and ceremonies. As long as worshipers inhabit earthly bodies the expression of religious thought directed to the Creator is accomplished through *corporeal media*.

God had commanded Pharaoh, "*Let My people go, so that they may worship Me in the desert*." **Ex. 7:16b**

The place of worship in the Old Testament eventually became the temple. The physical locale of worship for the Hebrew was of great importance because the temple was the place where heaven met earth.

"*In unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the LORD saying, 'He is indeed good for His lovingkindness is everlasting,' then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the God.*" **2 Chron. 5:13, 14**

Isaiah's vision of the Holy One occurred in the temple. **Is. 6:1-8**

"*But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood," declares the Lord God*." **Ez. 44:15** is referring to future temple activity.

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was performing his priestly tasks when the angel of the Lord appeared to him declaring the birth of his son. **Luke 1**

While the temple is clearly important in the Old Testament cultus, we learn in **Heb. 10:19, 22** that "*we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus… Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."* When we worship, we enter before His throne. This is genuine worship.

Jesus in **John 4** makes clear that worship is no longer a matter of space but of spirit and truth.

Rev. 1:10-13 John's vision occurred as he "*was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying 'Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches …'"*

Do you long to know and worship God?

Then become acquainted with the One Who explains the Father - Jesus Christ.

John 1:18 (Amplified Bible)

[18]No man has ever seen God at any time; the only [a]unique Son, or [b]the only begotten God, Who is in the bosom [in the intimate presence] of the Father, He has declared Him [He has revealed Him and brought Him out where He can be seen; He has interpreted Him and He has made Him known].[4]

Knowing God as He is will result in true worship. Going to church will not guarantee that you will truly worship. True worship is found in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Has there ever been someone you longed to know and someone else had access to that person? How wonderful would it be to know your favorite writer or president or favorite actor or for me, Beethoven? I am jealous of whoever was able to spend time with Beethoven and really know him.

What did that person have that I do not have? Access, time and interest of the desired one.

We have all three of those in order to know God. Well, we have access and time. The interest is each individual's choice. What must I do to really see God?

The psalmist says, "*With all my heart I have **sought** You*." **Ps. 119:10a**

1. The first step of seeking God is to accept, learn, treasure and store up His Word.
2. Next you must be submissive to that Word; you must have a desire to be taught by His Word.
3. Develop a passionate prayer life. The psalmist also prays. *"Blessed are You, O LORD; teach me Your statutes… Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall observe it to the end. Give me understanding that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart."* **Ps. 119:12, 33, 34**
4. To **see** God you must faithfully **follow** Him <u>each day</u> not sporadically. The **seeking** of God needs to occur as your priority in life.

"*O LORD, I remember Your name in the night, and keep Your law… At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to You because of Your righteous ordinances."* **Ps. 119: 55, 62**

"This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." **Ps. 118:24**

"O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." **Ps. 119:97**

Somehow, the more we see of God the more we become like Him. Grudem

Even the best description of God will never compare to knowing Him yourself. Truly seeing God as He is cannot be experienced as fully by hearing another person talk of Him – it must be experienced by you personally: you and God.

"*The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express the same <u>delight in God</u> which made David dance*." C. S. Lewis

Corporate Worship

Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are One, something divine and reflective of majesty occurs as the body of Christ is one. We are most like our Father when we are in unity.

What is involved in worship?

Silence

"*But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him."* **Hab. 2:20**

"Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for He is aroused from His holy habitation." **Zech. 2:13**

Remove all busyness from your human activity. Be still before Him. Live in a state of constant listening silence before the King. Now God is the source of our words and actions.

For most human beings, focused attention is slowly attained and easily lost. Grudem

Singing

More than forty psalms command us to sing unto the Lord.

Singing ushers us into the presence of the One to Whom we address these worship songs**.**

"*Yet You are holy, O You Who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel*." **Ps. 22:3**

We are told to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Worship involves our whole being. Body, mind, spirit and emotions are present on the altar of worship to our Sovereign King.

Learn to accept distractions in the worship experience. Perhaps God is speaking to you through these distractions. Do not become fixated on the idea that these distractions should not be there and are someone's fault.

What about when you do not feel like worshiping?

Offer a sacrifice of praise. This is the opportunity to yield your body, mind, soul and strength to the LORD. One Hebrew word for bless means "to kneel". We kneel in submission to our King. If we do not bow the knee to Him and we choose to go our own way, then we have not worshiped Him but ourselves.

As we worship we expect God to move. So we begin with pregnant hearts, but if it is true worship the delivery and birth will be the fruit of obedience. If we are not obedient, then we have not worshiped.

To offer praise before the Holy One of Eternity, the Ancient of Days is to experience change. To worship is to be changed to reflect Him.

Service

"*Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."* **Heb. 12:28, 29** To gain context, read **Heb. 12:18-29**.

"Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." **Rom. 12:1, 2**

- ✓ Simply put, worship is doing the will of God.

"*Worship is therefore a direct expression of our ultimate purpose for living, "to glorify God and fully to enjoy Him forever*." Grudem

- ✓ Service is so very important in the body of Christ. But service must originate in worship to be eternally effectual.
  There are many words for worship. The following are in Greek.

Proskuneo means to kiss the hand toward one, in token of reverence, by kneeling or prostration to do homage

Latreuo means to serve, to render religious service or honor

Ethelothreskeia is voluntary worship.

Therapeuo means to do service.

Sebomai means to revere a deity.

When digging deeper these terms almost all originate from a concept of service. Worship and service are inextricably woven together.

In Hebrew, the same is true.

Abad means to work, to serve

Sagad means to fall down, to bow down, to lie down in worship

Shachah means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to crouch, to fall down, to humbly beseech, to do reverence, to worship. In **Ps. 66:4**, the whole earth is bowing down to worship God

- ✓ Finally, worship is much like prayer: we must practice it. We learn to pray by praying. We learn to worship by worshiping.

Dwell on this: what does God do when we worship Him?

"*The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy."* **Zeph. 3:17**

"You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolation"; but you will be called, "My delight is in her," and your land, "Married"; for the LORD delights in you, and to Him your land will be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you." **Is. 62:3-5**

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." **James 4:8**

"As we love God and praise Him we realize that we are bringing joy and delight to His heart. And the deepest joy of love is the joy of bringing delight to the heart of the one you love." Grudem

True worship comes from the same source as genuine salvation … the same source as living water...Worship is the ultimate aim of salvation.

Worship is the ultimate ethical act on earth, the most important act on earth because it is the ultimate fulfillment of the Shema, the Great Commandment, and indeed the First and Second Commandments.

Ben Witherington in <u>We Have Seen His Glory</u>

Genuine worship is not something we generate ourselves, it is the outpouring of our hearts as an expression of the realization of Who God is.

Worship changes the worshiper into the image of the One worshiped. Jack Hayford

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEXT ANALYSIS

- **Read the passage under review for an overview.**
- **Record first impressions.**
- **Read the first paragraph marking all you see about God.**

I use a red marker and draw a red triangle around God. I double underline in red any actions (verbs) that refer to God. For instance, "The Almighty reigns."

Red triangle around "Almighty" and "reigns" has two red lines under it.

Out to the right of the text, I mark any names of God: Jehovah-sabaoth (LORD of Hosts), Most High God, etc.

Go back through and mark any references to Jesus or the Holy Spirit separately or you may do that as you mark the references to God.

I use a red cross for Jesus and red H.S. for Holy Spirit.

Again, mark out to the right side any points you pick up about Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the Messiah, the Healer, the Bread of Life, the Living Word, the Lamb of God, etc.

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, the Counselor, the One Who convicts of sin, etc.

- **Key Words**

As you have been marking God, Jesus and Holy Spirit, you have undoubtedly seen other key words in the text. Begin marking these.

A key word is usually repeated more than once. It is a word that if removed from the text would greatly affect the meaning of the passage.

Come up with your own system of markings. This will make it easier to remember as you mark things. You will find it helpful to keep an index card with your markings in your Bible.

At times, you will also want to find the meaning of a particular word in the original language.

Greek (New Testament) or Hebrew (Old Testament) word studies are a valuable skill to learn.

There are many word studies available online or in book form.

To begin, just find the word of interest in your text, for instance, "love."

You must know the exact verse. John 3: 16

Since this is the New Testament, you will be looking for the Greek word for "love" in this verse.

Most sources will give you a number for that word and you will look up that number and be told that in John 3: 16, "love" is *agape.* Then you will be directed to the dictionary section that enlarges your understanding for this word. It means far more than "love."

- **Words of Time/Place**

Mark words which denote time or place. I use a green X for time and double underline with green words for place.

- **Contrasts**

You will also see contrasts. Light/darkness, life/death, good/evil, love/hate, destruction/building, etc.

Mark these contrasts.

- **Comparisons should be noted as well. The use of "like" or "as" will signal comparisons.**

- **Lists are another indicator of what is important to the writer.**

Make lists of what you are seeing in the text.

- **Also you may wish to highlight certain other categories which reoccur throughout Scripture.**

Commands (I use blue highlight. Boy is there a lot of blue in my Bible!!)

Promises (I use green highlight here.)

Prophecy (I use pink here.)

Words denoting God's glory or majesty or praise (I use yellow for light.)

God's Wrath (I use orange.) Righteousness (orange also)

I encourage you to come up with your own system.

- **Questions**

As you continue to read and re-read the text, ask yourself questions.

Ask <u>Who,</u> <u>What</u>, <u>Where</u>, <u>When</u>, <u>Why</u> and <u>How</u> about as many things as you can think of. These questions will prompt you to see more than you saw at first glance.

- ✓ **As you progress you may have questions arise that you cannot answer just yet. Mark these either on a separate paper or at the bottom of your page.**

- ❖ **The reason for all these tactics of observation is primarily to slow you down. Reading Holy Scripture is not like reading the newspaper. It takes time and focus.**

All of these skills will train your spiritual eye to see things that normally would go undetected.

Speaking of "undetected." That is what you are doing, you are becoming a detective on the most important case of your life!

We all love a good mystery and that is what you are about now: solving the greatest mystery of all time.

"Why would Almighty God love and care for rebellious, weak, completely flawed man?"

Every time you approach Scripture, this is what is unfolding before you – God's answer to that question.

So do good detective work!

After you have done all of the above work, you may still want to delve a bit deeper.

- **Make a summary of what each paragraph says. Do this out to the left side of the text. Then make a summary of what the chapter says.**

What is Jesus teaching, doing, revealing about God?

What is God making known about Himself, about man, about sin, about time?

Summarizing is a necessity for you to learn in order to truly grasp the great truths of the Bible.

- **To wrap up the chapter, find a chapter title that sums up the message of that chapter. Use words from the text.**

Make the words distinct from other chapters.

Try to keep the words manageable: the fewer the better.

Also *find a verse* that captures the essence of the chapter.

- **Record any pertinent cross references near the verses that relate.**

For instance, I keep cross references concerning *the Deity of Christ* in all the Scriptures that comment on this truth: John 1: 14, 18; Col. 1: 15-17; Heb. 1: 1-4, etc.

DOCTRINES

As an additional benefit to all your diligent study, doctrines will become more and more evident to you as you dig beneath the surface.

There is a section in this study specifically on DOCTRINE. It will give you insight in order to help you find the doctrines in your passage under study

INTERPRETATION

After thorough initial study, you will see what the text means. This is INTERPRETATION.

Many students of the Scriptures have gone astray here because they did not lay the proper groundwork of text discovery.

What is Interpretation?

INTERPRETATION is really trying to find what the writer intended his meaning to be for his original hearers. The text analysis helps you interpret the meaning because you have asked the 5 WH, discovered the key words, and so forth. Now you are armed with the tools you need for proper interpretation. Just as an English speaking person may interpret what a French speaker is saying, you will now attempt to interpret not just the words themselves but the meaning behind the words. This is holy ground when dealing with the Scripture, so make sure you have asked the Holy Spirit to give you His wisdom.

- **Begin with a consideration of the type of literature you are studying: narrative, poetry, history, prophecy, letter, a vision, etc.**
  This information will assist you as you unfold the meaning of the text. Not all literature is to be handled in the same manner. History is different than poetry, as an example.

- **Context is king!**

  Make sure your interpretation lines up with the entire counsel of God's Word. If what you have discovered is in contradiction to the teaching of Scripture elsewhere, then you must not understand the proper meaning.
  Sometimes there are truths within Scripture which seem to contradict – when we come to passages like this, we must believe that Scripture teaches truth; Scripture cannot be completely knowable by a finite mind. Along with learning and growing in knowledge is the realization that God is incomprehensible on some levels and we bow to His majesty and splendor, rejoicing that He has revealed as much as He has. (Deut. 29:29)
  As always with our following Jesus, faith is the key ingredient.

- **As you interpret, make sure you are not basing your belief system on obscure passages or doctrines that occur in only one place (baptism of the dead – 1 Cor. 15: 29). In this case, we must resist the temptation to develop a belief based on this one encounter. Most of the time, there is ample reference to each topic discussed by the writers of Scripture. This is the safe and orthodox method of interpretation.**

- **At times as you interpret, you will find it helpful to see how the author used the same ideas or words in other texts. So be diligent to dig. For instance, John has written: his gospel account, three letters and the Revelation. If you wish to gain insight in how John uses the word, "power" you may want to check out other instances when he used this particular word.**

Each writer is unique and specifically chosen to write what the Spirit directed, so being an expert on their writings is always a plus when interpreting. The only way you will be an expert is if you spend the time and effort. Do not leave this to the academics and then trust what they tell you – you BE the EXPERT!

COMMENTARIES

The absolute necessity remains to vigilantly maintain a dedicated commitment to early, steady and thorough study before running to the commentaries to see if you are on the right track. Trust the Spirit to be your Teacher and Guide. He will not fail you.

Something the commentaries do offer which we cannot fine elsewhere is the historical background and the cultural setting. These facts may prove very helpful when approaching texts. God created Time and Space and He uses it for His glory. See what you can learn from history and culture which will actually add to your amazement at His Word. God's Holy Eternal Word transcends Time, but we must be careful not to abuse either the text for our purposes or abuse the creatures for which the Lord created Time and Space in the first place.

For instance, the Sabbath. When researching the historical, cultural and biblical purpose, meaning and reality of the Sabbath – what was the Lord showing us? Mark 2: 27, 28

When you have finished ALL of these important observations, you are ready to look at what others have written about your text under review. If you go to these sources before you do adequate foundational study, you will be influenced by the scholars' viewpoint and at that point, you can never return to an unbiased mind. Guard that mind!

Now what!! TRANSFORMATION!

After you have spent much time in the text, asking questions, digging out truths, finding the big picture and the small picture of each passage, trying to discern the original meaning, now you are ready to see what the text means for you!

- **APPLY what the Lord is showing you!**

"***Search me, O God, and know my heart;***

Try me and know my anxious thoughts;

And see if there be any hurtful way in me,

And lead me in the everlasting way." Ps. 139: 23, 24

This is the step you have been working for.

- **But do not jump ahead – allow the Lord all the time He needs to sink this deep into your spirit. Take all that you have learned and spread it before Him in prayer, asking Him to refine you with His Father's hand. The only way the truths you have been studying will remain is if the Lord Himself plants them in your inner man.**

As you have studied, I am sure, the Spirit has already been at work convicting and pointing out areas of inconsistency in your walk with the Lord. Hopefully you have written these discoveries in your notebook. Now you will do the hard work. The busy work of marking key words, asking questions, looking up other references can be fun and it moves quickly. This work of transforming your spirit on the other hand is hard and many times slow work which we end up bailing out on. If your enemy cannot keep you out of Bible study - learning about the Lord - then he will try another tactic. This tactic is even more devastating: he will try and hinder you from a truly renewed mind. <u>You are now responsible for what you have learned.</u> Do not let the accuser rob you of all you have been striving for!

- **Be transformed by what you have been learning.**

There are many steps we could discuss here about how to be transformed in your thinking – but I believe transformation comes from the Lord alone. Sure we could list here 10 points on how to be transformed, but many have done that and still come up with only temporary results. The Lord is after an eternal change of heart.

- **So go get with Him alone and ask Him, "O Lord, I want Your Word to transform me – I am Yours, shine Your light in my life and let's get going!"**

An unspeakable joy awaits you!

Only remember, just as your car needs routine checkups and adjustments, so do you!

MODIFIED TEXT DISCOVERY

At times you will need to do a Modified Text Discovery. For instance, as we study Joshua and Ephesians alongside one another, we benefit from a consolidated approach to both books with one primary view in focus: our inheritance as saints. Now we will study these two books with a different perspective than if we were attempting to understand the entire book's message.

Read the passage assigned for your study, for instance Joshua 1.

- **Read for the Overview and not specifics.**

Record your first impressions.

- **Mark God, Jesus and Holy Spirit.**

Mark on the right side of the page what you learn about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

- **Mark key specific words, i.e., for the Joshua passage – "inheritance," "land," "adoption," "possession." These are words that focus on the particular theme of the study.**
- **Mark any contrasts, such as: light vs. darkness/ life vs. death/ evil vs. good**
- **Highlight (in blue, that's my color for commands) commands such as: "Arise," "Forgive one another," "Be strong and courageous."**
- **Title the paragraph summaries with short comments on what takes place in that particular paragraph.**
- **Title the chapter itself.**

Now you have a solid overview of the first chapter, with a specific theme in mind.

If you have any further questions or comments, record those at the end of the text.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **Get the overview (the big picture)**
   Read the entire book or passage without stopping for details.
   Read it again, taking notes on the questions that you have.
   Look for the author's themes.
   Look for segment divisions (which are many times changes in themes).
   Further study will involve asking the 5WH questions, marking key words, observing historical or cultural references, looking for contrasts and comparisons and words of conclusion, such as "finally", "in conclusion", "therefore."

2. **Focus on specific passages**
   Start with smaller sections, such as the first chapter of a book.
   Follow the same method of discovery as above, but now looking for details as well as the "big picture."
   Look for lists on recurring topics. Again, these are most likely themes which the author is specifically trying to communicate.

3. **Relate the details to the whole**
   Now that you have spent time with the details of the passage under review, return to your overview and see the "big picture" again. How do the details relate to the overall message of the author.

   Next, relate the passage and the book to the overall message of the entire counsel of God's Word.
   Cross references (verses from the Bible as a whole) are invaluable in developing a comprehensive understanding of the communication which God intends for you to possess.
   Note (do not trust your memory here) what you learn from the cross references.
   [Cross references can be located by referring to a concordance and looking up specific words common to your passage under review and other verses in the Bible.]

4. **Interpret the meaning of the passage**
   Now that you have laid a firm foundation, you are prepared to ask yourself "What does this passage mean for me personally?"
   Too many times we jump to this part of Bible study without having taken the appropriate effort to familiarize ourselves with the content.

   Think of this activity as though you were the teacher and you were going to ask the class content questions to make sure they understood the material. What questions would you ask?

   Draw conclusions as well as you can, leaving the "unsolvable" issues in the hands of the only One Who can reveal truth. But do not be lazy, there is plenty which He desires for you to know beyond a shadow of a doubt!

5. **Apply the Scriptures you have studied**
   Because "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" you can come to God's word and expect to be changed. That is what application is: "Lord, change me into the image of Your Son."

   When you study a passage on *forgiveness,* your heart may be so hardened when you first begin that you are far from the desire to forgive. But as you humble yourself in your willingness to learn from the Lord, He softens you and plows the field of your heart, so that in time, you are more than ready to forgive. This is application.

   Remember the goal of Bible study is to glorify the Lord in your life.
   It is NOT about gaining knowledge; knowledge puffs up.

Some overall guidelines to Bible study

Personal

- Begin your study with prayer.
- Be aware of your preconceived ideas and presuppositions.
- Be careful not to apply cultural standards rather than biblical standards.
- Do not use Scripture to support your own personal viewpoint. Allow Scripture to dictate your views.
- Have a teachable spirit.
- Be willing to be changed.
- A good rule of thumb to ask yourself: "Do I want to be "right" more than I want to know truth?"

Academic

- Try to discover the type of literature you are examining: history, poetry, prophecy, biography, epistle, etc.
- Apparent contradictions should not alarm or discourage you. We are handling the very truths of God. Our understanding these truths does not unveil itself in a moment.
- Sometimes reading a different translation is helpful
- Word studies in the original language will deepen your understanding.
- Allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. The seeming inconsistencies, for the most part, can be resolved, and those which cannot at this time will require faithful patience. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible." Heb. 11:1-3
- Never use obscure passages to establish doctrine; seek instruction from passages which are more clearly expounded.
- Context is king! Look at the verses before and after; look at the chapters before and after; look at the consistent message of the entirety of Scripture.
- Refer to commentaries only after you have done adequate observation. To resort to commentaries prematurely will only rob you of the joy of discovery which awaits the diligent and faithful student of God's Word.

Be a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus, sit at His feet and learn from Him. He is your Teacher as He was the Teacher (Rabbi) of the first disciples. They listened to His words of life and they changed the world forever.

Below are just a few of the many resources you may find online.

www.biblegateway.com

www.biblestudytools.com

www.biblica.com

www.biblos.com

www.blueletterbible.org

preceptaustin.org

A word about inductive Bible study:

This type of study begins with the Word of God instead of man's ideas about the Word of God. Disciplining yourself to go first to the Lord and His Word is a practice which will drastically change your walk with the Keeper of your soul. Listen to His voice before any other voice can influence your thinking.

OBSERVING THE TEXT

After you have done the preliminary overview, you are prepared to look into the details of the passage under review.

In the overview, you noted the themes of each chapter. Now you will zero in on one specific chapter and look for details. Each chapter will support the overall theme of the book. See how this is done and note your observations either in the margin or on extra paper.

Repetition

To properly discover the message and themes within the chapter or passage, as with the overview, **repetition and familiarity** are your best tools.

- Begin with prayer, asking the Lord to open your eyes to see truth.
- ✓ Look at your chapter with **key, repeated words** in mind. Record these as you find them.

Also record key, **repeated phrases**, such as "in Christ."

- ✓ After reading through the chapter, looking for key words and phrases, now you may find **contrasts.** These are very enlightening and helpful. Light/ darkness; death/ life; obedience/ disobedience; grace/ law; sin/ flesh, are all contrasts that can give a depth of understanding to a passage.
- ✓ Also look for **comparisons** using signal words "like or as." Comparisons point out similarities. "The devil prowls around *like* a roaring lion."
- ✓ Mark words of **time and place**. "When, then, after, later, in three days, ten years later"
- ✓ Mark **terms of conclusion** such as "therefore" or "finally." These will alert you to the closing points of an argument.

5WH

- Make sure you always ask yourself the **5WH**. These are probably your best teaching device in all of inductive Bible study.

The most important questions are the ones that tell you "Who." In all of your study, you will want to discover all that you can learn about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Our Lord is the reason we do Bible study. We want to meet with Him every time we sit down to do our study.

Always ask the questions which will teach you more about Him.

Lists

- You will always find a list on God.

Also look for lists on Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Each passage will have particular lists on which the author is focused. You need to find these. God communicates to us in a logical and precise method. Yes, there are some things which are incomprehensible about our God, but He has revealed much that is very intelligible for us.

