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# Chapter One - Introduction to Systematic Theology

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Theology itself is the science of God and His works and systematic theology is the systematizing of the findings of that science.

Some deny that theology is a science, doubting whether we can reach any conclusions in this field that can be regarded as certain and final. Having rejected the Bible as the infallible and inerrant Word of God and having accepted the view that everything is in a flux, the liberal theologian holds that it is unsafe to formulate any fixed views about God and theological truth.

Evangelical scholarship believes that there are some things in the world that are stable and fixed. It points to the regularity of the heavenly bodies, of the laws of nature, and of the science of mathematics as the basic proofs for this belief. Science may question the regularity even of the laws of nature, but the experienced believer in God sees in these apparent irregularities the intervention of God and the manifestation of His miraculous power. He maintains that while the apprehension of the divine revelation is progressive, the revelation itself is as stable as the righteousness and truth of God themselves. He, therefore, believes in the possibility of theology and of systematic theology.

## 2. THE NATURE OF THEOLOGY

The term "theology" is today used in a narrow and also in a broad sense. It is derived from two Greek words, *theos* and *logos*, the former meaning "God" and the latter "word," "discourse," and "doctrine." In the narrow sense, therefore, theology may be defined as the doctrine of God. But in the broad and more usual sense, the term has come to mean all Christian doctrines, not only the specific doctrine of God, but also all the doctrines that deal with the relations God sustains to the universe. In this broad sense, we may define theology as the science of God and His relations to the universe.

## 3. THE DIVISIONS OF THEOLOGY

The broad field of theology is commonly divided into four parts:

1. exegetical;
2. historical;

3. systematic; and
4. practical theology.

### 3.1 Exegetical Theology

Exegetical theology occupies itself directly with the study of the biblical text and such related subjects as help in the restoration, orientation, illustration and interpretation of that text. It includes the study of biblical languages, biblical archaeology, biblical introduction, biblical hermeneutics and biblical theology.

### 3.2 Historical Theology

Historical theology traces the history of God's people in the Bible and of the church since the time of Christ. It deals with the origin, development, and spread of the true religion, and also with its doctrines, organizations, and practices. It embraces biblical history, church history, history