"But the people who **know** their God will display strength and take action." Dan. 11:32b
"But let him who boasts boast of this, that he **understands** and **knows** Me, that I am the LORD Who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD. Jer. 9:24
"This is eternal life, that they may **know** You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent." Jn. 17:3

By this time, you will have gone over the chapter many times. You will be amazed at how much you see now that formerly escaped your notice with just a cursory reading.

Themes

- Now you will begin to see **themes** in the chapter. These are frequently evident because of the key repeated words.

Make note of the themes in the chapter.

To get the picture of the entire chapter, it is helpful to break down the chapter into **paragraphs** and mark in the index what you see about each paragraph.

- Record these **paragraph themes** and see if you see any connection between them.

Also to maintain a consistent reading, note the **context** from one chapter or one passage to the other (those preceding and following). Never take a verse out of context. This leads to trouble in later interpretation.

Keep in mind that as you study, you are constantly asking yourself the purpose of the author in writing this particular passage.

Chapter titles

Working with chapter titles is helpful for you to see any patterns in the connection between chapters.

- Record your chapter titles at the head of each chapter.
- Record you chapter titles using the following guidelines:

1. Use key words for your titles to help you remember the main teaching of the chapter.

2. Keep your titles to five words or less. Try to use key words from the text.
3. Try to find a thread between each chapter. (Sometimes this is not possible, but it is very helpful for memory when it is possible.)
4. The chapter title must be distinctive from other chapter and paragraph titles.

    ❖ It also helps to find a **verse** which summarizes your main theme of the chapter. Locate this next to your chapter title.

As you work on your observations of the chapter, find how this chapter fits into the whole scheme of the entire book.

Life application

Constantly ask yourself as you are studying your verses, "What life lesson is being taught here?" And specifically ask yourself, "What life lesson is God teaching me personally here?"

"*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect*." **Rom. 12:2**

SEGMENT DIVISIONS

Segment divisions are breakdowns of long passages and even chapters of books of the Bible.

Locating segment divisions is generally developed over time and can be difficult. But you may surprise yourself when you realize that you are probably aware of divisions already.

Segment divisions may be single chapters or several chapters grouped together with a common theme. Seeing these segment divisions will help with understanding the structure of the book.

- **Philippians** may be divided in many ways.

The segments in this book are readily observed because they are neatly within the chapter divisions.

Chapter:

1 Christ, my Life
2 Christ, my Mind
3 Christ, my Goal
4 Christ, my Peace

OR

I am content because: I live for Him.	Ch. 1
I think for Him.	Ch. 2
I strive for Him.	Ch. 3
I trust in Him.	Ch. 4
Joy despite: Imprisonment	Ch. 1
People	Ch. 2
Things	Ch. 3
Circumstances	Ch. 4

- **The Gospel of John** is divided in several ways.

One simple division is the first twelve chapters which cover three years and the last nine chapters which cover one week.

John

Segment divisions:

1-12 ministry to the world

13-17 ministry to the disciples

18-21 ministry to the world

Another division:

1-12 that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

13-21 that you may have life

All of the above segment divisions are quick looks at the overall content of each book. This is to aid you in maintaining a general message throughout your study of the book you are undertaking to understand. The study of a long book like Romans can be difficult if you lose sight of the overall message. Segment divisions can help you manage an otherwise overwhelming amount of material.

- **Isaiah**

Chapters:

1-39 God rebukes His people

40-66 God restores His people

OR

1-39 God convicts His people

40-66 God comforts His people

- **Matthew**

Chapters:

1-10 Revelation of the King

11-13 Rebellion against the King

14-18 Mission of the King

19-23 Final Ministries of the King

24-28 Second Coming, Death and Resurrection of the King

Another way of dividing Matthew's segments:

1-25 The King, Son of David, offered to Israel

26-28:8 The King, Son of Abraham, put to death and raised again

28:9-20 The King in resurrection ministry to His disciples

Matthew is also divided according to the speeches which Jesus gave: His discourses.

Chapters: 5-7 Sermon on the Mount

10 Instructions to His Disciples

13 Parables

18, 19 Forgiveness and Relationships

24, 25 End Times

Hopefully you can see how segment divisions can aid you in your approach to the study of a particular book of the Bible.

Can you study this book without the use of segments? Yes. But ….

Will seeing an overall skeleton of this book help you keep in mind the intent of the author?

As with your own body, a skeleton is indispensable. Ask a radiologist!

HANDLING DIFFICULT BIBLE PASSAGES

As we study the Bible, it is inevitable that we come across passages that are hard to understand.

So what can we do?

Run to our commentaries?

NO!!!

Give yourself the opportunity to hear from the Lord before you ever consult a commentary.

But how?

Here are some steps to follow as you approach difficult passages in the Bible.

1. Pray for the eyes of your heart to be enlightened. **Eph. 1: 18**

Seeking biblical understanding is different than trying to understand how to use a computer or change the oil in your car.

You are approaching holy material which the Lord has provided for you and you must seek His thoughts before you entertain your own thoughts or those of another.

2. Abandon any preconceived thoughts concerning your passage under review. Come at your topic with fresh eyes and a fresh heart.

Otherwise you cannot hear clearly from the Lord.

3. Context is King. This means you must observe the verses surrounding the ones you have a particular interest in.

A well developed contextual understanding will aid in the further efforts to interpret the text.

4. Be very careful with cross references. Make sure you do a thorough "dig" on the context of the supporting cross references associated with your main passage. Become thoroughly acquainted with any verses which you will use to establish your essential interpretation.

What is the overall message of your primary passage and the overall message of any of your cross references?

Never pull cross references out of context.

5. No commentaries at the beginning of your study. Observe the text carefully and thoroughly, asking yourself questions as you endeavor to understand not just your current passage but the overall message of the book before consulting any commentaries.

Commentaries are man's thoughts on Holy Scripture. Stick with, remain in the Holy Scriptures as long as possible.

6. Seek the overall principle which the Lord is teaching even if the details cannot be reconciled.

7. If there is an apparent contradiction with the Bible passages, realize the contradiction lies with your interpretation, in other words, KEEP DIGGING!

8. You always defer to the clear, direct teaching within a passage before complicating your interpretation with the difficult passage.

A parable is helpful once the clear teaching is established. Parables are not meant to be the "rock" upon which you build your interpretation. Parables are analogies which confirm a clear teaching.

Jesus even used parables so as to be obscure at times.

9. When you do finally consult the commentaries, weigh the evidence of the writer's claims by your solid biblical research.

As you accumulate the differing opinions within the commentaries, prayerfully consider all the options. Consider each one separately and with wisdom and understanding from on high.

10 As you settle in on a particular interpretation, ask yourself if this interpretation, above all the others, glorifies and exalts the Lord.

Discard anything that does not cause you to hold the Lord in the highest esteem.

This clearly would be false teaching, as all Scripture declares a Sovereign and Holy God.

Following Jesus with you,

Becky

Here are some resources you may also want to look at regarding how to handle difficult biblical passages.

https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/approach-difficult-bible-passages/

https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2018/11/encountering-difficult-passages/

https://pursuingveritas.com/2017/11/09/how-to-approach-difficult-bible-passages/

https://www.kathyhoward.org/4-tips-for-handling-difficult-bible-passages/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=4-tips-for-handling-difficult-bible-passages

HEBREW POETRY

John Milton, the great British poet who wrote Paradise Lost, said that the deepest impulse for poetry is … praise. Milton regards the psalms as humanity's highest achievement in poetry.

Psalm 119 is a poem. Our western understanding of poetry is very different from the middle eastern idea of poetry. Hebrew is not based on rhyme – but on repetition of thought. Parallelism is crucial.

Also, the structure of this poem provides another aspect of Hebrew poetry. The structure of Psalm 119 is in groups of eight verses. Each group or stanza is a unit. Each stanza and each line of that stanza begin with the same Hebrew letter. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and there are 22 stanzas. This structure was useful for memory purposes. The long psalm was made easier to remember because of the use of this device. Psalm 119 is not alone in this structure. These are called *acrostic* poems.

We find from the Oxford Bible Dictionary: "another purpose of the acrostic psalm besides an aid to memorization is its intention to convey the idea that the entire range of sentiment is being expressed, from A to Z."

Poetry is very dependent on order. By observing the order of this poem, which is completely absorbed with God's word, we will learn much about the God of order.

Three Major Features of Old Testament Poetry

1. Synonymous parallelism-the second or subsequent line repeats or reinforces the sense of the first line.
2. Antithetical parallelism-the second or subsequent line contrasts the thought of the first.
3. Synthetic parallelism-the second or subsequent line adds to the first line in any manner which provides further information.

Poetry is filled with figurative language and there are guidelines for interpreting this type of language. Hebrew poetry is different from our poetry. We are accustomed to rhyme schemes. But the distinguishing characteristic of Hebrew poetry is a correspondence in thought (parallelism) between one line and the following line, or between one section and the following section. For us, redundancy is to be avoided, but to the Hebrew writer, redundancy was a literary form to be cultivated with diligence. For them, this redundancy was a measure of certainty and predictability. Because most of the New Testament was written by people greatly influenced by Hebrew ways of thinking, in particular the Old Testament, understanding the Hebrew poetic mind will aid in understanding the New Testament as well.

- ❖ Briefly, the three basic kinds of parallelism can be remembered as: similar thoughts, additional thoughts, or contrasting thoughts arranged side by side in a single passage. It is greatly beneficial to the student of the Bible to become sensitive to the Hebrew idea of poetry: correspondence in thought. For those fluent in Hebrew, they will inform us less fortunate that almost half of the Old Testament is written in poetic language which is lost in translation. But we can be more discerning and regain a portion of what is lost by being aware of the concept of parallel thought.

- ✓ To value the eternal benefit of this poem, even today one of the uses of this poem is prayer. We find from the Hebrew **Tehillim**(the Hebrew title for the book of Psalms, which means "praises"), prayers for a sick person are recited from Psalm 119. It is customary to recite those verses which correspond to the letter of his/her name. As an acrostic poem, Psalm 119 begins each stanza with a different letter. Aleph is like our letter "A." So you would pray for "Anne" or "Angela" the things you see in the first stanza. "Beth" is the second letter … and so on.

Why don't you begin your study each day by praying for someone with the first letter of the psalm you are studying – praying that your loved one will be *blameless, blessed, will observe God's testimonies, seek Him with all their heart,* etc.(for one whose name begins with "A").

This prayer will bless the one who is prayed for, will honor the Lord and will cause you to remember the words in this psalm in a deeper, more practical way.

PROPHETS AND PROPHECY

General notes on prophets and prophecy

There are more individual books of the Bible in the genre of prophets than any other.

Prophets wrote in ancient Israel between 760 B.C. and 460 B.C. and their works contain an array of the messages from God.

In order to avoid misunderstanding when interpreting the prophets, it is crucial to uncover their function and form. Prophecy does not only concern itself with predicting future events, the prophets were God's spokesmen to God's people.

Less than 2% of Old Testament prophecy is messianic. *

Less than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant. *

Less than 1 % concerns events yet to come. *

Usually the prophet was announcing events concerning his immediate time and culture. It is imperative to have at least a minimal understanding of his time period. A prophet in Scripture could be any authorized spokesman for God. The prophet must speak truth and the events will authenticate his pronouncements. **Deut. 18:22; Ez. 33:33**

The longer prophetic books were probably not intended to be read in one sitting. They are collections of spoken oracles, not always presented in their original chronological sequence, often without hints as to where one oracle ends and another begins, and often without hints as to their historical setting. Most were spoken in poetry.

Sections of Scripture are obvious concerning some of these points; some sections are not. God's thoughts are not ours (**Ps. 92:5; Is. 55:8**) and so we should not be surprised that some parts of God's revelation will require time and patient study to understand. The prophetical books in particular require *much* devoted time and study. DO not expect instantaneous, immediate comprehension. As with all Scripture, you are treading on holy ground. Come to this revelation with awe and trembling, not demands. You will be rewarded.

Purpose of Studying Prophecy

The study of Bible prophecy should be primarily for two main purposes:

1- The study of fulfilled prophecy confirms our faith.
2- The study of unfulfilled prophecy influences our conduct.

A great deal of predictive prophecy of Scripture is yet fulfilled. In the time before a prophecy comes to pass, it is designed to affect present thought and conduct, not to satisfy curiosity concerning the future.

There are 16 prophetical books which come from a relatively small time span: 760 – 460 B.C.

Why are there no prophetic books from Abraham or David's day?

Why is there such a concentration of prophecy between Amos (ca. 760 B.C.) and Malachi (460 B.C.)?

This period in Israel's history demanded *covenant enforcement mediation*. (Further information on this when function is covered.)

Hermeneutical Benefit of Prophecy

Orthodoxy is correct belief.

Orthopraxy is correct action.

Through the prophets God calls His people, ancient and modern, to a balance of right belief and action. The prophets serve as a reminder to us of God's determination to enforce His covenant.

Malachi's warning still stands. **Mal. 4:6**

Hermeneutical Implications of Prophecy

Hermeneutical caution

Many messages delivered through the prophets were primarily intended for the original hearers. These are mostly for near future rather than distant future prophetic announcements.

Hermeneutical concern

Sensus plenior (fuller meaning) is a function of inspiration, not illumination. The Holy Spirit inspired the Old Testament writers to unfold God's message. The same Holy Spirit inspired the New Testament writers to identify a fuller meaning behind the original message. As you interpret, remember, we are NOT inspired writers; we are illumined readers.

Examples: **Matt. 1:22-23 (Is. 7:14); 2:15 (Hos. 11:1); 2:17-18 (Jer. 31:15); John 12:15 (Zech. 9:9)**

Also consider the O.T. passages concerning the water from the rock: **Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20: 1-13.** These O.T. narratives give us no hint at the inspired understanding of Paul in **1 Cor. 10: 4.**

Paul wants the Corinthians to know that the experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness can be understood as an allegory of their own experiences with Christ.

Principle: **sensus plenior** (fuller meaning) is a function of inspiration, not illumination.

Inspiration is the original motivation to record the Scripture in a certain way. Illumination is the insight to understand what the Scripture's authors wrote.

Guideline: predictive prophecy in Scripture can be understood when Biblical guidelines are faithfully observed.

The Function of Prophecy

We must understand the role and function of the prophet in Israel to appreciate his message.

The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators. Moses was the mediator for God's law when God initiated His Law. Moses is a model or paradigm for the prophets. (Read and learn Old Testament Law, especially **Deut. Chapters 4, 28 – 32; Lev. 26**)

The Prophet's message was not their own, but God's**.**

Nabi (prophet)– Hebrew word for *prophet* comes from Semitic verb "to call" **nabu**

What we read in the prophetical books then is not only God's word as the prophet understood it, but God's word as God desired the prophet to deliver it.

The prophet's message is unoriginal and is in essence the same as the message given by God initially through Moses. The prophets were not inspired to make any points or announce any doctrines that are not already present in the Pentateuchal covenant.

The prophets wrote in a specific time to a specific people and it warrants study of the conditions of the prophets if interpretation is to be accurate.

A knowledge of the date, audience and situation, when they are known, contributes greatly to a reader's ability to comprehend a prophetic message.

With the prophets in particular, the reader must think in terms of oracles.

There are three main categories of oracles.

1- The covenant lawsuit (an allegorical literary form) i.e., **Isaiah 3:14-26; Hos. 3:3-17; 4:1-19**

2- The woe oracle
"Woe" was the word ancient Israelites cried out when facing disaster or death.
Woe oracles contain three characteristic elements:
-an announcement of distress
-the reason for the distress
-a prediction of doom **Hab. 2:6-8**

3- The promise of salvation oracle
Three ingredients make up the salvation oracle:
- reference to the future
- mention of radical change
- mention of blessing
Hos. 2:16-22; 2:21-23; Is. 45:1-7; Jer. 31:1-9

The Prophets as Poets

In most ancient cultures, poetry was a highly regarded mode of expression. Whole national epics and key historical and religious memories were preserved in poetry. Ancient Israel also appreciated poetry as a means of preserving culture and as a means of learning. If an event or work of literature was important enough to remember, it was appropriate for poetry. God used poetry as a means of speaking through His prophets to His people. The prophecies could be remembered and would ring in their ears more profoundly through poetry. Poetry is also more easily memorized for long term retention.

Three Major Features of Old Testament Poetry

4. Synonymous parallelism-the second or subsequent line repeats or reinforces the sense of the first line.

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certainty and predictability. Because most of the New Testament was written by people greatly influenced by Hebrew ways of thinking, in particular the Old Testament, understanding the Hebrew poetic mind will aid in understanding the New Testament as well.

Briefly, the three basic kinds of parallelism can be remembered as: similar thoughts, additional thoughts, or contrasting thoughts arranged side by side in a single passage. It is greatly beneficial to the student of the Bible to become sensitive to the Hebrew idea of poetry: correspondence in thought. For those fluent in Hebrew, they will inform us less fortunate that almost half of the Old Testament is written in poetic language which is lost in translation. But we can be more discerning and regain a portion of what is lost by being aware of the concept of parallel thought.

❖ Guidelines for Understanding Predictive Prophecy

1 Take the passage in its most simple, direct, ordinary meaning unless there are overwhelming reasons to do otherwise. (literal language)

2 Identify figurative passages by following the ordinary rules of language in making the distinction between literal and non-literal.

a. Picture language is designated as figurative due to the absurdity of a literal reading of the passage, i.e., "He will cover your with His feathers" Ps. 91:4
b. Other figurative language is so identified in the context itself. Symbolic and typical language is often quite clearly defined in the context. The interpreter must not impose literal or other meanings on those symbols. Jn. 2:19, 21-22; Rev. 1:20; 5:8
c. Other Scriptures may identify an apparently literal statement as having a figurative meaning. Gen. 3:15 (not a literal war between snakes and men)
Figurative does not mean "mythical". The goal of interpretation is to discern what the *figure* points to because the thing figured is to have a literal fulfillment in history.

❖ Typology - a category of Prophecy

A type may be defined as a "prophetic symbol", an explicitly and divinely planned prophecy.
A symbol is something used to represent something else; it is often a material object representing something immaterial. The Bible is frequently referred to as meat, milk, bread, water, seed, sword, and light. Numbers are frequently symbolic. Many times the number 40 represents testing; six can refer to man; seven is associated with completion or perfection. Materials may serve as symbols as well – brass, water, leaven. Animals such as sheep, dogs and serpents are common symbols. People, too, can symbolically represent certain concepts: Abraham and faith, for instance.

While symbols and types have common traits, there are some differences.

SYMBOL	TYPE
Something taken to represent another thing (often a material object representing something immaterial)	prophetic symbolism
ESSENCE	
A symbol normally represents something different in essence from itself (a book and bread are quite distinct in essence, but bread is used to symbolize the Bible)	a type may be different in essence from the thing being typified, as an ordinary symbol, but it may be something similar or even the same Melchizedek and David as types of Christ: all are human
Time Relationships	
A symbol is timeless. It can symbolize something past, present or future.	A type, by definition, points to the future. It is usually an O.T. type prefiguring something about redemption in the N.T.
Reference	
The thing symbolized may vary with a single symbol. Water can refer to cleansing, satisfaction, the Bible or Jesus.	A type points to one particular fulfillment or antitype. Usually Biblical typology relates to redemption.
Parallel Elements	
Usually a single parallel is intended between a symbol and the thing symbolized.	A type may parallel many points in the antitype.

Note: a type often contains symbols. The Tabernacle is treated in the N.T. as having foreshadowed the redemption of Christ. To be regarded as a type, the designation must be clearly expounded in Scripture as such. Spiritualizing is an abuse and must be rejected. To call any illustration or application a type is to vest it with biblical authority.

Identifying the Meaning of a Type

1. Consider the context

The context of **Matt. 16:6-12**, clearly states that leaven symbolizes wrong teaching.

2. Refer to other Scriptures

{ex. Joseph}

3. Let the author's intent control

Since the relationship described in the Song of Solomon is nowhere identified as a type of Christ and the church, the interpreter should not assume that Solomon and the Holy Spirit intended it as a type.

❖ SPECIAL TIME FEATURES

Predictive prophecy relates to the future. [Symbols are not time related.]

O.T. prophecies concerning the coming of Messiah could refer to either His first coming, His second coming or both.

- *Multiple Reference*

A common literary device, especially in prophecy, is secondary meaning. In Biblical prophecy where there is multiple reference occurring, the larger fulfillment will be addressed by the Holy Spirit through an inspired author of Scripture. This can also be called partial fulfillment followed by complete fulfillment. Others call this "progressive fulfillment".

First reference: time of prophet or soon thereafter

Second reference: first coming of Christ

Third reference: second coming of Christ

Deut. 18:15-18

First reference is to Joshua but the ultimate one is to Christ. (**Jn. 1:21, 45; 6:14; Acts 3:22-23; 7:37)**

Matt. 24 is a N.T. example of multiple reference in a single prophecy. Destruction of Jerusalem seems clearly in mind but the final fulfillment is certainly future.

- Split Reference

A prophecy in which part of the announcement might refer to one future event (though near at hand) and another part to a second, later event.

Is. 9:6-7, coming Child and coming Conquering King are here announced.

Is. 61:1-3, both the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance are both predicted here.

- ✓ Note: what may appear in prophecy as a single event, upon fulfillment may break into consecutive elements.

Problem: dogmatism in assigning prophetic times

Dogmatism, if misplaced, may lead us astray when events occur other than we anticipated. For example the first-century students of Old Testament prophetic Scriptures were not able to see the truth of Christ's claims because they were inflexible and dogmatic, rigidly holding onto their timeline rather than seeing the Living Truth right before them. In fact, when strongly held opinions prove to be false, the misunderstanding can undermine faith rather than support it.

"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." **Romans 15:4**

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. " **2 Pet. 1:19-21**

"*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven- things which angels desire to look into."*

1 Pet. 1:10-12

Majority of materials used:

How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart

Understanding and Applying the Bible, J. Robertson McQuilkin

NARRATIVE IN THE BIBLE

The Bible contains more of the type of literature called "narrative" than it does of any other literary type.

Narratives are stories. The Bible contains what we often hear called God's story - a story that is utterly true, crucially important and often complex. It is a magnificent story, grander than the greatest epic, richer in plot and more significant in its characters and descriptions than any humanly composed story could ever be.

Three levels of Old Testament Narratives

Top level: the whole universal plan of God worked out through His creation

Initial creation; fall of humanity; power and ubiquity of sin; the need for redemption; Christ's incarnation and sacrifice

Middle level: center on Israel

The call of Abraham; the patriarchs; God's deliverance from Egypt

Bottom level: individual narratives that make up the other two levels

Joseph's brothers selling him into bondage; Gideon's fleece; Samson and Delilah; David's adultery

PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING NARRATIVES

1. *An Old Testament narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.*
2. *An Old Testament narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.*
3. *Narratives record what happened-not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral of the story.*
4. *What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.*
5. *Most of the characters in Old Testament narratives are far from perfect and their actions are, too.*
6. *We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to judge that on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically already in the Scripture.*
7. *All narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given (John 21:25). What does appear in the narrative is everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know.*
8. *Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions. They have particular, specific limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere, in other ways.*
9. *Narratives may teach either explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by clearly implying something without actually stating it).*
10. *In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.*

Some Final Cautions

1. Allegorizing: instead of concentrating on the clear meaning, pushing another meaning beyond the text.
2. Decontextualizing: ignoring the full historical and literary contexts, and often the individual narrative, instead focusing on small units and missing the intended message.
3. False Combination: combining elements and making a point of the combination even though the elements themselves are not directly connected in the passage itself.
   Example: Ps 23 Because David says that he will dwell in God's house forever and God has prepared him a table in the presence of his enemies … therefore David's enemies, our enemies, are in the household of faith, the Church.
4. Redefinition: the plain meaning of the text leaves people cold, producing no immediate spiritual delight or saying something they do not want to hear, they are often tempted to redefine it to mean something else.
5. Extracanonical authority: claims of revealing scriptural truths not otherwise knowable. Expressions of belief that one can unlock the mysteries of the Bible. Cults operate on the basis of extracanonical authority.

No Bible narrative was written specifically about you. They are written to glorify God. Your task is to learn God's Word from the narrative and obey what God calls you to do in the light of what is told. Narratives are precious to us because they so vividly demonstrate God's involvement in the world and illustrate His principles and calling.

PARABLES

Parable: *a story which teaches a moral or a truth*. A parable is a story which, although not usually factual, remains true to life. It is designed to make one central point. Every detail of a parable will reinforce the main theme, but it is not legitimate to ascribe a spiritual meaning and application to each point.

Our word "parable" is related to the Greek word "*paraballo*" which means "to throw or cast alongside". So a parable is something placed alongside something else for the purpose of comparison. A parable, like an illustration, makes a comparison between a known truth and an unknown truth. The typical parable uses a common occurrence of natural life to emphasize or clarify an important spiritual teaching. Some parables are even referred to as mysteries (Matt. 13:11) which are spiritual truths understood only by divine revelation.

Most of Jesus' parables are clear, but they also possess a depth of meaning that only one with a right relationship to Jesus can comprehend. The ungodly miss this deeper meaning because their lack of a proper relationship with God has darkened their thoughts and hearts.

Parables were frequently used by Jesus in His teaching and from His use of them we see that parables basically have two purposes.

1. The first purpose of a parable was to reveal truth to believers. It is a marvelous way of getting across a point in a memorable way. A parable clarifies or emphasizes a truth … often in a very convincing way.
2. The second purpose of a parable was to hide truth from those who had rejected it and hardened their hearts against it. How clearly this is stated in regard to the parable of the sower in Matthew13:10-17 and Mark 4:10-12.

To correctly interpret a parable you must:

I. Ascertain the occasion of the parable. Since parables clarify or emphasize a truth you must discover what prompted the parable. Search out the why or what of the parable. Why was it told? What prompted it?

II. Look for the intended meaning of the parable.

The meaning will sometimes be stated.

The meaning, if not stated, will be identified by the application of the parable to the hearer.

The meaning is not to be imposed beyond what is clearly stated or applied to the hearers by the author of the parable.

III. Identify the central or focal idea of the parable. Every parable has one central theme or emphasis. McQuilken says, "Having a central point of emphasis is the chief feature that distinguishes a parable from an allegory. In the case of a parable it is not legitimate to treat each detail as having a spiritual application." Virkler states: "The details are not to be given meaning that is independent of the main teaching of the parable."

IV. Since a parable has one central point of emphasis, you must:

Identify relevant details. A relevant detail will always reinforce the central theme. How well Jesus demonstrates this basic rule of interpretation when He gives the parable of the sower and states: "Do you not understand this parable? And how will you understand all the parables?" (Mark 3:13). From there Jesus proceeds to interpret the parable, identifying relevant details, all of which relate to one central emphasis: the reception of the Word of God by different people.

Identify the irrelevant details. All details in a parable do not have significance, and therefore, to attach meaning that is not in the context of the occasion, or relevant to its central emphasis is to digress from the meaning of the parable. A detail is only relevant if it reinforces the central theme of the parable.

The parable of the prodigal son is an example of this. Much preaching on this particular parable has violated the occasion and meaning of this parable, attaching all sorts of meanings to the details of this story. This parable was given to the Pharisees to show them the heart of the Father in forgiving sinners versus the heart of the elder brother. Jesus wanted the Pharisees to see what their hearts were like as they grumbled saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them"(Luke 15:2).

Note the occasion of the three parables given consecutively: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in Luke 15. The repeated words tell the story: lost, found, sin, and joy(rejoice).It is crucial to discern the primary or central emphasis of the parable.

V. Parables that have cultural themes must be interpreted in the light of biblical culture rather than our own culture. For example, in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, some have said the oil in the lamps symbolizes the Holy Spirit, giving meaning to an irrelevant detail. The central emphasis of the parable is "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13). Understanding the

Eastern wedding culture helps to understand the parable and why some were ready, and others were not.

Knowing the similarities between wheat and tares helps one to better understand the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13 and the admonition not to uproot the tares, lest the wheat might be uprooted with them (verses 26-29).

VI. Parables should never be the primary basis for establishing doctrine. Parables can reinforce doctrine in our mind but no doctrine should be grounded on a parable as its primary or only source. The rationale for this principle is that clearer passages of Scripture rule when clarifying doctrine versus more obscure passages such as a parable never vice-versa. Parables are by nature more obscure than doctrinal passages. Thus doctrine should be developed from the clear prose passages of Scripture, and parables used to amplify or emphasize that doctrine.

Henry Virkler, Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids, Michigan:Baker Book House, 1981), pp. 162-163

J.Robertson McQuilken, Understanding and Applying the Bible (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1983). P.156

Epistles

Every book of the Bible has a genre or type.

Narrative, poetry, prophecy, history, epistle, apocalyptic literature, and gospel.

There is also style, which depends on the particular author and the manner in which God wanted the message delivered. Style gives us more certainty in the veracity of who is really writing a particular letter. Pseudepigraphic writing was an issue during the times of Bible writing. Style helps us decipher the likelihood of who wrote the book we are looking at.

Someone's name affixed to the book is not enough.

Some literature is literal and some figurative. Never mix the two approaches.

Parables are different than literal discourse.

Poetry's purpose is different than dialogue in narrative.

We must endeavor to understand which type of literature we are looking at.

Many misinterpretations would be avoided if we took the time to see what type of literature we are dealing with.

Letters, many times, were written to reveal and address problem issues within a certain biblical community. Some issues were a tremendous threat to the growth and advancement of individuals and some were a threat to the whole community.

Understanding key components to the faith, the change from Judaism to Christianity, what it really meant to be "save," the coming wrath of God, marriage and family life, all of these topics and many more were essential areas where someone could get off track and cause others to misunderstand the message of Christ.

Letters contained encouraging words to weary, suffering warriors of the faith; they also contained words of rebuke and correction to those who were confused or defiant and rebellious. People needed to be reminded of what was at stake. Letters play an important part in the passing on of the doctrine of a living and vital faith. Without the epistles, we would be at a great loss as to the understanding of our very faith.

We needed help in the early Church and we need help now to understand the ways of God and His people.

Epistles were, for the most part, intended to be circulated. The new Church required a constant refining of the developing understanding of what Jesus had come to accomplish.

The fact that these letters were intended to be circulated also tells us something:

the message was uniform and true. What was true in Ephesus was also true in Thessalonica. We are deeply indebted to those who cared for and maintained the integrity of the message of these letters.

How did Paul, John, Peter, Jude, James, the writer of Hebrews, know when and what to write?

Now in 2024, the Lord knew what we need today in order to sanctify us and perfect our walk with Him. The Lord in 54 AD knew exactly what the fledgling church needed to hear.

He moved through the letter writers to pen the very words of each letter.

While we are grateful to the faithfulness of the early Church to preserve these letters, we are most grateful to the Lord for seeing to it that we possess in our hands the very words on which we live and thrive today.

As you approach reading and understanding the epistles, remember to gain as much information on the locale to which the letter was written, also research the "personality" of that particular body of believers. The Corinthians were different from those in Ephesus.

Cultural and historical context is crucial to a trustworthy interpretation of a passage.

Start with biblical evidence. Do not resort to the commentaries until you have exhausted all avenues in the Bible for these clues.

Cross references are tremendously helpful in this regard.

If you are trying to understand "marriage" in the early Church era, look up "marriage" in a concordance or google Bible verses on "marriage."

This is where we begin – NOT what man has said about marriage.

Always begin and end with the Bible. That is our solid ground!

Each epistle is like a friend. Each epistle has a personality.

Get to know each letter like you would grow in developing a budding friendship.

Ask questions of that letter; cross examine other parts of the Bible that touch on the issues within the letter.

For instance, we can glean much insight from the book of Acts in regard to most letters.

The history in Acts can equip us with a wealth of background material as we interpret each letter. Acts tells us what was going on in the community of that particular place; whereas the epistle tells us what was going on in the mind and heart of that church at that time.

With the friendship analogy, we learn a lot from the person herself, but we also learn from those who have a past history with the person, perhaps a more objective view.

I love the epistles. When I sit down to read Philippians, I take this letter in my hands as though I am reading a letter from a dear friend in prison. This is no textbook entry, this is my friend's heart reaching out to me. I read Philippians with a different attitude when I see it this way.

Letters are meant to transform your life. You cannot simply read it and put it down, forgetting the direct authority and requirement that this letter places on you.

Romans 12: 1, 2 tell us not to be conformed to the world, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to the Lord.

Does Paul have the authority to demand this of us? No!

Oh but God does!! The Lord was the One writing through Paul to give His message to His people. Will your letters be around in two thousand years? No.

But the Lord has determined that His people would have His words delivered to them for all time. And that is what is happening as you read the epistles of the early Church.

REMEMBERING THE LORD - THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL

"And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He {Jesus} explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." Luke 24: 27

The word "remember" is stated in the Old and New Testaments more than 300 times.

There is a Jewish saying: "Put something where you can see it so your eye will remind your heart."

We are going to put the feasts "before us" so our eye can remind our heart about this great God that we serve and adore.

Since most of the feasts involve at least one Sabbath day, we will begin here.

- **SABBATH**

This word is from the Hebrew "Shabbat" – rest.

God wanted to give His people a gift and it was a weekly rest. Ex. 20: 8-11

This rest was God's idea and was not to be burdened by the extra requirements later imposed by legalistic Pharisees.

The origin of this rest goes as far back as Creation itself. God rested on the seventh day after He created the whole world. Because of our identity in Him, we are to follow His example and rest. Jesus did not nullify this rest, but put it in perspective.

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Mark 2: 27

"It is right to do good on the Sabbath." Matt. 12: 12

"The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Matt. 12: 8

As New Testament believers we are prone to dispense with any regard for the Sabbath because we are "under grace." But the Lord knows we are still in need of rest. The rest He was ultimately pointing to was the rest we find in Christ as Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 describe. But we also continue to need to recharge our bodies as well. You would not go 6 days without sleep, would you? A weekly rest and reflection remain a gift from the Lord.

How you implement this rest is between you and the Lord.

"Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day – things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ." Col. 2: 16, 17

Keep in mind that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath and as our Lord we are to seek His way of honoring this day.

The Lord knows that one day rolls into the next and we need refreshment and reflection.

DO not let your week be out of control! Find a way to prepare for your day of worship.

The Jews actually saw the day before Sabbath as the Preparation Day.

We disciples of Christ just screech into church on Sundays, skid marks included, race into the sanctuary ("sanctus" means holy – so our holy place) and plop down, ready to worship.

This will not do! We must prepare our hearts to receive from our Lord and King whatever it is He has to say or do in our midst.

Are you planning and preparing for the Lord's Day?

Prepare and then …. REST.

- **PASSOVER – Hebrew PESACH The 14th day of the first month (March/April)**

Egypt had been a hard place for God's people to live. They were essentially slaves there.

Through the Passover event, God delivered His people from this bondage to Egypt. His method of redemption was through the blood of a lamb, placed on the doorposts of the home of a Hebrew. The Death Angel would then "pass over" this house and no death would be administered to the firstborn of that home. The Egyptians did not fare so well and the night of Passover was a night of bitter pain for them.

Read Ex. 12: 1-30

Keep in mind that *eating* the Passover meal was very prescribed as well. Much as we as believers in the Christ partake of the eating of Our Lamb's body and blood – we are sharing in His life and His work of redemption. Ex. 12: 11 – "It is the Lord's Passover."

Ex. 12: 14 tells us that this was to be a memorial to celebrate as a permanent ordinance.

Remembering is so very important! We are to remember our Lord as we celebrate our Passover Lamb. 1 Cor. 5: 7

- **THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD The 15th day of the first month**

"For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread." Lev. 23: 6

Throughout Scripture, leaven is associated with sin. God's people are to purge themselves of all sin. It is not about the cracker but about the need for holiness because our God is holy.

Lev. 19: 2, "You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy."

"Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Cor. 5: 7, 8

This observance followed immediately upon the heels of the Passover. How short are our memories that we need such immediate reminders of Who our Deliverer is!

Not only are we to remember Who He is and what He has done, we are to remember who we are – we are His holy people. 1 Pet. 2: 9

- **THE FEAST OF FIRST FRUITS Day after the Sabbath**

"When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. The priest shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted …" Lev. 23: 10 – 11

On the first day of the week after Passover, the cereal harvest began. Barley was the first to ripen during this season.

This observance was to remind the people that the Lord was their Provider.

On the day after the Sabbath, following Passover, as the first fruits of the barley harvest were being offered in the Temple, Christ was raised from the dead, "the first fruits of those who are asleep." (1 Cor. 15: 20)

- **PENTECOST OR THE FEAST OF WEEKS Hebrew SHAVUOTH (May/June)**

Fifty days after the First Fruits

"You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the Lord. You shall bring … two loaves of bread for a wave offering … On this day you shall make a proclamation as well; you are to have a holy convocation. You shall do no laborious work …"

Lev. 23: 16, 17, 21

Fifty days after First Fruits, while the disciples of Jesus were gathered together to celebrate Pentecost, God kept His promise and sent His Holy Spirit.

Acts 2: 1-4, 16-18

- **THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS Hebrew Rosh Hashanah The 7th month, 1st day (September/October)**

"In the seventh month, on the first of the month you shall have a Sabbath rest, a reminder by blowing of the trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord."

Lev. 23: 23-25

A Day of Blowing

"Now in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall also have a holy convocation, you shall do no laborious work. It will be to you a day for blowing trumpets."

Num. 29: 1

For the Jew, this is the New Year – rosh means "head" or "beginning" and hashanah means "the year." In keeping with tradition it is fitting that the seventh month is holy, just as the seventh day has always been honored. Therefore, the calendar begins with the seventh month." Celebrate the Feasts Martha Zimmermann

The sounding of the shofar has much meaning for Israel.

The shofar would sound to announce every Friday to stop working as the Sabbath was about to begin.

It was sounded at Mt. Sinai at the giving of the Law. (Ex. 19: 19)

It was sounded at this most holy season to call Israel to repentance. As it was sounded on this day, these words were spoken, "You who are asleep, wake up! You who are in a trance, arise! Search your doings and repent; remember your Creator."

Fulfillment

Rom. 13: 11; Eph. 5: 14; Gen. 22: 1-14

Jesus is our sacrifice. "Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son." Gen. 22: 13

- **DAY OF ATONEMENT Hebrew YOM KIPPUR The 7th month, 10th day**

"On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the Lord. You shall do no work on this day, for it is a day of atonement … It is to be a Sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your Sabbath."

Lev. 23: 27, 28, 32 (More on this day in Lev. 16)

The Day of Atonement, when annual atonement was made of the sins of the nation, was the holiest day in the Old Testament calendar. Reformation Bible

"Prepare to meet your God, O Israel." Amos 4: 12

- **Job understood the great chasm between God and man.**

"Can man be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?" Job 4: 17

"There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both." Job 9: 33

"Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my advocate is on high." Job 16: 19

"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last He will take His stand on the earth." Job 19: 25

- **A parable of Jesus indicates the kind of heart that worships on this occasion:**

"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner.!" Luke 18: 13

It is customary to read the following Psalms during Yom Kippur: 107, 111, 145.

Fulfillment:

Israel will see the One Whom they have pierced and they will repent.

Zech. 12: 10; 13: 1; 14: 9

- **FEAST OF BOOTH OR TABERNACLES Hebrew SUKKOTH**

"You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns. Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful."

Deut. 16: 13-15

The name "Sukkoth" comes from the journey of Jacob to this place. Gen 33: 17

Read Ezra 7: 73- 8: 18 to see how overjoyed the Israelites were to again celebrate this feast upon returning to Judah after the Exile to Babylon. "All the people gathered as one "… as Ezra read from God's Word.

- **Jesus took great risk to celebrate this feast in John 7. Yet He attended because the theme of His teaching related directly to the festival itself. As He cried out, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink," He was giving the people a visual reminder of a special feature of this service. The priest would be sent to the Pool of Siloam with a golden pitcher to draw water and then pour the water into a bowl at the altar. This action of the priest was to be a reminder to all who saw that the Lord was the Provider of the coming rainy season so necessary for the crops and the survival of the people. This festival was an opportunity to petition the Lord for His blessing through the rains, asking God to open the gates of heaven.**

Jesus was well aware of the spiritual drought that existed in their hearts and so His quote from Isaiah seems all the more profound here. "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost." Is. 55: 1

These are the three major feasts for which all males of Israel were required to travel to the temple in Jerusalem. (Ex. 32: 14-19) Reformation Bible

The feasts are associated with the provision of life from the land which the Lord had provided for them (agricultural in basis). Yes, He had given them the land but if there was to be a constant flow of life-giving nourishment from this "promised land" there had to be also a constant flow of obedience and faithfulness on the part of the people of God.

The feasts were to remind the people of this connection and never forget that their very lives depended on Him. To walk in dependence on God was to walk in faith; to walk in independence from God was foolish, rebellious and would end in devastation.

The same is true for today – REMEMBER YOUR GOD!

***The Feast of Tabernacles (Also called Sukkot - meaning "booths")**

"The Feast of Tabernacles looked back to Israel's journey through the wilderness, and looked forward to the promised kingdom of Messiah. The Jews lived in booths made of branches to remind them of God's providential care of the nation for nearly forty years…Following the Feast of Trumpets and the solemn Day of Atonement, Tabernacles was a festive time for the people."

W. Wiersbe

This feast would be marked by the temple being illumined with large candlesticks to remind the people of the guiding pillar of fire during the wilderness time. (The light will be touched on in **John 8.**)

In this particular feast, there was a procession daily from the Temple to Gihon spring or Pool of Siloam.

A priest would fill a golden pitcher with water while the choir sang **Isaiah 12: 3 and recited the Hallel Psalms (Ps. 113- 118).** On the last day of the feast (*Hoshana Rabbah*), the priests would march seven times around the altar. The pouring of the water was particularly meaningful as water was scarce at this time of year in Israel. People were fearful of drought.

THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL

PASSOVER (PESACH) Ex. 12: 6, 7 Lev. 23: 5 **Lamb's blood put on doorpost** **Each Passover was to be a remembrance of the Lord's deliverance from bondage to slavery.** **Spring** **1ST Month – Nisan** **14th day**	**UNLEAVENED BREAD** Lev. 23: 6-8 **Leaven, as a symbol of sin, was to be removed from the home.** **Spring** **1st Month – Nisan** **15th day for 7 days**	**FIRST FRUITS** **Promise of Harvest to Come** Lev. 23: 9-14 **This was to be a remembrance of the faithfulness of God** **Spring** **1st Month – Nisan** **Day after Sabbath**	**PENTECOST OR FEAST OF WEEKS (SHAVUOT)** Lev. 23: 15-21 **Two loaves of bread offered as a wave offering** **50 days after first fruits** **Late Spring/Early Summer** **3rd Month – Sivan** **50 days after first fruits**
Christ is our Passover Lamb **We have been delivered from sin** **1 Cor. 5: 7**	**Clean out the old leaven (sin)** **1 Cor. 5: 7, 8**	**Christ is the first fruits as evidenced by the resurrection** **1 Cor. 15: 20-23**	**The Coming of the Holy Spirit** **Jews and Gentiles in one body- the mystery of the Church** **Acts 2: 1-47** **1 Cor. 12: 13** **Eph. 2: 11-22**

FEAST OF TRUMPETS **A HOLY CONVOCATION** **A DAY OF REST AND A REMINDER** **Lev. 23: 23-25** **Fall** **7TH Month – Tishri** **1st day**	**DAY OF ATONEMENT** **YOM KIPPUR** **ATONEMENT FOR CLEANSING FROM SIN** **Lev. 23: 26- 32** **Shofar is blown Lev. 25: 9** **Fall** **7th Month** **10th day**	**FEAST OF BOOTHS OR TABERNACLES** **(SUKKOT)** **Lev. 23: 33- 44** **Final blowing of the shofar** **This feast is a reminder of the wilderness and the provision of the Lord.** **Harvest celebration!** **Fall** **7th Month** **15th day, for 7 days, the 8th day is a Holy Convocation**
Israel will be gathered and God will make a new everlasting covenant with them. **Jer. 32: 37-41** **Ezek. 36: 24**	**Israel will see the One they have pierced and repent.** **Zechariah 12: 10; 13: 1; 14: 9** **Ezek. 36: 25027** **Hebrews 9, 10** **Romans 11: 25-29**	**All families of the earth will come to Jerusalem.** **They will remember the Lord and celebrate His Feast of Booths.** **He has provided salvation for all mankind.** **God will tabernacle with man.** **Zech. 14: 16- 19** **Ezek. 36: 28** **Rev. 21: 1-3**

CELEBRATE THE LORDS SEASONS

SABBATH The cycle of the week Leviticus 23	REMEMBER ITS GLORY GET READY TO OBSERVE	NEW TESTAMENT REALITY CHRIST IS OUR REST. "Do this in remembrance of Me."
PASSOVER FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD FIRST FRUITS – Wheat harvest Count fifty days PENTECOST - Shavuoth	• Wine – His Blood • Bread – His Body • "on the day after the Sabbath" • God's Spirit will come	Sacrifice of the Lamb of God He was without sin Resurrection – Christ the "first fruits" of the dead **1 Cor. 15: 20** First fruits of the Holy Spirit **Acts 2: 1-4**
"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; even so you too when you see all these	things, recognize that He is near, right at the door." **Matt. 24: 32, 33**	He has come!
FEAST OF TRUMPETS Blowing of the Trumpets DAY OF ATONEMENT A Cleansing from Sin FEAST OF BOOTHS/TABERNACLES Gathering in of the final crops	• Regathering of Israel in preparation for final day of atonement • Israel will repent and look to the Messiah whom they have pierced • Families of earth will celebrate Feast of Booths	**Matt. 24: 30, 31** The coming of the Son of Man with a great trumpet The hour of God's judgment/Lamb's Book of Life **Zech. 12: 10; 13: 1; 14: 9; Rev. 20: 15** The final harvest of God's people **Zech.14: 16; Ezek 36: 24**
There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. **Heb. 4:9**	Christ has already entered there. He is resting from His work, just as God did after the creation. Let us do our best to go into that place of rest too, being careful not to disobey God. **Heb. 9: 10-14**	Jesus the Son of God is our great High Priest Who has gone to heaven itself to help us; therefore let us never stop trusting Him. **Heb. 9: 15-28** **Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!**

FOUR CUPS OF THE SEDER MEAL

There are 4 cups in the traditional seder meal: the meal that Jesus our Lord participated in the night before His death.

These 4 cups are taken from Ex. 6:6, 7.

1. **The first cup is the cup of Sanctification.**

With each cup the priest would say, "Blessed be the Lord God, King of the universe."

"Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha olam..."

2. **The second cup is the cup of affliction.**
   Our Lord was willing to drink the cup of affliction in order to redeem us (cup three). This bitter cup was on the mind of our Lord. Matt. 26: 20-30
   "Lord, let this cup pass from Me … nevertheless, let Your will be done."
3. **The third, the one our Lord drank before He went to Gethsemane, was the cup of Redemption. "I will redeem you."**
4. **We are told in the gospel accounts that He refrained from the last cup, saying that He would not drink of the fruit of the vine until we are with Him in His Father's kingdom.**

Our Lord's first miracle was at a wedding in Cana, turning the water to wine.

The next time our Lord will drink wine will be at His own Wedding: the wedding feast of the Lamb!

In John 14, Jesus told His disciples that He was leaving to go and prepare a place for them in His Father's kingdom. (The King of the Universe, Eloheinu Melech Ha Olam)

When a bridegroom leaves to go and prepare the home for his new bride, he typically leaves her a gift.

Our Lord is no mean Bridegroom. He left a gift for those who love Him. He left the gift of His Spirit.

This Spirit is Who will sanctify and ready us for His return and our Wedding.

O dear follower of Christ, dear Bride of Christ, he is coming back for a sanctified Church, not a blemished, unholy, impure, unready Bride. But one adorned with *beauty, purity, wisdom and truth.*

He has left us His bridegroom's gift, the Holy Spirit of God.

Do not let the Law, sin, idols, the world, children, family, jobs, the tyranny of the urgent rob you of being prepared for our Lord and Husband.

Sanctification is not so that you can grow in the Lord; while that is a wonderful benefit, it is not the purpose of **Sanctification**. We are sanctified because He deserves nothing but the best and His Father is committed to delivering us to Him on that Wedding Day as nothing short of perfection.

Now we must prepare to meet our Beloved.

Are you walking in the Spirit, living the life of Sanctification which He provided for you?

This is why the Spirit is so crucial in the book of Acts, as He is throughout the entire Bible.

We are told in **Acts 1:5** that the baptism of the Spirit is coming.

Acts 1:8 tells us more: you will receive power to be His witnesses with the coming of the Spirit.
Acts 2:3, 4 ushers in the fulfillment of the Scriptures as God pours out His Spirit on man.

Acts 2:11 reveals the voice of the Spirit to enable man to speak of the wonders of God.

The Holy Spirit speaks of our Lord, our Bridegroom … "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear." **Acts 2:33**

This is our wedding gift.

Eph. 1:13, 14 sheds even more light on this truth.

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a ***pledge*** of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

The word "pledge" in Greek (*arrabon*) means engagement ring!

Be faithful, be pure, be singleminded for the coming of your King, Lord and Bridegroom.

When we gather together for that wedding feast, He will drink from the fourth cup of the Passover meal, ***the cup of Praise***. Ex. 6:7, "Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, Who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." He has bought us from the marketplace of slavery, He has purified us by the washing of the word, He has ascended to heaven to intercede on our behalf as we are being made ready. He has waited for His Bride.

"***For the joy*** set before Him, He endured the cross." Heb. 12:2b

NOTES ON THE SABBATH

More than one opinion in regard to Sabbath Rest is recorded here.

These are compiled from various online sites.

In a similar way, since the Sabbath points toward our final salvation, and this salvation is in Christ, we are abiding by the *purpose* of the Sabbath command when we put our faith in Christ. It is in him that we find the rest that we need (Matt. 11:28-30). The requirement for rest has been transformed to focus on Christ rather than a day of the week. If we have faith in him, we are entering God's rest and we are therefore keeping the spiritual intent of the Sabbath.

How are we to keep the Sabbath in today's society?

Within the Christian church there are three leading options for answering your question.
Some Christians believe that the Sabbath was an Old Testament ordinance and has no application to the New Testament church. No less a giant than Saint Augustine took the position that the Sabbath was not carried over into the New Testament community and therefore has been fulfilled and was done away with through the work of Christ. There are Christians who feel that there is no particular significance to Sabbath keeping today, although they make up a very small minority.
For the most part, Christian people, while they may disagree as to what day is the Sabbath—the sixth or the seventh day and all that—and how we observe it, still maintain that the Sabbath is to be observed somehow in the Christian community. God ordained the Sabbath, not at Mt. Sinai with Moses and the people of Israel, but at Creation. The later books of the Law certainly filled out the concept of the Sabbath in terms of its specifics and how it was to be observed in Israel, but the Sabbath existed long before the Ten Commandments and other laws were given. This would indicate that as long as Creation is in effect, Sabbath is in effect. In the covenant God made with Israel he says, "This is my Sabbath unto all generations." The fact that it's a Creation ordinance is strong evidence that there is still a Sabbath observation requirement for Christians—in fact, not only for Christians, because the Sabbath was part of God's design for humanity from the beginning. That's one of the reasons states have had blue laws. Sabbath keeping was not even seen as a violation of the separation of church and state; everybody was required to have a Sabbath whether they were Christian, Jew, Muslim, or whatever.
In the New Testament the church comes together on the Lord's Day, which is the first day of the week, for corporate worship. We have a clear mandate in the New Testament not to forsake the assembling of the saints (Heb. 10:25). In other words, the New Testament's simple language says that Christians are supposed to be in corporate worship on the Lord's Day. That means we're supposed to go to church. That is usually seen as one of the ways in which the Sabbath is to be observed. All Christians I know of who believe that the Sabbath is still in effect agree that on the

Sabbath we should be worshiping, and also that on one day in seven there should be rest from unnecessary commerce and labor. There are still provisions for commerce that must go on—hospital work, pharmacies, and such. But commerce just for the sake of merchandising ought to cease on the Sabbath.
This group of Christians who believe the Sabbath should be observed actually splits into two groups. One holds what we call the Continental view: Recreation is permitted on the Sabbath. The other holds the Puritan view: Recreation is forbidden on the Sabbath. I take the position that recreation is a legitimate form of rest on the Sabbath

Another point that needs to be answered - is the Sabbath a moral law (like the other 9 commandments written on the tablets)? An example of a moral law, is-- you shall not kill- this means there is no day that you are allowed to kill, no exceptions (just for clarification murder is not the same in meaning), killing is wrong on any day of the week. If the law said you cannot kill anyone except for one day then this would no longer be a moral law, but a ceremonial law.

The Sabbath is not meant to be the set day to worship above every other day of the week. It does not say to only worship God on a certain day. The Sabbath is the *day of rest,* it is a verb meaning "to cease, stop, desist; to rest" (sabbaton means rest). Can you rest on other days? Of course- then its not moral, its ceremonial and it was part of the old covenant that was done away with by Christ whom you are to have faith in.

Jesus never commanded anyone to keep the Sabbath after his resurrection and none of His apostles ever commanded anyone to keep it either. Not once in the New Testament teachings are we told to keep the Sabbath. There is no continuing command for the church to meet for worship on Friday night or Saturday before 6 at night, None. Without any exception, every mention of Sabbath keeping in the book of Acts is connected with Jewish worship on that day, not Church or a Christian keeping of law.

Paul who was once a strict keeper of the law writes in Col. 2:16-17 “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, (this means any Sabbath) which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” If you have Christ you do not need to return to the inferior shadows.

The Bible commands believers to gather together regularly for their corporate worship but the day of the week is strictly optional, it is a personal choosing. It can be Monday, Wednesday or even Sunday. And yes, it can even by Saturday. But it is not restricted to Saturday. By understanding what the difference in the covenants are we

can keep from being confused and not become legalistic but grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

1. In Romans 14:5, Paul forbids those who observe the Sabbath (these were no doubt Jewish believers) to condemn those who do not (Gentile believers).
2. The early church fathers, from Ignatius to Augustine, taught that the Old Testament Sabbath had been abolished and that the first day of the week (Sunday) was the day when Christians should meet for worship (contrary to the claim of many seventh-day sabbatarians who claim that Sunday worship was not instituted until the fourth century).
3. Sunday has not replaced Saturday as the Sabbath. Rather the Lord's Day is a time when believers gather to commemorate His resurrection, which occurred on the first day of the week. Every day to the believer is one of Sabbath rest, since we have ceased from our spiritual labor and are resting in the salvation of the Lord (Hebrews 4:9-11).

So while we still follow the pattern of designating one day of the week a day for the Lord's people to gather in worship, we do not refer to this as "the Sabbath."

John Calvin took a similar position. He wrote,

There were three reasons for giving this [fourth] commandment: First, with the seventh day of rest the Lord wished to give to the people of Israel an image of spiritual rest, whereby believers must cease from their own works in order to let the Lord work in them. Secondly, he wished that there be an established day in which believers might assemble in order to hear his Law and worship him. Thirdly, he willed that one day of rest be granted to servants and to those who live under the power of others so that they might have a relaxation from their labor. The latter, however, is rather an inferred than a principal reason.

As to the first reason, there is no doubt that it ceased in Christ; because he is the truth by the presence of which all images vanish. He is the reality at whose advent all shadows are abandoned. Hence St. Paul (Col. 2:17) that the sabbath has been a shadow of a reality yet to be. And he declares elsewhere its truth when in the letter to the Romans, ch. 6:8, he teaches us that we are buried with Christ in order that by his death we may die to the corruption of our flesh. And this is not done in one day, but during all the course of our life, until altogether dead in our own selves, we may be filled with the life of God. Hence, superstitious observance of days must remain far from Christians.

The two last reasons, however, must not be numbered among the shadows of old. Rather, they are equally valid for all ages. Hence, though the sabbath is abrogated, it so happens among us that we still convene on certain days in order to hear the word of God, to break the [mystic] bread of the Supper, and to offer public prayers; and, moreover, in order that some relaxation from their toil be given to servants and workingmen. As our human weakness does not allow such assemblies to meet every day, the day observed by the Jews has been taken away (as a good device for eliminating

superstition) and another day has been destined to this use. This was necessary for securing and maintaining order and peace in the Church.

As the truth therefore was given to the Jews under a figure, so to us on the contrary truth is shown without shadows in order, first of all, that we meditate all our life on a perpetual sabbath from our works so that the Lord may operate in us by his spirit; secondly, in order that we observe the legitimate order of the Church for listening to the word of God, for admin-istering the sacraments, and for public prayers; thirdly, in order that we do not oppress inhumanly with work those who are subject to us. [From *Instruction in Faith*, Calvin's own 1537 digest of the *Institutes*, sec. 8, "The Law of the Lord"].

For further study, see D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).

Should We Keep the Sabbath?

Christ released us from the Sabbath. His finished work on the cross abolished the entire Mosaic law of ordinances, which includes the Sabbath commandment. Only nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament. The reason for this is significant. The fourth commandment was part of the Jewish law system, which Paul called “the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us” (Col. 2:14). The moral standards in the other nine commandments regarding worshiping other gods and idols, taking God’s name in vain, dishonoring parents, murdering, committing adultery, stealing, lying, and coveting remain in effect because they reflect God’s very nature and as such are timeless.[22] The expression of these moral standards in the form of the Ten Commandments, however, was not timeless. Paul clearly stated that Christ took this “handwriting of requirements” and “nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:14).

What day, then, should Christians set aside? There is no commandment given to Christians in this area. Every day of the week belongs to God. The idea of worshiping God one day in seven, whether it be the first or the seventh, and then living for self the rest of the week is a grievous evil existing today. People often think that they can go to church one day of the week, pray and sing a few hymns piously, and then live for the Devil the rest of the time. Every day is the Lord's, and Christians owe Him their worship and devotion as much on Monday as on Saturday or Sunday.

The Christian's Day of Worship

Is there a day which believers should set aside to worship the Lord? There is one day-the first day of the week. That is the day on which Jesus rose from the dead, and it is also the day He chose to meet with His disciples after His resurrection. This was not a Sabbath day, or a rest day, it was a day of

ceaseless activity. The Lord Jesus was very busy on the resurrection day. The false conception of so many is that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath, and since the Sabbath is a day of rest, the Sabbath laws are applied to Sunday. This has resulted in untold harm.

The average Christian, instead of making the Lord's Day one of service, has made it one of rest and feasting. That is not the purpose of the Lord's Day. That is merely a perversion of the Jewish Sabbath day. Christians need to wake up and to grasp the meaning of this resurrection day. Souls need to be rescued from darkness, and only the gospel of Jesus Christ can accomplish this. "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (**James 4:17**).

One might say, "But I don't dare mention that in my church; it would only stir up a lot of trouble." That is true. It is hard to stand against traditions, but I challenge each believer to yield himself to the Lord in this matter.

Thus, by the example of Christ Himself and later by the apostles, we see that the first day of the week, known as the Lord's Day, was especially set apart as a day of service for God.

Some seem to think that it is worse for one to sin on Sunday than on any other day of the week. I believe that this is wrong. The Bible teaches that it is displeasing to God for one to yield to the Devil on any day of the week. Christians must live so that their consciences will be void of offense before God every day. In addition, they can make Sunday a day of special worship and service.

http://www.backtothebible.org/index.php/q-what-does-gods-word-say-about-the-christian-keeping-the-sabbath.html

7 Reasons You Should Rest Today!

by Chad Missildine

Few people in today's culture take a day off to rest. The ones that actually do commit to resting are seen as oddballs. Case in point: when mentioning online recently that I did nothing all day, a friend commented, "Just don't make a habit of it." Whah? It's sort of counter-cultural to stop for a day. It's always been tough for me.

One of my commitments is to take a day of rest every week to refocus. I made this decision while creating a spiritual growth plan for my life this past year. It has been the toughest yet most rewarding decision of my life when I'm able to keep the commitment. If you are a *performer* like me or have a bunch of little ones, it may be extremely tough for you to rest! Still, you need to take care of yourself. Here are some reasons you should take a day of rest every week to focus on God. (Even if you are not a believer, there are plenty of benefits to resting one day a week.) **Get Busy Resting!**

7 Reasons You Should Rest Today:

1. You have permission to rest.

In the Old Testament, the Bible called the day of rest and focus a Sabbath. In the Jewish nation, it was the most defining practice for that day. It is what set them apart from everyone else. The Sabbath commandment was the longest of the Ten Commandments. If you don't believe in the Bible, I give you permission to rest!

2. Jesus made the Sabbath even better.

Jesus was hammered for occasionally breaking the Sabbath laws, but he told the Jews they were missing the point. He said, "I didn't come to break the law, but to fulfill it." So instead of making the Sabbath day a legalistic practice (which is what it had become for many of the Jews), we are called instead to focus on the real reason of the Sabbath- to focus on God.

3. The early church helped set the stage for us.

For Christians, this one day of the week became Sunday during the first centuries of the church. It was a day for honoring God. Ignatius, one of the church fathers, spoke of early Christians as "no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in observance of the Lord's Day." (Letter to the Magnesians, 9) It became a day not just for rest, but also for spiritual focus.

4. It reminds us that we are not in charge.

A day of focus on God reminds us that we are ultimately not in control, even though we often believe otherwise. When we force ourselves to be still to contemplate and honor God, we are sort of put back in our right state.

5. It reminds us that God is provider.

During the ancient exodus from Egypt, Jews were commanded to gather twice as much food on the day before the Sabbath, so that they could rest on the day that was set aside for Him. It instilled a huge trust in God. Today, when we stop and reflect, we are reminded that He is the ultimate provider, not us.

6. It reminds us that we are set aside for God, to be different.

When we take a day *all the way off*, our minds are rested and focused again on God. Our bodies are rested and renewed. We are reminded that we are to be different from the world. We are reminded again to change the world.

7. Even creation rests.

In biblical times, Israelites were commanded to let the land rest (lie fallow) every seven years so that the soil could be replenished. This ancient practice set the stage for much of the modern crop rotations that still live today. We are no different from the soil when it comes to resting. Without a weekly day of rest and refocus, we become like stressed soil: depleted of the nutrients and health that yield a productive life. If all of creation needs rest, why wouldn't you?

So what do you do on a day of refocus and rest? What other observations do you have that I didn't talk about? We'd love to hear. Come back next weekend for more thoughts on resting!

Wisdom and Sabbath Rest

by Tim Keller

Leadership is stewardship—the cultivation of the resources God has entrusted to us for his glory. The Sabbath gives us both theological and practical help in managing one of our primary resources —our time.

In Ephesians 5, Paul invokes the biblical concept of wisdom:
"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." —Ephesians 5:15–17

The King James Version translates verses 15–16 as, "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Living wisely (or circumspectly) is to a great degree a matter of how we spend our time.

So what does this verse tell us? First, the word "redeem" is drawn from the commercial marketplace. It means, essentially, to "make a killing" in the market, or to spend so wisely and strategically that the returns are many times that of the investment.

Second, Paul's phrase "the days are evil" doesn't simply mean his readers were living in bad times. When Paul speaks of "the present evil age" (Galatians 1:4), he means the time between the first coming and the second coming of Christ. It's the overlap between the old age and the new kingdom age, a time when Christians are spreading the gospel and being a witness to the kingdom. Thus, Christians are solemnly obliged not to waste time. Time-stewardship is a command!

However, applying the principle of "making the most of every opportunity" from a kingdom perspective may be harder today than ever. Especially in global cities, we find more pressure, fewer boundaries, and less stability in our daily work than perhaps ever before. Part of the issue is how connected we are through technology. Part of it is globalization, which creates such enormous economic pressures that everybody is pushed to their limits. Employers are trying to get so much productivity out of workers that many of us are being asked to go beyond what is really fair and right.

Even though technology and contemporary idols have created longer and longer work weeks, "do not be foolish, but

understand what the Lord's will is." Discern God's will. Long ago someone told me that God does not give you more to do in a day than you can actually do, and I've wrestled with that for many years. We may feel there's way too much to do, but some of it is not his will. The pressure is coming from you, or your employer, or your friends, or your parents, or someone else besides God!

SABBATH PRINCIPLES

One of the fundamental principles of the Bible when it comes to time management is the Sabbath. If we are to be an "alternate city" (Matthew 5:14–16), we have to be different from our neighbors in how we spend our time outside of work; that is, how we rest. So what is the Sabbath about?

According to the Bible, it is about more than just taking time off. After creating the world, God looked around and saw that "it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). God did not just cease from his labor; he stopped and enjoyed what he had made. What does this mean for us? We need to stop to enjoy God, to enjoy his creation, to enjoy the fruits of our labor. The whole point of Sabbath is joy in what God has done.

Writer Judith Shulevitz describes the dynamic of work and Sabbath rest this way:
My mood would darken until, by Saturday afternoon, I'd be unresponsive and morose. My normal routine, which involved brunch with friends and swapping tales of misadventure in the relentless quest for romance and professional success, made me feel impossibly restless. I started spending Saturdays by myself. After a while I got lonely and did something that, as a teenager profoundly put off by her religious education, I could never have imagined wanting to do. I began dropping in on a nearby synagogue.

It was only much later that I developed a theory about my condition. I was suffering from the lack [of a Sabbath]. There is ample evidence that our relationship to work is out of whack. Ours is a society that pegs status to overachievement; we can't help admiring workaholics. Let me argue, instead, on behalf of an institution that has kept workaholism in reasonable check for thousands of years.

Most people mistakenly believe that all you have to do to stop working is not work. The inventors of the Sabbath understood that it was a much more complicated undertaking. You cannot downshift casually and easily. This is why the Puritan and Jewish Sabbaths were so exactingly intentional. The rules did not exist to torture the faithful. They were meant to communicate the insight that interrupting the ceaseless round of striving requires a surprisingly strenuous act of will, one that has to be bolstered by habit as well as by social sanction.

In the Bible, Sabbath rest means to cease regularly from and to enjoy the results of your work. It provides balance: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God" (Exodus 20:9–10). Although Sabbath rest receives a much smaller amount of time than work, it is a necessary counterbalance so that the rest of your work can be good and beneficial.

God liberated his people when they were slaves in Egypt, and in Deuteronomy 5:12–15, God ties the Sabbath to freedom from slavery. Anyone who overworks is really a slave. Anyone who cannot rest from work is a slave—to a need for success, to a materialistic culture, to exploitative employers, to parental expectations, or to all of the above. These slave masters will abuse you if you are not disciplined in the practice of Sabbath rest. Sabbath is a declaration of freedom.

Thus Sabbath is about more than external rest of the body; it is about inner rest of the soul. We need rest from the

anxiety and strain of our overwork, which is really an attempt to justify ourselves—to gain the money or the status or the reputation we think we have to have. Avoiding overwork requires deep rest in Christ's finished work for your salvation (Hebrews 4:1–10). Only then will you be able to "walk away" regularly from your vocational work and rest.

Sabbath is the key to getting this balance, and Jesus identifies himself as the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27– 28)—the Lord of Rest! Jesus urges us, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28–29). One of the great blessings of the gospel is that he gives you rest that no one else will.

SABBATH "PRACTICALS"

In practical terms, how do we figure out how much time we need for Sabbath rest, and how do we spend that time? The following are a few suggestions or guidelines, by no means exhaustive.

What is the ideal amount of time off from work?

The Ten Commandments require one day (twenty-four hours) off each week. When God gave these commandments, the Hebrews had been working from sunup to sundown, but the gift of the Sabbath was to stop working at sundown on Friday and rest until sundown on Saturday.

If you look at the Scripture, there's nothing that says you have to confine yourself to a forty- or fifty-hour work week. I suggest that to be within the biblical boundaries, you need to have at least one full day off, and the equivalent of an additional half-day off during the week.

For example, if your work and commute take up almost all of your weekdays but you have a full weekend off, with church participation on Sundays, then that is probably a sufficient Sabbath. Or if you get one full day off per week, and perhaps three evenings free after 6:00 p.m, you can live a pretty balanced life. This still allows quite a lot of hours for work during the week.

What counts as time off?

Of course, "making the most of every opportunity" is not simple. It never has been simple. Yes, two hours spent in prayer with God will produce far more spiritual benefits than watching an old Cary Grant movie; yet, recreation is something you must have! Mental refreshment is part of a balanced diet for the body and soul, so prayer cannot replace all recreation, exercise, and so on. Sabbath encompasses several different types of rest, as outlined below.

1. Take some time for sheer inactivity.
Most people need some time every week that is unplanned and unstructured, in which you can do whatever you feel like doing. If your Sabbath time is very busy and filled with scheduled activities of "recreation" and ministry, it will not suffice. There must be some cessation from activity or exertion. This pause in the work cycle is analogous to Israel's practice of letting a field lie fallow every seventh year to produce whatever happened to grow (Leviticus 25:1–7). The soil rested so over-farming would not deplete its nutrients and destroy its ability to keep producing. Whatever came up in the soil came up. You need some unscheduled time like that every week to let come up—out of the heart and mind—whatever will.

2. Take some time for avocational activity.

An avocation is something that is sheer pleasure to you, but that does require some intentionality and gives some structure to your Sabbath rest. In many cases an avocation is something that others do for ”work,” which is analogous to occasionally planting a different crop in a field to replenish the nutrients and make the soil more fertile for its normal crop. Include these elements:

- You need some contemplative rest. Prayer and worship are a critical part of Sabbath rest, from any perspective. Regular time for devotion, reading the Scripture, and listening to God forms the basis for inner rest and provides time away from the more exhausting exertions of life.
- You need some recreational rest. The Puritans and others were rightly skeptical of recreations that required spending a great deal of money and time and exertion, because those types of recreations exhaust people. Be careful that recreation really refreshes.
- You need to include aesthetic rest. Expose yourself to works of God’s creation that refresh and energize you, and that you find beautiful. This may mean outdoor things. It may mean art—music, drama, and visual art. God looked around at the world he made and said it was good, so aesthetic rest is necessary for participating in God’s Sabbath fully.

3. Consider whether you are an introvert or an extrovert.
When planning your Sabbath rest, ask yourself what really “recharges” you. This self-assessment can help you determine how relational your Sabbath time should be. Introverts tend to spend their energy when out with people and recharge their batteries by being alone. Extroverts tend to spend energy in personal work and recharge their batteries by getting out with people. If you are a real introvert, be careful about trying to maintain all of your community-building relationships during your Sabbath time. That would be too draining. On the other hand, relationship-building could be one of the greatest things a true extrovert could possibly do. Don’t try to imitate an introvert’s Sabbath rhythms if you are an extrovert or vice versa! Recognize that some avocational activities take you into solitude, while some take you out into society.

4. Don’t necessarily count family time as Sabbath time.
Do a realistic self-assessment of “family time” and how it affects you. Family time is important, but parents need to be very careful that they don’t let all of their regular Sabbath time be taken up with parental responsibilities. (Introverts especially will need time away from the kids!) Keeping all of these things in good balance may be virtually impossible when your children are very young, but this too will pass.

5. Honor both micro- and macro-rhythms in your seasons of rest.
Israel’s Sabbath cycles of rest-and-work included not only Sabbath days but also Sabbath years and even a Year of Jubilee every forty-nine years (Leviticus 25:8–11). This is a crucial insight for workers in today’s world. It is possible to voluntarily take on a season of work that requires high energy, long hours, and insufficient weekly- Sabbath time. A new physician has to work long hours in a residency program, for example, and many other careers (such as finance, government, and law) similarly demand some sort of initial period of heavy, intense work. Starting your own business or pursuing a major project like making a movie will require something similar. In these situations you have to watch that you don’t justify too little Sabbath by saying you’re “going through a season”—when in actual fact that season never ends.

If you must enter a season like this, it should not last longer than two or three years at the most. Be accountable to someone for this, or you will get locked into an “under-Sabbathed” life-style, and you will burn out. And during this “under-Sabbathed” time, do not let the rhythms of prayer, Bible study, and worship die. Be creative, but get it in.

BRAINSTORM IDEAS WITH OTHERS

As soon as Christian communities start defining specific rules for what everyone can and can't do on the Sabbath (like traveling, watching television, or recreation, for example), we begin to slip into legalism. Observing Sabbath rest along with a community can be beneficial, but keep in mind that people differ widely in their temperaments and situations.

It may be helpful to find other Christians in your field of work and ask them how they handle the need for rest, leisure, and restoration. Inquire about their weekly or seasonal rhythms. You will probably discover one or two ideas that are really helpful. If you can, bring these people together to brainstorm in person.

We live in a broken world, and some employers do relentlessly exploit their employees. Dealing with situations like these is difficult, but being part of a community made up of wise Christians in your field can help you correctly assess your work situation and your alternatives.

"INJECTING" SABBATH INTO OUR WORK LIVES

I have come to see that if you develop the foundation and inner rest of Sabbath, it will not simply make you more disciplined about taking time off, but it will also lead you to be less frantic and driven in your work itself. This is perhaps the most important application of Sabbath, where we can truly act as a counterculture, and here's how it works.

Associated with the Sabbath laws were "gleaning laws," such as Leviticus 19:9, in which field owners were not allowed to "reap to the very edges" of their fields. They had to leave a percentage of grain in the field for the poor to come and harvest. Sabbath, then, is the deliberate limitation of productivity, as a way to trust God, be a good steward of your self, and declare freedom from slavery to our work.

In concrete terms this is the hardest thing to do, because it's a heart matter. Personally, this has meant deliberately setting fewer goals for myself in a given day and week, rather than harvesting "out to the edges.'"

In global cities, many people are stingy with their money yet freely give their bodies away. By contrast, we Christians are stingy with our bodies and generous with our money. Likewise, many people are willing to mortgage their souls to work, but at a certain point Christians have to say, "I'm willing to set fewer goals, not go up the ladder as fast, and even risk not accomplishing as much, because I have to take Sabbath time off. And ultimately, I don't need to be incredibly successful. I can choose this path of freedom because of the inner rest I've received from Jesus Christ through what he has done for me."

You have to actually inject this Sabbath rest into your thinking and into your work life. Some of our work worlds are institutionally structured toward overwork. Sometimes you have to "pay your dues" in the early stages of your career when you're in a season of hard work (as I mentioned previously) or are trying to gain some credibility in your field. When you're more established in your field, you may be able to moderate your workload. However, at some point, even if that doesn't happen, you will have to trust God and honor Jesus— who is Lord of the Sabbath—by practicing Sabbath and risk "falling behind" in your career.

It may happen that you *will* fall behind, and yet retain your sanity. Or it may be that God will allow you to keep moving ahead in your career despite your practice of Sabbath and the "gleaning" principle. It is up to him.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of Sabbath is not simply to rejuvenate yourself in order to do more production, nor is it the pursuit of pleasure. The purpose of Sabbath is to enjoy your God, life in general, what you have accomplished in the world through his help, and the freedom you have in the gospel—the freedom from slavery to any material object or human expectation. The Sabbath is a sign of the hope that we have in the world to come.

1. What is most difficult for you about injecting Sabbath into your weekly rhythm?
2. How do you observe the Sabbath?

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From Warren Wiersbe Be Compassionate

"What was the purpose of the Sabbath and how had the legalists distorted it?"

Pharisees and scribes had turned the Sabbath day into a burden instead of a blessing.

Some of the rabbis taught that Messiah could not come until Israel had perfectly kept the Sabbath.

John R.W. Stott Bible Speaks Today

"The Sabbath day became a very important feature of Jewish religion, and when their vision was clearest the Jews understood that the weekly day of rest was a 'ritual anticipation of the advent of the messianic age' – a kind of picture, in the form of a religious observance, of what the whole of life would once again be like when God's Messiah came into the world to set things right – and therefore a thing of delight. But it was easy for that truth to become obscured, and for the Sabbath to be hedged around with so many 'Thou shalt nots' that instead of a delight it became a misery. It is into this situation that Jesus comes. In Luke 6:1-11, to renew once more the vision of what the Sabbath really is."

"One implication of the Genesis story is that a Sabbath day's rest, one day in seven, is a pattern which has been built into creation and into human life from the start. It is not merely a Jewish or Christian observance; whatever a man's religion, his constitution as a human being needs a rhythm of this kind."

The Bible has four Sabbaths:

1- Creation Sabbath Gen. 2
2- Jewish Sabbath: temporary Gal. 4:14 f; Col. 2: 16f
3- Christian Sabbath or perpetual rest: daily delight Heb. 4
4- Celestial Sabbath: which God's people will enjoy in heaven

BAPTISM

While Baptism is a very old practice for the Christian, it has roots in Judaism.

Ceremonial washings are revealed in the Torah. God commanded the Hebrew people to wash their clothing before He gave them the law at Sinai (Ex. 19: 10).

Aaron and his sons also were commanded to wash before they would minister in the Tabernacle. **Lev. 8, 16**

There were also a number of ritual cleansings for other issues. **Lev. 15.**

One particular instruction regarding washings involved leprosy. **Lev. 14:1-9**

In the Second Temple period, the practice of *mikveh* was quite common. There are many references to this rite in the Talmud.

The Complete Jewish Study Bible tells us concerning the *mikveh* that it relates "*to an experience of death and resurrection, and also to the reentry into the womb and reemergence*."

The rite of baptism was for proselytes to Judaism. But when did this occur?

This had arisen during the intertestamental period and was limited to the Gentiles. When one converted to Judaism, this rite was considered one which "purified" the unclean Gentile.

Yet, John the Baptist clearly called and baptized Jews and Gentiles. John was making clear that true repentance required a cleansing for everyone. Repentance was the key and baptism was the outward signal that repentance had taken place within the heart. John's call was precisely to ready God's people for the coming of the Messiah. Baptism was a part of this process of readying them.

"It is not unlikely that John's baptism, followed the pattern of proselyte baptism, which required a renunciation of all evil, complete immersion in water, and then reclothing as a member of the holy community of law-keepers."

<u>Expositor's</u>

Another interesting difference here with John is that typically with proselyte baptism, the procedure was for the convert to baptize himself. John was not functioning as a priest or Levite who usually played a part in purification. This is why the rulers of Jerusalem sent a delegation to question John.

John 1: 19-28

F. F. Bruce p. 99

Josephus 18. 117. "*The Essenes, according to Josephus, took a purifying bath in cold water each day before their midday meal (Jewish War 2. 129) There were people known to rabbinical tradition as 'morning bathers' because they practiced a ritual washing at dawn before they took the name of God on their lips, thus exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, with whom they engaged in controversy*."

"Baptism was not merely for the purpose of expiating special transgressions, as was the case chiefly in the violation of the so-called heretical laws of purity but was the first step in a practice of holy living and a preparation for the attainment of a closer communion with God.

The purpose for baptizing the proselyte was for cleansing from the impurity of idolatry. The bathing in water constituted a rebirth and made him a 'new creature.'" <u>Expositor's</u>

<u>Expositor's</u>

"*Proselytes to Judaism were washed completely, issued new clothing, and then received into the commonwealth of the people of God; but Israelites were regarded as sons of Abraham and children of God by covenant from birth. In effect, Jesus was telling Nicodemus that his descent from Abraham was not adequate ground for salvation. He would have to repent and begin a new life in the Spirit if he expected to enter the kingdom of God."* **John 3: 5-9; 8: 37- 44**

New Testament Baptism

"*In the New Testament, baptism is connected with <u>death,</u> not birth; no amount of physical water can effect a spiritual change in a person. The emphasis in John 3: 14-12 is on believing, because salvation comes through faith (Eph. 2: 8- 9). The evidence of salvation is the witness of the Spirit within (Rom. 8: 9), and the Spirit enters your life when you believe (Eph. 1: 13- 14; Acts 10: 43- 48)."* Warren Wiersbe

Water Baptism

Matt. 28: 18- 20

Acts 2: 41

Matt. 28: 18- 20 teaches us "*the covenant relation which baptism formally confers is with all three Persons of the Godhead*." Reformation Study Bible

"*The outward and visible sign in the Christian Church of the new birth is baptism*."

R.V.G. Tasker

Reformation Study Bible

Rom. 6: 3

"Baptism, the sign and seal of initial union with Christ, is the burial service for the 'old self' (v. 6) as well as the inauguration ceremony for the new person in Christ (v. 4). As such, it proclaims that those united to Christ have died to sin. From 5: 20 to 8: 4, sin is presented as the driving energy that produces sinful acts, and is personified as a tyrannical taskmaster, demanding dominion and needing to be resisted."

Acts 22: 16

1 Cor. 6: 11

Eph. 5: 25-27

Baptism is a symbol of what has taken place on the inside of the believer.

The identity of the believer has changed. He/she is no longer one who lives for themselves.

Gal. 2: 20

Baptism is a Spirit- wrought regeneration that cannot be accomplished by man, but only by God's Spirit.

This new identity issues in new life. **Titus 3: 5**

The Holy Spirit now lives within the believer and the abiding presence of God is dwelling within the believer; this dwelling is the seal and guarantee that one will be kept safe in Christ forever.

1 Cor. 12: 13

Eph. 1: 13, 14

We are united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

Rom. 6: 3- 7

Col 2: 11, 12

The word *baptizo* means “to dip” or “immerse in a liquid.” The idea is much like dipping a cucumber in vinegar. After enough saturation time, the cucumber is no longer a cucumber, but a pickle. The pickle has a new nature now and will never be able to be a cucumber again!

The same is true of the believer. Now we have a new nature.

The old “you” is gone forever.

Does that mean you will never sin or act like your old self?

No, you are still human with human frailties, but you no longer HAVE to sin.

Augustine says when Adam was created God created him ***posse non peccare*** – able not to sin.

But when Adam fell and essentially “died” spiritually, he was no longer able to resist sin.

His new condition was ***non posse non peccare*** – not able not to sin.

As new creatures in Christ we are returned to our pre- Fall state: we are now able to “not sin.”

We are ***posse non peccare*** again!!

“*The outward signs do not automatically or magically convey the inward blessings that they signify. No prescription of a particular mode of baptism can be found in the New Testament*. “

Reformation Study Bible

PHARISEES

We do not know the exact time in which the Pharisees came on the scene, but we know that by the intertestamental time, there were a group of people known as Pharisees.

With the advent of the Greek domination of this part of the world, the Pharisees arose as a distinct sect of Jewish leadership committed to preserving the purity of the Jewish faith. These Jews were devoted to reformation in restoring the ancient ways of Israel and maintaining the purity of the Jewish faith. They were zealous for Old Testament Law.

Hellenization is the Greek influence which spread among the countries ruled by Greece. The Sadduccees accepted the Greek ways and absorbed them into their way of life, but the Pharisees refused to be so indoctrinated.

(The Sadduccees obtained their name from the High Priest Zadok. These Jews embraced Greek influence because this view was popular among the priests as well as the aristocracy.)

The Pharisees had developed an extensive oral tradition but their interpretations of the Law altered many of the biblical requirements. Mk. 7: 1-3; Lk. 18: 9-14

Slightly before this time the Old Testment writings had been canonized to a certain degree into Tanakh= Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets) and Ketuvim (the Holy Writings).

This was a dark period in Jewish history, especially during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian king, who committed many outrages against the Jews.

Antiochus sent a General named Apollonius to Jerusalem. He destroyed the temple, stealing objects and corrupting it with unclean animals and sacrifices to Greek gods. On the Sabbath day when the Orthodox Jews would not fight, the Seleucid army fell upon the Jews, killing many thousands of Jews and carrying off the women and children as slaves.

An intense persecution of the Jews commenced and only those Jews who would cooperate with the Greeks would thrive.

The Hasidim which means "the pious ones" came to be known as the Pharisees, the separated ones, because they sought to retain the separation of their culture form the Greek influences of Hellenization.

So the Pharisees began with an honorable quest: to preserve the Jewish faith intact with little or no corruption from the Greeks.

The Pharisees were the keepers of the Mosaic law (The Torah). They believed that having guardianship of this law was proof that they were God's chosen people, to whom the Messiah would come. They believed that the Messiah would be an earthly king, a son of David whom God would raise up. He would establish an earthly kingdom, freeing them from Roman rule.They also believed that in order to remain in favour with God, the keeping of the torah was essential.

"Basic to the Pharisees conception of religion was the belief that the Babylonian Exile was caused by Israel's failure to keep the Torah (The Mosaic law), and that its keeping was an individual as well as a national duty."

To the Pharisee, keeping the law (both written and oral) was everything. The condition of a person's heart towards God was unimportant. Because of their strict adherence to levitical laws of purity, they kept themselves separate from gentile sinners (on whom they looked down), for fear of being defiled.

The experts of the law set about "hedging" the Mosaic law with precepts so as to make its violation almost impossible. They also added to these laws and precepts, customs which had been handed down through the years. They took these precepts to such extremes that the original intent of the written law was often lost, having been made of no effect by the oral laws and traditions which they had brought in.

The Pharisees placed great importance on Temple worship, but they had no personal relationship with God. Their worship was merely formal religious observance. This strict observance of the written and oral law (the latter often negating the former) and formal religion while paying no attention to the motives of the heart, led to self righteousness and hypocrisy. When the Pharisees met Jesus, a clash was inevitable.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus was openly opposed to the Pharisees. He denounced them publicly for their hypocrisy, spiritual blindness, and evil ways. The Pharisees had been entrusted with the guardianship of the Torah which was God's gift to Israel."

http://www.lastdays.org.uk/jesus-and-the-pharisees.html

But over time, the Pharisees came up with their own version of how these "purities" would be maintained. Little by little, their own man made rules supplanted the holy Law of God.

"The Pharisees used all kinds of tricks to sidestep the truth, and oaths were among them. They would avoid using the holy name of God, but they would come close by using the city of Jerusalem, heaven, earth or some part of the body." W. Wiersbe

"The only standard of righteousness the people knew was that laid down by the current religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees... The qualities Jesus mentioned, 'poor in spirit,' 'those who mourn,' 'the meek,' etc., obviously could not be products of Pharasaic righteousness … the qualities Jesus mentioned are internal. These come only when one is properly related to God through faith, when one places his complete trust in God." **Bible Knowledge Commentary**

John 1: 24-25

The Pharisees were an important sect of Judaism. They numbered about 6, 000 and were most influential... They were the only minor group to survive the Jewish war of AD 66-70 and their teachings formed the basis for Talmudic Judaism.

All throughout the gospels, Jesus refers to the Pharisees as hypocrites and "dead men's bones."

Jesus called them blind guides who had shut the gates of heaven so that neither they nor the people could enter. He constantly attacked them for hypocrisy, calling them fools.

Matt. 15: 11ff; 23: 13; 23: 23-26

Mark 7: 14ff

Luke 11: 37-53

Throughout His ministry, Jesus had told them the truth.

Such was their blindness and hardness of heart that, when God came to them, they did not know Him.

So there is a tremendous lesson for us in the name "Pharisee."

What began with good and right reasons ended up being the enemy of Jesus Christ.

Let that be a warning to us.

In what way have we come up with our own brand of "purity," turning our spiritual backs on what matters to God?

*SAMARITANS

Samaritans were a mixed-blood race resulting from the intermarriage of Israelites left behind when the people of the northern kingdom were exiled and Gentiles brought into the land by the Assyrians. Bitter hostility existed between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus' day… Samaritans were particularly hostile to Jews who were on their way to observe religious festivals in Jerusalem. It was at least a three-day journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, through Samaria, and Samaritans regularly refused overnight shelter for the pilgrims. Because of this antipathy, Jews traveling between Galilee and Jerusalem frequently chose to remain on the east side of the Jordan River."

The Samaritans believed themselves to be the descendants of the northern tribes, who had been exiled in 722 B.C. by Assyria. The Samaritans are discussed in 2 Kings 17 and Ezra 4.

The Samaritans were also rejected by the Jews because they could not prove their genealogy, so they established their own temple and worship activities on Mt. Gerizim.

The Samaritans identified themselves with Mount Gerizim near Shechem, which its members claimed was the place God had chosen for His sanctuary. They believed Israel had become apostate as soon as the sanctuary had been moved away from Shechem, during the time of Eli, the priest. The Samaritans rejected Jerusalem's special place in God's plans, and the ongoing tension regarding the proper place for the sanctuary of God is evident in **John 4**. Samaritans believed in the God of Israel, acknowledged Moses as His prophet and the Pentateuch as His revelation, and looked forward to the day when He would send the 'prophet like like Moses' as He had promised (**Deut. 18: 18**)

They did not accept or acknowledge any Old Testament writings beyond the Pentateuch as canonical.

Samaritans were considered apostates and idolaters (based in part on **Gen. 35: 4**) and were viewed as more likely than Jews to be demonized. Jesus, however, apparently regarded the Samaritans as a genuine, albeit misguided, subgroup of the covenant people.

The Jewish high priest John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan sanctuary on Mount Gerizim in 128 B.C. and tensions between Jews and Samaritans remained high throughout the first century A.D. Samaritans massacred a group of Galilean pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem in A.D. 52.

Jews would typically avoid traveling through Samaria when passing from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Samaritans looked for a Messiah and called Him, the Restorer.

Archaeological Study Bible

Samaritans had a syncretistic faith. They worshiped Baal, Jehovah and all the other gods of the many peoples who moved into Samaria after the Assyrian conquest. Expositor's calls this a "mongrel type of religion." Not only did the

people of Samaria intermarry with the foreign peoples but they included their gods as part of their own worship.

The purity of the Judaistic faith was lost when Samaria made this choice.

Therefore Jews and Samaritans would never be able to co-exist again.

An example of this in the Bible is Nehemiah 4: 1- 2 where the Samaritans opposed the newly returned Judeans in their efforts to rebuild the Temple after their exile to Babylon.

"Religious syncretism, the fusion of diverse religious beliefs and practices."

Encyclopedia Britannica

Syncretism: the combining of different religions, cultures, or ideas

Cambridge English Dictionary

ARE YOU PERSUADED TO FOLLOW JESUS WHEREVER HE LEADS?

Acts 17:2-4 "persuaded" **18:4, 13; 19:26** This was Paul's routine: persuade men that Jesus was the Christ.

The word for persuade is from the same root as the word for "faith."

pistis= faith, persuasion *pisteuo*= believe, to be persuaded, to be persuaded that something is true

peitheo= believe, persuade, in the middle voice it means "to suffer oneself to be persuaded"

it also means to obey, trust, agree, yield

Acts 18:4; 19:8; 28:24; Lk. 16:31; Heb. 13:18

Before you can be willing to go to your Jerusalem (both Jesus and Paul faced the potential and the reality of death as they went to Jerusalem), you must be persuaded that God is worthy of your life. If you are not willing to give your all for Him, then you have not been persuaded yet.

Peitheo means to "yield." So when you do not yield to God, you are not persuaded that you can trust Him.

In Greek when you put an "*a*" in front of a word you are making it negative: like our "un."

Apeitheo=refuse to be persuaded, to refuse belief, to be disobedient

Acts 14:2; 19:9; Rom. 2:8; 10:21; 11:30,31; 15:31; Heb.3:18;11:31; 1 Pet. 2:2:7, 8; 3:1, 20; 4:17

Apeitheia=the condition of being unpersuadable, obstinate rejection

Eph.2:2; 5:6; Col. 3:6; Rom. 11:30, 32; Heb. 4:6, 11

Note the connection between unbelief: not being persuaded and unbelief as disobedience

Non-believers have not been persuaded that God is Who He says He is.

Do you know non-believers who have not been persuaded that God is Who He says He is? Of course you do.

But Christian, are you persuaded that God is Who He says He is? Who is God to you?

What are some of God's attributes?

*attributes are divided into many classifications: immanent/emanant, transitive/intransitive, relative/absolute, natural/moral, communicable/incommunicable

Basically they are divided according to how He relates to man and His own separate character.

God is:

All-powerful all-loving all-knowing righteous just merciful majestic sovereign gracious forgiving

Do you really believe He is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving?

My God can cure any illness I have.

He can give me the job I want.

He can cause all my loved ones to be saved, healthy, rich, happy.

He can give me my every desire.

Do I magnify God because He gives me all these things?

Am I ***persuaded*** that my God is great?

Yes, God is great because when He does or **does not** heal me, give me certain requests, shield me from pain – I can trust that He knows what He is doing. I can trust that He is achieving in me His goal – not happiness, not ease, not a smooth carefree life. Jesus did not have a carefree life. What I am persuaded about God is that He is so great, so worthy to be praised that With every trial I face, every heartache I endure, every tear has a purpose: to reflect the life of the One Who loves within me.

Jesus said: “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is for the disciple enough that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master.” Matt. 10:24,25

I am persuaded that my God is more than able. O Jehovah – Self-Existent God – reveal more of Yourself to me that I might truly worship You, not only on Sundays, but every day and every moment I breathe. Prepare me for my Jerusalem.

Next time we will discuss “How do you gain a trust of God?”

Until then, ***be persuaded*** that He is God and He knows what He is doing in your life.

SATAN TRIED TO STOP MESSIAH FROM ARRIVING

As we celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth it is important that we become aware of the intense heavenly struggles that took place to block His arrival. Satan has made many attempts to stop our Lord from arriving on earth as a man to accomplish His task. Christ delivered us from Satan's slavery to living freedom when we believe in Him as our savior. The measure of the wealth of God's unmerited favor to every believer is the cost of Christ's blood. It was accomplished not "out of" but "according to" the wealth of His grace. We are redeemed through His blood from our sin. Christ prevailed and, because of this, today we can celebrate His birth. When Lucifer fell he became Satan ("adversary" in Hebrew) and polluted the heavenly realm with the sin he brought in to God's presence (Isaiah 14:13-14). He then entered the Garden of Eden, and through lying, enticed Eve to defy God. In this manner Satan became "the father of lies" because he originated lying (John 8:44). This single act brought sin into the earthly realm and into the heavenly realm as well. Eventually Satan convinced one-third of the angels to follow him and rebel against God Almighty (Revelation 12:4). Jehovah God sent Himself, in the body of a man, to atone for the sins of the world. As a suffering servant, His suffering reached a level of pain before and during the crucifixion that we couldn't imagine as He bore the sins of the world and the spiritual realm as well (Isaiah 49-57). In the cosmic realm Satan tried all he could to prevent Christ's crucifixion. But Christ battled with the powers of darkness, and won the war (Luke 22: 53). The death He experienced cleansed the heavenly tabernacle, which Lucifer polluted with his sin and fall, as well as providing for the salvation of all who would believe the gospel of Christ (Hebrews 9: 23-26; II Corinthians 5: 21). This is why the Lord Jesus had to come to earth. He had to go to the cross and provide the cleansing of the heavenly and earthly realms. Satan has not given up and we see many instances in Scripture where he tried to stop the Messiah from arriving to accomplish His task. Satan's tactics would include lying about what God says, and polluting the Messianic family line with occultism if he could not kill them. Satan would also use the lust for political power to destroy the Jews as well as turn rulers and members of the chosen seed family against each other in another attempt to kill off the seed line of the Messiah. It is some of these efforts by Satan that we will examine and see how the Christ prevailed. We must remember that Satan is the force behind all evil in this world.

Selected Scriptural Accounts of Satan's Attempts to stop God's Plan

The corruption of Adam's line (Genesis 6)

The apostle Paul, who recognized that demonic warfare was taking place in the spirit world, warned us that we were the objects of their wrath (Ephesians 6: 10-13). After Satan's success in the Garden of Eden, the next attack by Satan to prevent to coming of the Messiah was the series of events recorded in Genesis 6:1-5. Jewish scholars clearly understood this passage to be a union of angels and humans, which produced a corrupt line of humans known as the Nephilim. This was the cause of the Great Flood, to eliminate these monsters and restart the human line through which Jesus would come. The Lord Jesus warned His disciples that similar

events would transpire when He was about to make His second coming to the earth and told them, and us, not to be deceived (Matthew 24: 4. 37).

Abraham's seed (Genesis 12, 20)

Attempts to eliminate the family line that would produce the Messiah centered on Abraham, the patriarch of the Jews. Abraham foolishly endangered the Messianic line by lying twice about his relationship to Sarah his wife. At two different times, once in Egypt (where he went against God's direction), and a second time in Gerar of Canaan, the kings of these realms had taken her into their harem unaware that she was already married to Abraham. Twice both of them could have been killed when the truth was found out, but the Lord provided the means of escape both times.

The populating of Canaan (Genesis 12:6)

Abraham sojourned in Canaan at the Oaks of Terebinth, which was a well- established place of intense pagan worship and occultic practices. Although Abraham was in close physical proximity to this center of pagan worship, he did not participate with them. Instead God came to him and made the everlasting Abrahamic Covenant with him. This revelation and intervention preserved the purity of the Messianic line.

Famine (Genesis 42)

Famine came into the world and again threatened to terminate the family line of Abraham's grandson, Jacob, in Canaan. They would have died out had the Lord not intervened and caused the events that brought Joseph and then the rest of the family down to Egypt to survive and then thrive.

Destruction of male line (Exodus 1)

Satan, through Pharaoh Thutmose II, enslaved the Jews to stop the Messianic line from developing. Enslavement was only partially effective so Pharaoh decided to enact a more aggressive policy of infanticide. The king's instructions were explicit to the midwives: male babies were to be killed and female infants kept alive. The midwives, who feared God, disobeyed Pharaoh and under threat of death delivered the male babies alive to preserve the seed line.

Pharaoh's pursuit (Exodus 14)

As the Hebrews left Egypt in the Exodus following a series of miracles brought on by God, Pharaoh chased them with his army. As Pharaoh's armed troops approached, the Jews became fearful because they were trapped between the Red Sea and a vicious foe behind them. Then the angel of God, who guided them, moved from the front of the Israelites to the rear to protect them from the charging Egyptians. The angel shifted from guide to guardian! All through that night the pillar of cloud, which also had moved to the rear to be between the two camps, brought

such darkness that military advance was impossible for the Egyptians. That night God performed another miracle by splitting the sea by a strong east wind and drying the sea floor. While the wind kept the sea floor dry and the sea split, the Israelites walked through the sea bed to dry land on the other side. However when the Egyptians came after them, God commanded the sea to return to it's original state and drowned the entire Egyptian army. Again the Messianic line was preserved.

Against David's line (II Samuel 7)

King David decided on his own that he would build the Lord a temple. It is clear from the context that this refers to a literal house and not a dynasty. This was premature in the Lord's timing; in fact it was not God's will for David to build Him a temple at all. If David forged ahead with Nathan, the prophet's, authorization it would have been contrary to God's plan. Satan had obviously tricked Nathan into thinking that this was the Lord's will. Nathan initially had a favorable response to David's desire but this was changed by the Lord's visit to him. Because the Lord Himself intervened, Nathan rescinded his words to David. David was instructed not to build the temple at this time, but his son after him would have the honor of doing so. David was of the family of Judah, the great-grandson of Abraham who was given the pledge that the Messiah would come through him (Genesis 49:10). Instead of David building a Temple, God would build a royal house, which would be a dynasty of kings that originated with David. It would be a kingdom that would never end; the kingdom and its throne would be permanent, a realm over which the Son of David (The Lord Jesus) would reign forever. So again Satan attempts to lead God's people astray, but the Lord intervenes to make sure the Messianic line is preserved for the kingdom reign.

Jehoram kills his brothers (II Chronicles 21)

As King Jehoram of Judah came to power, he killed his brothers along with others of the royal family, perhaps because of his close ties with the wicked rulers of the northern Israel. He too would suffer a cruel death after a brief reign of only eight years. Despite Jehoram's personal evil, however, the Lord did not destroy the nation, for he remembered his everlasting covenant with David, that David's line would continue forever. Satan tried again to stop the family line by causing Jehoram to kill his brothers, but not the entire Messianic line. God intervened and killed Jehoram and allowed Jehoram's sons to remain alive.

Arabians slew all but Ahaziah (II Chronicles 22)

Satan sent a group of Arabians to Jerusalem to kill the sons of the King Jehoram to break the Messianic line, and only Ahaziah the youngest survived. As a king he was wicked and died in battle with Jehu's army, the king of the Northern kingdom. The king's servants buried him in Jerusalem (2 Kings 9:28). In addition to murdering the two kings, Jehu almost annihilated the royal families of both Israel and Judah (2 Chron. 22:8; 2 Kings 10:1-14). The Lord preserved

another Satanic attempt to destroy the seed line by preserving the life of Ahaziah's youngest son Joash.

Athaliah kills all but Joash (II Chronicles 22)

Jehu was in power in the north; and there was no male survivor in the Davidic dynasty except Joash, an infant son of Ahaziah back in Jerusalem. Ahaziah's wicked mother Athaliah took the throne and started a bloody massacre to exterminate the royal family, which would have ended the Messianic line. Then Jehosheba, Ahaziah's sister, hid her baby nephew from the queen, and spared the infant Joash's life, Ahaziah's son. He was kept in safety until the six years of Athaliah's reign ended (841-835 B.C.).

Blood Curse on Jeconiah

The kings of the southern kingdom had declined in morality, and one of the most interesting enigmas in Scripture emerges from the blood curse that God pronounced on Jeconiah (also known as Coniah): Jeremiah 22:28-30 *28 Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? 29 O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. 30 Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah (KJV).* The Messiah was prophesied to come from the royal line of David, but with a blood curse on the royal line of Jeconiah this could not happen. God always keeps His word. How can the Messiah come from the royal line that is now subject to a blood curse? God gives us the answer through the differing genealogies of Christ recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Matthew, as a member of the Tribe of Levi, focuses his gospel on the Messiahship of Jesus and presents Him as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Thus, Matthew traces the legal line from Abraham through David, then through Solomon to Jacob the father of Joseph, the legal stepfather of Jesus. On the other hand, Luke traces the bloodline from Adam (the first Man) through to David and his genealogy from Abraham through David is identical to Matthew's. But after David, Luke departs from the path taken by Matthew and traces the family tree through *another* son of David (the second surviving son of Bathsheba), Nathan, down through Heli, the father of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary was a virgin and therefore not subject to the blood curse. Even though the text of our Bibles in Luke chapter three say Joseph is the son of Heli, he clearly can't have two fathers; Heli is Mary's father. Scriptural evidence to explain the substitution is given in Numbers 27:1-11 and 36:1-12. Normally inheritance came through the sons. The daughters of Zelophehad had petitioned Moses for a special exception to the inheritance law since they were the only surviving relatives in their family. This was granted to them when they entered the land under Joshua. The one exception to the law in which inheritance is permitted through the daughter is if no sons are available, and she married within her tribe. The pure blood of Christ relies upon this peculiar exception granted to the family of Zelophehad in Numbers chapters 27 and 36. Heli, Mary's father, apparently had no sons, and Mary married within the tribe of Judah. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, of the house and lineage of David and carrying legal title to the line, but

without the blood curse of Jeconiah. The Greek text of the Luke passage is marked to indicate that Heli is Mary's father. Joseph clearly cannot have two fathers.

Haman's attempts (Esther 3)

Mordecai was the single Jew in the Persian King Xerxes' court. Mordecai's job was to represent the Jews and translate the king's orders for the Jewish community. Haman, also close to the king, wanted to kill Mordecai for not bowing to him when ordered to do so, because Mordecai said that he, a Jew, does not bow to Haman. In the story, Haman and his wife Zeresh instigate a plot to kill all of the Jews of ancient Persia. Haman attempts to convince King Xerxes to order the killing of Mordecai and all the Jews of the lands he ruled. Killing Mordecai would not solve Haman's problem because a new Jewish representative will take his place and will also not bow to him. So Haman decided to kill the whole nation of Mordecai, including Mordecai himself, and then there will be no need for a new Jewish representative, who might not bow to him. The plot is foiled by Queen Esther, the king's recent wife, who herself is a Jew. Haman is hanged from the gallows that had originally been built to hang Mordecai. The Lord used Esther to intervene and save the entire Jewish nation and thereby preserve the Messianic line to Jesus.

Joseph's fears (Matthew 1)

In the ancient days of the Jewish marriage practices, the engagement was considered to be an integral part of the marriage. So much so that any sexual activity during or outside of the engagement period was considered adultery, which could be punishable by death. When Joseph heard that Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit he wanted to privately and quickly break the engagement. This would have given Jesus the status of bastard and therefore disqualified her baby from a Jewish legal perspective as the Messiah. Satan had obviously convinced him that Mary's story of being visited by the angel Gabriel and pregnant with the Holy Spirit was unbelievable. It was only through God's intervention that Joseph believed the story and stayed with Mary, which gave Jesus a Jewish legal mother and father in an earthly sense. Satan's plot was again foiled.

Herod's attempts (Matthew 2)

King Herod was an insecure man. He was also not Jewish. He was from Edom and was a half-Jew at best. The occupying Romans put him on the throne. One of the worst persecutions that Herod orchestrated was the killing of the young male children as recorded by Matthew chapter 2. Herod was threatened that a true King of the Jews would replace him when the Magi met with him to locate the baby Jesus so that they could worship Him. Scripture explains that Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him over the Magi's visit. This is not grammatical hyperbole. The ancient Magi were a hereditary priesthood of the Medes credited with profound and extraordinary religious knowledge. Herod consulted his chief priests and scribes to find out what the Scriptures said about the location of the birth of the Messiah. He relayed the Bethlehem location (Micah 5:2) to the Magi then followed that with a request for them to come back to him

to verify the Messiah's location. This was under the guise of Herod "worshipping" Him too. When the Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, he realized that he had been tricked and ordered all male children less than two years of age in Bethlehem and its environs to be slain. Joseph, Jesus' stepfather was also warned in a dream and went to Egypt for safety.

Conclusion

There are many more attempts that could be demonstrated from Scripture where Satan tried to stop the birth of the Messiah. He was not able to prevail and we are clearly shown that the Lord God will *always* prevail and His enemies will not. Our Lord was born on exactly the day the Lord prophesied in Daniel 9:27. Here the Bible predicts that the Messiah will be on earth in 483 years from the time of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem after the last siege of the Babylonians in 586 B.C. King Artaxerxes issued that decree to Nehemiah in about 444 B.C. Some believe that this decree was made at an earlier date. In any event, counting out the exact timetable of the 183,880 days described in Daniel chapter 9 puts the timing of the appearance of the Messiah within Jesus' lifetime. Satan could not stop Jesus from coming and nobody will stop Him from coming back. Daniel E. Woodhead Ph.D.

NOTES ON SHEOL

What is the difference between Sheol, Hades, Hell, the lake of fire, Paradise, and Abraham's bosom?

https://www.gotquestions.net/Printer/sheol-hades-hell-PF.html

Question: "What is the difference between Sheol, Hades, Hell, the lake of fire, Paradise, and Abraham's bosom?"

Answer: The different terms used in the Bible for heaven and hell—sheol, hades, gehenna, the lake of fire, paradise, and Abraham's bosom—are the subject of much debate and can be confusing.

The word *paradise* is used as a synonym for *heaven* (2 Corinthians 12:3-4; Revelation 2:7). When Jesus was dying on the cross and one of the thieves being crucified with Him asked Him for mercy, Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Jesus knew that His death was imminent and that He would soon be in heaven with His Father. Therefore, Jesus used *paradise* as a synonym for *heaven*, and the word has come to be associated with any place of ideal loveliness and delight.

Abraham's bosom is referred to only once in the Bible—in the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). *Abraham's bosom* was used in the Talmud as a synonym for *heaven*. The image in the story is of Lazarus reclining at a table leaning on Abraham's breast—as John leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper—at the heavenly banquet. The point of the story is that wicked men will see the righteous in a happy state, while they themselves are in torment, and that a "great gulf" that can never be spanned exists between them (Luke 16:26). Abraham's bosom is obviously a place of peace, rest, and joy—in other words, paradise.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word used to describe the realm of the dead is *sheol*. It simply means "the place of the dead" or "the place of departed souls/spirits." The New Testament Greek equivalent to *sheol* is *hades*, which is also a general reference to "the place of the dead." The Greek word *gehenna* is used in the New Testament for "hell" and is derived from the Hebrew word *hinnom*. Other Scriptures in the New Testament indicated that sheol/hades is a temporary place where souls are kept as they await the final resurrection. The souls of the righteous, at death, go directly into the presence of God—the part of sheol called "heaven," "paradise," or "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23).

The lake of fire, mentioned only in Revelation 19:20 and 20:10, 14-15, is the final hell, the place of eternal punishment for all unrepentant rebels, both angelic and human (Matthew 25:41). It is described as a place of burning sulfur, and those in it experience eternal, unspeakable agony of an unrelenting nature (Luke 16:24; Mark 9:45-46). Those who have rejected Christ and are in the temporary abode of the dead in hades/sheol have the lake of fire as their final destination.

But those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life should have no fear of this terrible fate. By faith in Christ and His blood shed on the cross for our sins, we are destined to live eternally in the presence of God.

SHEOL

she'-ol (she'ol):

1. The Name:

This word is often translated in the King James Version "grave" (e.g. Genesis 37:35; 1 Samuel 2:6; Job 7:9; 14:13; Psalms 6:5; 49:14; Isaiah 14:11, etc.) or "hell" (e.g. Deuteronomy 32:22; Psalms 9:17; 18:5; Isaiah 14:9; Amos 9:2, etc.); in 3 places by "pit" (Numbers 16:30,33; Job 17:16). It means really the unseen world, the state or abode of the dead, and is the equivalent of the Greek Haides, by which word it is translated in Septuagint. The English Revisers have acted somewhat inconsistently in leaving "grave" or "pit" in the historical books and putting "Sheol" in the margin, while substituting "Sheol" in the poetical writings, and putting "grave" in the margin ("hell" is retained in Isaiah 14). Compare their "Preface." The American Revisers more properly use "Sheol" throughout. The etymology of the word is uncertain. A favorite derivation is from sha'al, "to ask" (compare Proverbs 1:12; 27:20; 30:15,16; Isaiah 5:14; Habakkuk 2:5); others prefer the sha'al, "to be hollow." The Babylonians are said to have a similar word Sualu, though this is questioned by some.

2. The Abode of the Dead:

Into Sheol, when life is ended, the dead are gathered in their tribes and families. Hence, the expression frequently occurring in the Pentateuch, "to be gathered to one's people," "to go to one's fathers," etc. (Genesis 15:15; 25:8,17; 49:33; Numbers 20:24,28; 31:2; Deuteronomy 32:50; 34:5). It is figured as an under-world (Isaiah 44:23; Ezekiel 26:20, etc.), and is described by other terms, as "the pit" (Job 33:24; Psalms 28:1; 30:3; Proverbs 1:12; Isaiah 38:18, etc.), ABADDON (which see) or Destruction (Job 26:6; 28:22; Proverbs 15:11), the place of "silence" (Psalms 94:17; 115:17), "the land of darkness and the shadow of death" (Job 10:21). It is, as the antithesis of the living condition, the synonym for everything that is gloomy, inert, insubstantial (the abode of Rephaim, "shades," Job 26:5;; Proverbs 2:18; 21:16; Isaiah 14:9; 26:14). It is a "land of forgetfulness," where God's "wonders" are unknown (Psalms 88:10-12). There is no remembrance or praise of God (Psalms 6:5; 88:12; 115:17, etc.). In its darkness, stillness,

powerlessness, lack of knowledge and inactivity, it is a true abode of death (see DEATH); hence, is regarded by the living with shrinking, horror and dismay (Psalms 39:13; Isaiah 38:17-19), though to the weary and troubled it may present the aspect of a welcome rest or sleep (Job 3:17-22; 14:12). The Greek idea of Hades was not dissimilar.

(1) Not a State of Unconsciousness.

Yet it would be a mistake to infer, because of these strong and sometimes poetically heightened contrasts to the world of the living, that Sheol was conceived of as absolutely a place without consciousness, or some dim remembrance of the world above. This is not the case. Necromancy rested on the idea that there was some communication between the world above and the world below (Deuteronomy 18:11); a Samuel could be summoned from the dead (1 Samuel 28:11-15); Sheol from beneath was stirred at the descent of the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:9). The state is rather that of slumbrous semi-consciousness and enfeebled existence from which in a partial way the spirit might temporarily be aroused. Such conceptions, it need hardly be said, did not rest on revelation, but were rather the natural ideas formed of the future state, in contrast with life in the body, in the absence of revelation.

(2) Not Removed from God's Jurisdiction.

It would be yet more erroneous to speak with Dr. Charles (Eschatology, 35) of Sheol as a region "quite independent of Yahwe, and outside the sphere of His rule." "Sheol is naked before God," says Job, "and Abaddon hath no covering" (Job 26:6). "If I make my bed in Sheol," says the Psalmist, "behold thou art there" (Psalms 139:8). The wrath of Yahweh burns unto the lowest Sheol (Deuteronomy 32:22). As a rule there is little sense of moral distinctions in the Old Testament representations of Sheol, yet possibly these are not altogether wanting (on the above and others points in theology of Sheol).

(3) Relation to Immortality.

To apprehend fully the Old Testament conception of Sheol one must view it in its relation to the idea of death as something unnatural and abnormal for man; a result of sin. The believer's hope for the future, so far as this had place, was not prolonged existence in Sheol, but deliverance from it and restoration to new life in God's presence (Job 14:13-15; 19:25-27; Psalms 16:10,11; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24-26; see IMMORTALITY; ESCHATOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT; RESURRECTION). Dr. Charles probably goes too far in thinking of Sheol in Psalms 49 and 73 as "the future abode of the wicked only; heaven as that of the righteous" (op. cit., 74); but different destinies are clearly indicated.

3. Post-canonical Period:

There is no doubt, at all events, that in the postcanonical Jewish literature (the Apocrypha and apocalyptic writings) a very considerable development is manifest in the idea of Sheol. Distinction between good and bad in Israel is emphasized; Sheol becomes for certain classes an intermediate state between death and resurrection; for the wicked and for Gentiles it is nearly a synonym for Gehenna (hell). For the various views, with relevant literature on the whole subject, see ESCHATOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT; also DEATH; HADES; HELL, etc.

James Orr

TERMS

Acrostic: An acrostic poem is a type of poetry where the first, last or other letters in a line spell out a particular word or phrase. The most common and simple form of an acrostic poem is where the first letters of each line spell out the word or phrase. https://examples.yourdictionary.com/acrostic-poem-examples.html

An **acrostic** is a poem (or other form of writing) in which the first letter (or syllable, or word) of each line (or paragraph, or other recurring feature in the text) spells out a word, message or the alphabet. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acrostic

a text, usually a poem, in which particular letters, such as the first letters of each line, spell a word or phrase. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/acrostic

Antiphonal music is that performed by two choirs in interaction, **often singing alternate musical phrases**. Antiphonal psalmody is the singing or musical playing of psalms by alternating groups of performers.

Chiasm: a feature of Hebrew poetry that structures thought in a mirror pattern, restating themes inversely. The name comes from the Greek verb *chiazein*, meaning "to place crosswise," and the pattern follows the shape of the Greek letter *chi (x).* This device can either mark entire psalms or merely highlight certain segments**.**

Condensed expression: also called *abbreviated expression*; the suppressed word or phrase can usually be supplied easily from the surrounding context.

Context: the parts of something written or spoken that immediately precede and follow a word or passage and clarify its meaning.

Cross reference: verses located in other places within scripture which relate and explain the currently observed text

Declarative praise: praise found in psalms that declare the majesty of God; also psalms in which believers are commanded to praise God

Descriptive praise: psalms in which the poet praises God and points out specifics that prompt the worshiper to remember concerning God's actions and attributes, i.e., creation, salvation

Distich: a two-line compound thought; also called a bi-colon

Eisegesis: the process is misinterpreting a text by reading into the text one's preconceived ideas

Exegesis: explanation, critical analysis or interpretation of a word, literary passage, etc., esp. of the Bible; the process of interpreting a text of scripture

External Evidence: Data derived from sources other than the document under consideration

Hendiadys: the combination of two or three things to express the same meaning.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (**Psalm 27: 1**)

"Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains,

For they had rebelled against the words of God." (**Psalm 107: 10**)

"...encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his *kingdom and glory*." (**1 Thess. 2:12**)

"May the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole *spirit, soul and body* be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (**1 Thess. 5:23**)

"...while we wait for *the blessed hope - the glorious appearing* of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. "(**Tit. 2:13**)

Hesed – "The name of the Lord is the solemn guarantee by covenant that He will fulfill all His promises. The phrase "for His name's same" is equivalent to the use of "in Jesus' name," as it applies all the promises and assurances given to the saints." Expositor's

"Lovingkindness" is Hesed in Hebrew. This is one of the most important words in Hebrew. This word refers to God's covenant love, His motivation for the protection, provision, paternal affection and other relationship-based sentiments He shares with His children. This is unfailing love. Without "hesed" we have no hope.

Historical Critical Method: Umbrella term for various interpretive tools aimed at discerning the historicity of certain biblical events, including source and redaction criticism. Unfortunately, this approach has historically been wedded to a skeptical stance toward the reliability of Scripture.

Hypostatic Union: union of Christ's human and divine natures in one being

Inclusio - *Inclusio* is just another word for *sandwich*.-John Niemelä
Ancient Greek and Hebrew literature, such as the Bible, did not have punctuation and paragraph breaks, so the authors had to use other methods to tell their audiences when certain things were happening in the structure of their books. One literary device they used to do this is called the "inclusio."

An *inclusio* pattern is one in which a paragraph or longer portion of literature ends in a similar fashion to how it began.

Repetition of same language at beginning and end of a section of literature forming bookends. An *inclusio* tells the reader that what is in the middle of the two bookends is support or an explanation of the words making up the bookends.

Internal Evidence: Data derived from the document under consideration itself

Kerugma - **Kerygma** (from the ancient Greek word κήρυγμα kérugma) is a Greek word used in the New Testament for "preaching" (see Luke 4:18-19, Romans 10:14, Matthew 3:1).

Kerugma is the Greek word associated with preaching. It means "proclamation or proclaiming."

At least five elements are involved in the New Testament kerugma.

1. It presented Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
2. It described Him as God in human flesh.
3. It focused on His life and work, especially His death and resurrection.
4. It spoke of His second coming.
5. It declared that salvation was only through faith in Him and those who rejected Him faced God's wrath.

The *kerugma* always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of salvation.

Martin Luther has stated that every time the gospel is presented in its entirety, there will always be conflict.

Litotes or Meiosis
Ironic understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of its contrary (e.g., "You won't be sorry" meaning you'll be glad)

"Not badly at all"

"I am not as young as I used to be"

Definition**:** A phrase that understates or lessens one thing in order to magnify another.

The Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes. (**Gen. 18:27)**

We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). *We looked like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them*. (**Num. 13:33)**

Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel,

...for I myself will help you, declares the Lord. (**Isa 41:14**)

Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, *a citizen of no ordinary city*. Please let me speak to the people. (**Acts 21:39**, italics added)

For I am the least of all the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect… (**1 Cor. 15:9-10**)

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (**1 Peter 2:10)**

Maskil: a song for teaching purposes as well as artistic, it's exact meaning is unknown but it is attached to 13 psalms

Merism (Latin merismus, Greek μερισμός merismós) is **a rhetorical device (or figure of speech) in which a combination of two contrasting parts of the whole refer to the whole**. For example, in order to say that someone "searched everywhere", one could use the merism "searched high and low".

Metonymy: use of the name of one thing for that of another associated with or suggested by it (Ex. "the White House" for "the President")

Midrash: Jewish mode of interpretation; Midrash falls into two categories. When the subject is law and religious practice (*halacha*), it is called *midrash halacha*. *Midrash aggadah*, on the other hand, interprets biblical narrative, exploring questions of ethics or theology, or creating homilies and parables based on the text. (Aggadah means" telling"; any midrash which is not halakhic falls into this category.)

Original Language: the language in which the text was originally written (for instance, Greek for the New Testament)

Parallelism: a literary pattern common to Hebrew poetry in which an idea is stated in one line and then re-enforced in the next either by synonymous terms or antithetical ones

Pericope: in rhetoric, a unit or passage of writing that forms a thought, such as a story

Pesher: The hermeneutic of "this is that," which sees a past biblical prophecy as being presently fulfilled before the very eyes of the interpreter. The apostles often used this method ("this is that which was spoken") in light of Jesus' person and work, and specifically applied it to prophetic aspects of the Psalms.

Psalms

Hallel psalms: Hallel, (Hebrew: "**Praise**"), Jewish liturgical designation for **Psalms 113–118** ("Egyptian Hallel") as read in synagogues on festive occasions. In ancient times Jews recited these hymns on the three Pilgrim Festivals, when they offered their required sacrifices in the Temple of Jerusalem.

The "Great Hallel," **Psalm 136**, which is used in the morning service on the Sabbath, festivals, and during the Passover seder.

Imprecatory psalms: those which contain the request for God to judge the enemies of the psalmist

Psalms of lament: psalms characterized by a complaint or distress expressed by the psalmist

Laments of the individual: there are eight parts to this type of psalm: address and cry to God for help, the lament itself, confession of trust, petition, belief in being heard, longing for God's intervention, vow of praise, and rejoicing when the personal cry has been heard.

Interior lament: psalms in which the poet describes problems which he has gone through or is currently going through from which he has gained insight, shaping his faith and building his trust in God; the focus is not on the trial but on the Lord's faithfulness.

Psalms of Confidence These psalms are so called because their main characteristic lies in their attitudes and actions of trust in the Lord. For this reason, they are also called psalms of trust. In this regard, we need to remember that the Hebrew view of life (as indeed, that which is and should be the Christian perspective) is that of a pilgrimage - a tough, challenging journey through the trials and hostilities of day-to-day living until the pilgrim eventually arrives in the Presence of God in whom and through whom he will experience eternal rest and comfort.

Psalms of confidence are expressions of trust in God by his people as they encountered countless dangers and distresses of life.

Many times, the psalms would contain the elements of a declaration of trust in God; an invitation to trust him; the basis for such trust; a petition; they lament; and lastly, a vow to praise the Lord. However, all of these elements are not always present in every song nor do they always appear in the above stated order.

The key notion in the psalms of confidence is that of Yahweh as the Protector of his covenant people.

Psalms of praise: psalms characterized by praising God and recounting why God is to be praised; there are four predominant themes in these psalms: creation, Yahweh's omnipresence and omnipotence, Israel's history and God's works and deeds

Psalms of thanksgiving: usually involves the psalmist gratitude at deliverance from crisis

Songs of ascent: **Psalms 120-134** which were most likely sung by pilgrims on their journey to Jerusalem for the annual feasts; later these psalms were sung by the Levites as they stood on the fifteen steps of the temple

Torah psalms: three psalms in particular make the Torah the focus: 1, 19, 119. Sixteen others focus on this topic enough to fall in this category as well: 18, 25, 33, 68, 78, 81, 89, 93, 94, 99, 103, 105, 111, 112, 147, 148. It is said these psalms form the structure for the entire Psalter; they give a foundational interpretive framework for the personal, moral and national identity of the psalm as a form

Yahweh is King psalms: "*YHWH malak*" – The Lord reigns! is declared in these psalms; these psalms proclaim the present reign of Yahweh.

Qal vahomer: the basic idea of "how much more", if God cares for the lilies of the field, then how much more will He care for His children

Selah *Selah* is thought to be a time of silence for the purpose of reflection. This word occurs 71 times in the Psalms and three times in Heb. 3.

Sensus plenior is a Latin phrase that means "fuller sense" or "fuller meaning". It is used in Biblical exegesis to describe the supposed deeper meaning intended by God but not by the human author.

Sitz im leben: "setting in life" is a scholarly term which refers the reader to the life-setting of the text; emphasis on context

Stich or colon: the line or completed thought segment of poetry

Strophe: a larger thought segment in Hebrew poetry, made up of multiple stichs

Syncretism: *Syncretism*, as defined by the American Heritage Dictionary, is "the reconciliation or fusion of differing systems of belief." This is most evident in the areas of philosophy and religion, and usually results in a new teaching or belief system. Obviously, this cannot be reconciled to biblical Christianity.

Religious syncretism often takes place when foreign beliefs are introduced to an indigenous belief system and the teachings are blended.

Targum, (Aramaic: "Translation," or "Interpretation"), any of several translations of the Hebrew Bible or portions of it into the Aramaic language. The word originally indicated a translation of the Old Testament in any language but later came to refer specifically to an Aramaic translation.
The earliest Targums date from the time after the Babylonian Exile when Aramaic had superseded Hebrew as the spoken language of the Jews in Palestine.

Tehillim: the Hebrew word which designates the Book of Psalms; it means "praises"

Torah: the revelation of God's character and covenant which is recorded in the first five books of the Bible. At its heart is the law, which God gave to Israel on Mt. Sinai; the focus being that God's will for human life is divinely revealed and historically evidenced in the story of Israel and mankind. The discussion of law or Torah in the Psalms takes on at least three forms: God's ways, God's works and God's words

Typology: an interpretive method that notes the historical and textual relationship between two matters of revelation and then more fully understands the separate parts on the basis of the whole.

Unit: the basic words or phrases that make up the larger thought segment of a poetic line or stich

Wisdom motifs: themes concerning the two contrasting ways of life: good and evil; also practical advice on living, including the fear of the Lord

Writings: the third division of the Hebrew canon in which the Book of Psalms is contained. Separate from Torah and Prophets, this division is sometimes referred to by its Greek name, the Hagiographa.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS ADDED POST PUBLISHING:

ASEITY

JESUS THE KING

ANCIENT CLASSICAL RHETORIC

ASEITY

There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away . . . with the solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday, and know nothing."

—Charles Spurgeon

What does the word ASEITY mean?

What does it matter in the big scheme of things?

How can this word impact my life in a meaningful way?

These are all relevant questions.

You have perhaps lived your life without exposure to this word before, but indeed it is a crucial word to consider if you desire to know your God better and better.

This word "gets at" the very core of Who our God is.

nounMetaphysics.

1. existence originating from and having no source other than itself.

https://www.dictionary.com/browse/aseity

Etymology

From Medieval Latin *aseitas* ("state of being by itself"), from Classical Latin *a* *se* + *-itas*.

(*theology*, *metaphysics*, *usually* *ascribed* *to* *deity*) The attribute of being entirely self-derived, in contrast to being derived from or dependent on another; the quality of having within oneself the entire reason for one's being; utter independent self-existence and self-sustenance.

ASEITY (ASEITAS)

A term used in scholastic philosophy and theology to express one of the primary attributes of God. Aseity comes from the Latin *a se* (*aseitas*) and signifies the attribute of God whereby He possesses His existence of or from Himself, in virtue of His own essence, and not from any other being outside Himself as cause. It is best understood by contrast with its opposite, that is, the attribute whereby a being receives its existence from another (*ab alio*) or is a caused or contingent being. It is thus one of the primary marks distinguishing God from creatures.

God is Self-Existent.

Meaning. Aseity has two aspects, one positive and one negative. In its negative meaning, which emerged first in the history of thought, it affirms that God is uncaused, depending on no other being for the source of His existence. In its positive meaning, it affirms that God is completely self-sufficient, having within Himself the sufficient reason for His own existence. The technical analysis of this in terms of essence and existence, which took longer to develop in Christian thought, affirms that God possesses existence per se, that is, through or in virtue of, His own essence. This does not mean that God is literally the cause of Himself in the strict sense of cause, since this would imply some kind of real distinction between God as causing and God as effect. Such a teaching, as St. Thomas Aquinas has pointed out (*C. gent.* 1.22), would be absurd. What it does mean is that God's existence is absolutely identical with His essence, that His essence necessarily includes existence itself, so that God cannot not exist: He is the Necessary Being par excellence.

https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/aseity-aseitas

I am sure you have examined the concept of the holiness of God – His "complete otherness." God is so unlike man that we can forget to remember His "otherliness" from us. Yes, we are made in God's image, but what even does that mean?

God is so completely different from us and a delve into His Aseity will enlighten your understanding of that concept.

Scripture teaches us that His ways, His thoughts are higher than ours.

His actions and words are many times inscrutable and even unlovely to us.

Remember David's reaction when Uzzah was immediately struck dead as he reached out to steady the ark of the covenant. David withdrew from the Lord for a while because of this event.

2 Sam. 6

David didn't comprehend the holiness of God enough to see that the Lord's respond to Uzzah's action was completely reasonable.

We truly do not know God, but it is our compulsion, our drive to find Him in our thoughts.

The study of theology is in fact the study of God Himself.

Now, can you, in truth, approach the study of the divine Mind with the tools that you have to contemplate this topic?

No, not really. So what do we do if we desire earnestly to know our God better and better?

We do exactly what Jesus told us to do – we come to Him as a little child.

Asking Him questions because that is what little children do.

One of the greatest flaws in our search for meaning is the growing thought that we actually possess knowledge.

When we approach Almighty God with humility and true curiosity and a longing to know Him, I believe He is thrilled to pop us up on His metaphysical knee and unfold the mysteries of eternity to us as He wills to do.

As we look at the Aseity of God, we are looking into the very Mystery of Who our God is.

A few remarks about entering into this study, God's Aseity and Timelessness are woven together so we will need to ask the Lord for an understanding of a "Mind" beyond Time.

This cannot be done by human reasoning because we have never experienced what it would be like to be separate from Time and Space.

Ask the Lord to unfold these mysteries to you as He sees fit, as He sees you are ready to absorb what He wants to reveal.

Our God LOVES to reveal. Just be patient and wait on Him.

So aseity marks the great difference between creator and creature, but it also guards God's freedom to enter the creation without compromising himself, to enter relationships with the world and with people. So he saves us from sin, not because he needs to do it, but because of his free gift of grace. God's eternality is his aseity with respect to time and therefore his lordship over time. Because he is the creator of time, he stands above it, but enters it freely to do his will. He transcends time in that (1) he has no beginning or end, (2) he does not change, (3) he is equally conscious of past, present, and future, and (4) he is not limited by the passing of time in what he can accomplish.

The term *aseity* comes from the Latin phrase *a se,* meaning "from or by himself." Bavinck defines it by saying that God "is whatever he is by his own self or of his own self."[1] He adds that aseity is "commonly viewed as the first of the attributes" and even says that "all other attributes were derived from this one."[2] The idea is that God is not in any way dependent on anything outside himself, but he has sufficient resources within himself for all that he is and does. In this way God's lordship is absolute and independent of anything he has created.

It might seem difficult to find a biblical basis for a concept that seems as philosophical and abstract as this one. The term *aseity* is not found in Scripture. But this word does express well some ideas about God that are fully biblical.

God's aseity means that he is sufficient to himself, independent of anything outside himself. God's eternality is his aseity with respect to time: Lord of time, existing above and apart from it, but free to enter it to accomplish his purposes.

https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/eternality-aseity-god/

Now, why is aseity important?

Just as it's the very essence of sin to believe that we should be like God, so it's also deadly to believe that God should be like us, to believe that God is basically just us, except with a much bigger budget.

When we think like that, we create an idol: a god of our own imagining, a fawning, dependent God who is unworthy of our worship. And in so doing, we also deprive ourselves of the supreme joy for which we were made: the joy of worshiping the ever-loving triune God who alone is worthy of worship.

We forget God's aseity—His self-existence and independence from creation—to the ruin of God. And to the ruin of ourselves.
https://www.ligonier.org/podcasts/simply-put/aseity-of-god

- **Verses to examine as you consider God's Aseity.**

Ex. 3: 14 – God is the Self-Existent Being "I Am that I Am"

Christ possesses these qualities as well; we see this in the 7 "I AM" statements in the Gospel of John

Acts 17: 24, 25

Ps. 90: 2

Is. 40: 17-23, 28 The uncreated Creator of all things – God is unique

Rom. 11: 33-36 – God is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Source, the Goal toward which all things tend

Heb. 1: 1-3

Heb. 2: 10

1 Cor. 8: 5-6

Col. 15-17

John 1: 1-3

Rev. 4: 8,11

John 5:26

Neh. 9: 6 God creates as well as preserves all creation

For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;

Acts 17:24

The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

Revelation 1:8

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Psalm 90:1-4 "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.

2Before the mountains were born

Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. **3** You turn man back into dust And say, “Return, O children of men.” **4**For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night."

Psalm 102:25-27 “Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. **26** “Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed. **27** “But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end."

Isaiah 43:10-11 “You are My witnesses,” declares the Lord,

“And My servant whom I have chosen,

So that you may know and believe Me

And understand that I am He.

Before Me there was no God formed,

And there will be none after Me.

11 “I, even I, am the Lord, And there is no savior besides Me."

1 Timothy 6:16.

who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

Genesis 21:33

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.

Psalm 102:25-27

“Of old You founded the earth,

And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

“Even they will perish, but You endure;

And all of them will wear out like a garment;

Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

“But You are the same,

And Your years will not come to an end.

John 1:4

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

Source: https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/God-Is-Self-Existent

Source: https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/God-Is-Self-Existent

Scriptural Proofs of the Aseity of God

1. God's Aseity follows from the implication that God owns everything:
    1. "*10 "For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. 11 "I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine. 12 "If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains.*" (Psalm 50:10-12)
        11. Note the allusion that God own His creation and creatures in verses 10-11.
        12. The implication is stated in verse 12: Because all things are His, He does not need to depend upon us human creatures.
        13. Even the Jewish religious sacrifices is not something God ultimately needs for Himself in verses 8-9.
    2. "*Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.*" (Job 41:11)
        11. This is God speaking, answering Job.
        12. God owns everything and owes no one anything!
    3. "*The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;*" (Acts 17:24-25)
    11. God does not need to dwell in man made locations (Acts 17:24)
        12. Notice God is not "*served by human hands*" (Acts 17:25)
        13. Notice God also does not "*needed anything*" (Acts 17:25)
    4. Notice God's satire against false God's for lacking Aseity in Isaiah 40:19-20, 44:15-17.

Examples of how the Aseity of God relate to other areas of theology

1. Relations to God as Creator:
    1. "People have sometimes thought that God created human beings because he was lonely and needed fellowship other persons. If this were true, it would certainly mean that God is not completely independent of creation. I would mean that

God would need to create persons in order to be completely happy or completely fulfilled in his personal existence."[5]
        2. Why is not God loneliness driving Him to create? Remember the doctrine of the Trinity!
        3. God's Aseity also imply God needs nothing else to create the World, hence *Creation Ex Nihlo*.
2. Relations to God's Goodness:
        1. God does not depend on an abstract "goodness" to be God, rather goodness depends on God.
        2. "And his righteousness is self-justifying, based on the righteousness of his own nature and on his status as the ultimate criterion of rightness" [6]
3. Relations to God's Grace:
        1. Ultimately God's grace is not based upon anything that we do; it is free from our manipulation since it is based solely on God's own desire to be gracious to us.
        2. While obedience of a believer yields more blessing, understanding God's aseity means we acknowledge that even our own obedience doesn't have to require God to be gracious to us, as if He owes us and we can control Him.
4. Relations to God's Faithfulness:
        1. "God does put himself under obligation to creatures by making covenants and promises…But these obligations, based on his nature and his voluntary covenants, are self-imposed, not forced on him by creatures."[7]
        2. God is faithful because He wants to be faithful!

The aseity of God is His independent, self-existence. It is another word for His non-contingency. If God is self-existent and depends on nothing else for His being, then He is necessarily without cause and eternal. If God is independent and self-sufficient, then it is not possible for us to influence God to do what we want. It would mean that God knows all things from all eternity and that He does not look in the future to see who will do what in order for Him to make His decisions based on what He sees. God's independence means that He does not consider what someone might do in a certain place and time and then make His choice based on that foreseen knowledge. That would violate God's non-contingency because it would mean that His choices and resulting actions from those choices are contingent upon the foreseen choices of others. This can't be.

https://carm.org/about-doctrine/what-is-the-aseity-of-god/

Matt Slick 2016, March 26

https://veritasdomain.wordpress.com/2021/01/13/gods-attribute-the-aseity-of-god/

https://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/s3-doctrine-of-god-attributes-of-god/doctrine-of-god-part-2

https://www.monergism.com/topics/god's-attributes/aseity-self-existence-god

William Lane Craig's Class on Aseity

I think aseity or self-existence is even stronger, even more robust an attribute than simply existing independently of other things.[3] Aseity means that God exists by a necessity of his own nature. That is to say, it belongs to God's very nature to exist. He doesn't just happen to exist and happen to be independent of everything else. Rather, God exists by a necessity of his own nature. So if God's nature is possible – if it is logically possible for God to exist – then he exists. He exists by a necessity of his own nature.
If that is right, what this implies is that the attribute of divine aseity entails two other important divine attributes. First, God's eternity. If God exists by a necessity of his own nature then it is impossible that God would ever fail to exist, and therefore that he could come into being or go out of being. If God exists by a necessity of his own nature then he will exist permanently without beginning or end. That is to say, he will be eternal. God's attribute of being eternal is entailed by his aseity.

Another important attribute of God that would be entailed by aseity would be God's necessity. That is to say, God is not a being that just happens to exist in this world (the actual world) but fails to exist if some other possible world were actual instead. Rather, God exists necessarily. That is to say, he exists in every possible world. No matter which world you might imagine could have been actual, God exists in that world. There is no possible world in which God is absent. God exists in every possible world because he exists by a necessity of his own nature. So if his nature is even possible then God will exist in every world.

So God is not merely an eternal being. He is much, much more than that. He is a necessary being. He is a being which must exist, a being whose non-existence is impossible. This is appropriate to the concept of God because God is the greatest conceivable being. We saw that St. Anselm's concept of God which helps to guide

systematic theology is the concept of a greatest conceivable being, or a most perfect being. A most perfect being – a greatest conceivable being – would be a being which doesn't exist merely contingently, but one that necessarily exists because it is obviously greater to exist necessarily than to just accidentally happen to exist.

Moreover, several of the arguments for God's existence that we will be talking about later in this class imply the existence of a necessarily existing being. For example, the Leibnizian argument from contingency that we will talk about is that in order to explain why something exists rather than nothing there must be a metaphysically necessary being whose non-existence is impossible. Therefore that argument implies the existence of a necessary being. Or again, the moral argument that says objective moral values and duties need to have some kind of a foundation in God as the ethical ultimate, as The Good. Since many moral truths are not just contingently true but necessarily true, the foundation for morality cannot just exist in some possible worlds; it would have to exist in every possible world in which there are those moral truths. So to ground moral values we must have a being that is metaphysically necessary. Or again, there is an argument for God's existence called the conceptualist argument for God's existence which says that God must exist as an omniscient mind to ground mathematical and logical truths like 2+2=4. In order to ground the truth of these necessary truths you would need to have a necessarily existent being because there is no possible world in which those statements fail to be true. So if God is the ground of these logical and mathematical truths he must be as necessary as they are.[4]
It seems to me that this concept of aseity, as being a being which exists by a necessity of his own nature, is one that not only properly belongs to the concept of God as a greatest conceivable being but we actually have some good arguments for thinking that such a being exists. We will review those arguments later in the class, but I want to simply preview these at this point by saying that the notion of God as a self-existent being (one that exists by a necessity of his own nature) is one that makes good sense.

This understanding of God's self-existence can help to solve two problems. First, sometimes is has been said that if God is a being, then he is just one being among others. He is just one more marble in the sack if God is a being. So God can't be a being. I think understanding God's self-existence enables us to see the fallacy of that reasoning. All other beings are dependent upon God for their existence. God alone is a self-existent, necessary being. Everything else that exists is a contingent, dependent being. So God is not just one more marble in the sack; rather, everything else depends upon him for its being. He is not just one being among many.

The second problem that this helps us solve is the old question, "Where did God come from?" The answer is God didn't come from anywhere. God is a self-existent being. It is impossible for him not to exist, and he always has existed. His existence is permanent. So when you understand the concept of God as a self-existent being, you can see that this old question, "Where did God come from?" or "Who made God?" is a meaningless

question. It is like saying, “Why is it that all bachelors are unmarried?” Nobody breaks his brain trying to figure out why all bachelors are unmarried. It belongs to the very concept of a bachelor to be unmarried.[9] Similarly, it belongs to the very nature of God to exist. He cannot not exist. It is impossible for him not to exist. He had no beginning; he depends upon nothing.
Those who ask the question “Where did God come from?” or “Who made God?” simply show that they haven’t understood the concept of God. Once you understand the concept of God then you can see that this question is as trivial as asking why all triangles have three corners.

What we will do next Sunday is look at the principal challenge to the doctrine of divine aseity. This comes from the quarter of Platonism. Platonists believe that there are other uncreated entities besides God – indeed, infinities of infinities of such entities – and that therefore God is not the source of the being of all things other than himself. There are uncreated entities in addition to God. Next week we will look at that challenge, and I will try to provide some answer to it.

https://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/s3-doctrine-of-god-attributes-of-god/doctrine-of-god-part-2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bj6mZiRRuUU

Excellent teaching on God’s Aseity by RC Sproul.

JESUS THE KING

Does Jesus reign today as King or will He be our King at some future date?

Give this question some thought because it determines your outlook on your relationship to Jesus today.

Ephesians 1:20–21

. . . that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Revelation 17:14

They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for **he is** Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

1 Timothy 6:13–15

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—**he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.**

Revelation 1:5–6

. . . and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and **the ruler of kings on earth.** To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

"*Similarly, when Jesus sent out seventy disciples on a preaching mission, He instructed them to tell impenitent cities that "The kingdom of God has come near you" (Luke 10:11b). How could the kingdom be upon the people or near them? The kingdom of God was near to them because the King of the kingdom was there. When He came, Jesus inaugurated God's kingdom. He didn't consummate it, but He started it. And when He ascended into heaven, He went there for His coronation, for His investiture as the King of kings and Lord of lords.*

So Jesus' kingship is not something that remains in the future. Christ is King right this minute. He is in the seat of the highest cosmic authority. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to God's anointed Son (Matt. 28:18)." For the whole article, below link.

https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/what-is-kingdom-god#:~:text=When%20He%20came%2C%20Jesus%20inaugurated,that%20remains%20in%20the%20future.

Will His kingdom look different when He returns?

Yes – but that does not negate the fact that He is King today, right now!

If we view Jesus as a future king alone, we run the risk of thinking we can ignore some of His demands. We cannot, yet we have been lulled into a complacent attitude about His authority and rights as our Master and King.

Matt. 28: 18 tells that ALL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN given to Him. That's now!

This means His commands are NOT suggestions for a nice life; His commands dictate our lives today. If we choose to disobey, we hazard our very lives. The enemy of our souls would love nothing better than to confuse us on the issue of His Kingly reign today.

Do not be fooled!

Satan has tried many tactics to derail the Lord's people; this is one of them. We need to realize that His reign began when He defeated the enemy on the cross and He won our redemption. Our King fought for us long ago on a hill in Israel. He is not just a future king coming to claim His inheritance, He has already earned and claimed His right to your soul.

To regard His role as King as a future position denies His very identity today.

The first gospel tract was placed on the cross over the head of Jesus. It was written in multiple languages so all men could know that this Man was the King.

King Jesus reigns today! If He did not reign today in your life as His obedient subject, then you are the one who lost. We must give our allegiance, our only allegiance to Him as our King.

He alone rules and reigns.

ANCIENT CLASSICAL RHETORIC

"Exordium," "narratio," "probatio," and "peroratio" are terms from ancient rhetoric that **describe the five main sections of a structured argument**:

- **Exordium:**

The introduction of the argument, where the speaker establishes credibility, captures the audience's attention, and outlines the topic.

- **Narratio:**

The statement of facts or background information related to the topic, providing context for the argument.

- **Probatio (also called Confirmatio):**

The section where the speaker presents evidence and proof to support their claims.

- **Refutatio:**

The section where the speaker addresses opposing arguments and refutes them.

- **Peroratio:**

The conclusion of the argument, where the speaker summarizes key points, appeals to the audience's emotions, and calls to action.

Components and Structure

The classical argument is made up of five components, which are most commonly composed in the following order:

- **Exordium –** The introduction, opening, or hook.
- **Narratio –** The context or background of the topic.
- **Proposito and Partitio –** The claim/stance and the argument.
- **Confirmatio and/or Refutatio –** positive proofs and negative proofs of support.
- **Peroratio –** The conclusion and call to action.

If you would like the entire article, find it below:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/historical_perspectives_on_argumentation/classical_argument.html

Below is a part of the document covering Exordium.

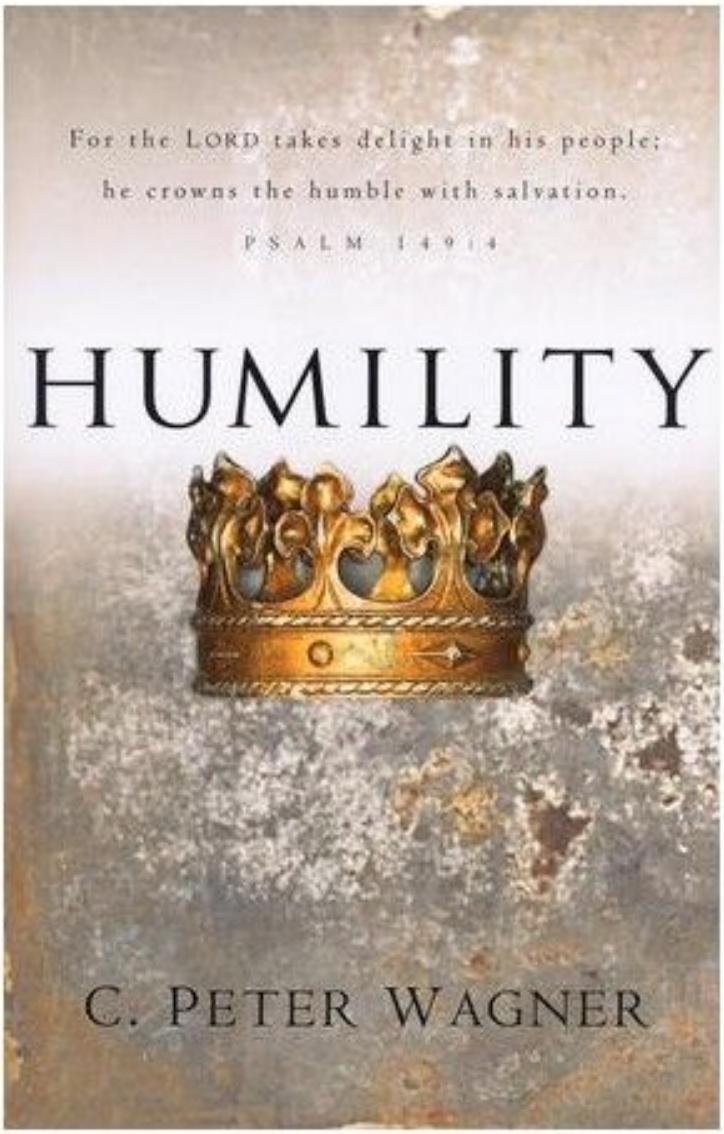
Exordium

Think of the exordium as your introduction or "hook." In your exordium, you have an opportunity to gain the interest of your reader, but you also have the responsibility of situating the argument and setting the tone of your writing. That is, you should find a way to appeal to the audience's interest while also introducing the topic and its importance in a professional and considerate manner. Something to include in this section is the significance of discussing the topic in this given moment (Kairos). This provides the issue a sense of urgency that can validate your argument.

This is also a good opportunity to consider who your intended audience is and to address their concerns within the context of the argument. For example, if you were writing an argument on the importance of technology in the English classroom and your intended audience was the board of a local high school, you might consider the following:

- New learning possibilities for students (General Audience Concerns)
- The necessity of modern technology in finding new, up-to-date information (Hook/Kairos)
- Detailed narrative of how technology in one school vastly improved student literacy (Hook/Pathos)
- Statistics showing a link between exposure to technology and rising trends in literacy (Hook/Logos)
- Quotes from education and technology professors expressing an urgency for technology in English classrooms (Hook/Ethos)

Of course, you probably should not include all of these types of appeals in the opening section of your argument—if you do, you may end up with a boring, overlong introduction that doesn't function well as a hook. Instead, consider using some of these points as evidence later on. Ask yourself: *What will be most important to my audience? What information will most likely result in the action I want to bring about?* Think about which appeal will work best to gain the attention of your intended audience and start there.



What is so great about being humble?

Do we really need to be humble?

Why does it matter to Jesus?

Are there any reasons NOT to be humble?

By the way, this will be an ongoing doctrine. In other words, let's continue to add to the notes, comments, quotes contained in this document. Humility is such a considerable doctrine that we must constantly be tweaking its truthful impact in our lives.

One way to approach a topic first is to determine the definition of the subject; here that would mean a proper definition of "humility."

ταπεινοφροσύνη – tapeinophrosune

I. having a humble opinion of one's self
II. a deep sense of one's (moral) littleness
III. modesty, humility, lowliness of mind

Next we would explore some places where we find this word.

Colossians 3:12 New American Standard Bible

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, ***humility***, gentleness and patience;

Acts 20: 19 New American Standard Bible

19 serving the Lord with all ***humility*** and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;

Eph. 4: 2 New American Standard Bible

2 with all **humility** and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

Phil. 2: 3 New American Standard Bible

3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with ***humility*** of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

1 Pet. 5: 5 New American Standard Bible

[5] You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with ***humility*** toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the ***humble***.

A reading of Phil. 2: 5-11, the famed kenosis passage, gives us a clear understanding of what humility is, what it does and what it costs. Jesus is our example here.

Philippians 2:5-11

New American Standard Bible 1995

[5] Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, [6] who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. [8] Being found in appearance as a man, He ***humbled Himself*** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Here "humble" is the verb form *tapeinoo* from the previous noun *tapeinophrosune.*

We consider ourselves small because we can give a correct estimate of ourselves as bondservants of Jesus Christ. While we consider ourselves small (as John the Baptist did John 3: 30), we can then focus our attention on Christ Who is to always appear "BIG" to us.

A proper view of Christ is the only guarantee that we will perceive ourselves correctly.

We will always consider our agenda, our viewpoints, our will, our dreams as more important UNTIL we bow before the Lord.

When we find our place, our position at the feet of Jesus, we have gained the world and all it has to offer us. If we can simply be at the feet of the Master, we are where we need to be and we have all the necessities of life.

Is this pie in the sky, wishful thinking?

Try living there … at the feet of Jesus, then you will know the answer to the question posed.

There are many examples from Scripture of those who chose the path of humility: Moses, Abraham, Esther, Boaz, David, Peter, Ruth, Elijah, Naaman the lepe, Nebuchadnezzar.

Each of these people saw victory when they humbled themselves.

When they walked their own way, they experienced defeat.

History has one example after another of those who followed the footsteps of Jesus and surrendered their will to His.

Corrie ten Boom, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, Martin Luther, my mother, George Washington, Jim and Elisabeth Eliot, countless unnamed believers who are not nameless to the Lord. And this is the mark of humility: if your Master knows you and knows of your devotion to Him, that is all that matters to you.

Test yourself on the issue of Humility

Are you willing to sacrifice whatever He asks of you, even if no one ever knows?

Are you glad to offer a service with no acknowledgement from others?

Are you full of joy when others receive praise from man and you go unnoticed?

Is humility something you long to grow in like your Lord?

Do you realize that there may be great loss in your life in order for you to know this kind of humility? Are you willing to embrace this humility no matter what that cost is?

- *"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less." - C.S. Lewis*
- *"True humility is not denying your strengths, humility is being honest about your weaknesses." - Rick Warren*
- *"Pride makes us artificial, and humility makes us real." - Thomas Merton*
- *"Humility is the solid foundation of all virtues." - Confucius*
- *"Humility is the only true wisdom by which we prepare our minds for all the possible changes of life." - Thomas Jefferson*
- *"Life is a long lesson in humility." - James M. Barrie*
- *"I believe the first test of a truly great man is in his humility." - Fulton Sheen*

'It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.' – Saint Augustine

'Live a life full of humility, gratitude, intellectual curiosity, and never stop learning.' – Gza

'Humility is the true key to success. Successful people lose their way at times. They often embrace and overindulge from the fruits of success. Humility halts this arrogance and self-indulging trap. Humble people share the credit and wealth, remaining focused and hungry to continue the journey of success.' – Rick Pitino

1.

'Early in life I had to choose between honest arrogance and hypocritical humility. I chose the former and have seen no reason to change.' – Frank Lloyd Wright

'Life is a long lesson in humility.' – James M. Barrie

'It ain't the heat, it's the humility.' – Yogi Berra

'A grateful heart is a beginning of greatness. It is an expression of humility. It is a foundation for the development of such virtues as prayer, faith, courage, contentment, happiness, love, and well-being.' – James E. Faust

'There is no respect for others without humility in one's self.' – Henri Frederic Amiel

'Pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real.' – Thomas Merton

'We come nearest to the great when we are great in humility.' – Rabindranath Tagore

'If you aren't humble, whatever empathy you claim is false and probably results from some arrogance or the desire to control. But true empathy is rooted in humility and the understanding that there are many people with as much to contribute in life as you.' – Anand Mahindra

"Thank you' is the best prayer that anyone could say. I say that one a lot. Thank you expresses extreme gratitude, humility, understanding.' – Alice Walker

'Revenge, lust, ambition, pride, and self-will are too often exalted as the gods of man's idolatry; while holiness, peace, contentment, and humility are viewed as unworthy of a serious thought.' – Charles Spurgeon

'We learned about gratitude and humility – that so many people had a hand in our success, from the teachers who inspired us to the janitors who kept our school clean… and we were taught to value everyone's contribution and treat everyone with respect.' – Michelle Obama

'A Christian reveals true humility by showing the gentleness of Christ, by being always ready to help others, by speaking kind words and performing unselfish acts, which elevate and ennoble the most sacred message that has come to our world.' – Ellen G. White

'Sports are such a great teacher. I think of everything they've taught me: camaraderie, humility, how to resolve differences.' – Kobe Bryant

'The greatest friend of truth is Time, her greatest enemy is Prejudice, and her constant companion is Humility.' – Charles Caleb Colton

'Just knowing you don't have the answers is a recipe for humility, openness, acceptance, forgiveness, and an eagerness to learn – and those are all good things.' – Dick Van Dyke

'Above all, remember that God looks for solid virtues in us, such as patience, humility, obedience, abnegation of your own will – that is, the good will to serve Him and our neighbor in Him. His providence allows us other devotions only insofar as He sees that they are useful to us.' – Saint Ignatius

'Humility is attentive patience.' – Simone Weil

'Humility is the gateway into the grace and the favor of God.' – Harold Warner

'The world calls for, and expects from us, simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially towards the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment, and self-sacrifice. Without this mark of holiness, our word will have difficulty in touching the heart of modern man.' – Pope Paul VI

'Nothing is more deceitful than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast.' – Jane Austen

'Humility and knowledge in poor clothes excel pride and ignorance in costly attire.' – William Penn

'To me, having the courage to tell your own story goes hand in hand with having the curiosity and humility to listen to others' stories.' – Sarah Kay

'Humility must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends.' – Dwight D. Eisenhower

'Humility, that low, sweet root, from which all heavenly virtues shoot.' – Thomas Moore

'A man who is eating or lying with his wife or preparing to go to sleep in humility, thankfulness and temperance, is, by Christian standards, in an infinitely higher state than one who is listening to Bach or reading Plato in a state of pride.' – C. S. Lewis

'Judges have to have the humility to recognize that they operate within a system of precedent, shaped by other judges equally striving to live up to the judicial oath.' – John Roberts

'Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility.' – Saint Augustine

'A good youth ought to have a fear of God, to be subject to his parents, to give honor to his elders, to preserve his purity; he ought not to despise humility, but should love forbearance and modesty. All these are an ornament to youthful years.' – Saint Ambrose

'There is nothing I can do to undo what I did. I can only say again how sorry I am to those I let down and then strive to go forward with a greater sense of humility and purpose, and with gratitude to those who stood with me during a very difficult chapter in my life.' – David Petraeus

'Holy humility confounds pride and all the men of this world and all things that are in the world.' – Francis of Assisi

'It is a most certain truth, that the richer we see ourselves to be, confessing at the same time our poverty, the greater will be our progress, and the more real our humility.' – Saint Teresa of Avila

'Humility is nothing else but a right judgment of ourselves.' – William Law

'Humility is always a good thing. It's always a good thing to be humbled by circumstances so you can then come from a sincere place to try to deal with them.' – Michael J. Fox

'Humility is really important because it keeps you fresh and new.' – Steven Tyler

'Think not that humility is weakness; it shall supply the marrow of strength to thy bones. Stoop and conquer; bow thyself and become invincible.' – Charles Spurgeon

'Humility is a good estate; founded thereon, the whole spiritual edifice grows into a holy temple in the Lord. Through humility, some have even possessed the gates of their enemies. For which of the virtues is so mighty to subdue the pride of demons and the tyranny of men?' – Saint Bernard

'Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance.' – Saint Augustine

'Do you wish to be great? Then begin by being. Do you desire to construct a vast and lofty fabric? Think first about the foundations of humility. The higher your structure is to be, the deeper must be its foundation.' – Saint Augustine

'Humility is to make a right estimate of one's self.' – Charles Spurgeon

'There is something in humility which strangely exalts the heart.' – Saint Augustine

'May it please Christ our Lord to grant us true humility and abnegation of will and judgment, so that we may deserve to begin to be His disciples.' – Saint Ignatius

'Because in the school of the Spirit man learns wisdom through humility, knowledge by forgetting, how to speak by silence, how to live by dying.' – Johannes Tauler

'So much of how we act and what we do is based on humility or pride – that's everything. And when you can humble yourself, you know, we are more like Christ when we can humble ourselves.' – Tim Tebow

'One way to appreciate C.S. Lewis is to see how his Christian humility shaped his life and work.' – John Piper

'The most important criterion is this: hire someone whose character and humility and attitude you would like to have reproduced in your church and in yourself.' – John Ortberg

'Far more books get written about how to get more people in your church than how to get the people already in your church to have more humility and sincere love.' – John Ortberg

'Jesus' life as a foot-washing servant would eventually lead to the adoption of humility as a widely admired virtue.' – John Ortberg

'Jesus told us to learn from him how to be meek and humble of heart. We must look at his life if we are to have any concept of what humility is all about.' – Mother Angelica

Notes on Worship

What is the purpose of childhood?

A child is an expert in their own right.

A child is a connoisseur of being messy, wild, free, loud – just plain uncivilized at times.

They ask questions almost non-stop; they are inquisitive; they are curious; they are struck by the most insignificant things.

They actually like to get dirty and don't even mind being a mess (until we train them to dislike being messy).

They love to sing, play, make things, use colors indiscriminately, they love to giggle and laugh at everything, they love to move and fidget. This action of creating art with no pretense or perfectionistic tendencies is stemming from their reflection of being made in the image of their God, their Creator. We like to create because we are made in the image of our Creator. Where do we lose that drive?

Who shows them that all their "creations" have to be "perfect?"

Who models this unrealistic view of life?

When they are scanning our faces for approval, do they find correction and censoring?

Or do they find the Spirit of the Father knowing what is truly important?

Life is a constant adventure for these new explorers. Every encounter with the Lord's creation is an opportunity to find more and more about our Creator God. The inquisitive nature of a child is placed there by the Creator for His purposes.

Their eyes never stop, nor do their fingers. They are constantly scanning for new pleasures to explore.

Then what happens?

We do.

We kill their WONDER.

This is the same thing that happens in worship.

We are the children described above. We are at heart all of those things – curious, full of interest, wide-eyed, don't mind being messy … until.

As we "grow-up" we turn in our wonderment and joy of life for sophistication and propriety. Above all we feel the need to be proper.

Is this what the Lord asks of us?

We must work to restore the WONDER OF WORSHIP.

But how can we reverse all the years of starving our souls of true worship?

Only the Spirit knows but the good news is that He wants us to be reunited with the child within us. He wants us to have the freedom to worship our God with abandon.

So I would say, start with that one word: ABANDON.

Ask the Lord to help you find your way back to that child.

Abandon your heart to the Lord; release all your preconceived ideas about "proper" worship and abandon yourself to His kind of worship.

I am not talking about Sunday structured worship here. I am talking about a life of worship.

We have lost the ability to adore the Lord through every daily detail which we experience. This robs us but more importantly, this robs the Lord of the adoration He deserves.

We MUST be desperate to return to this child-like walk of faith. Yes, it's easier to just keep going as we are but we MUST make this change. Without change, we can be certain that we are not pleasing to the Lord. This life of faith is constant, steady change. We must be moldable in His capable hands.

Lord, I abandon myself to Your care, to Your plan, to Your way.

I am committed to worshiping You the way You desire and not the way I have become comfortable to offer to You.

I lay down my way of worshiping You and I pick up the way You have called me to worship.

Open my eyes to Your Word in regard to worship.

Let the act of worship jump off the pages of Scripture in ways I have never seen before.

Please don't let me miss anything in Your Word about how to worship You.

May the richness of true worship be my new and lifelong passion.

May I be like David, dancing through the streets as the ark of the covenant was brought to the place of worship. David didn't care if he seemed undignified; he only cared about worshiping his God with a full heart.

Lord, You know how inhibited I am; this is a big ask. But You are a big God.

The child within me is excited to be on this journey with My Creator God to find Your way of creating the way of worship that blesses my Father's heart.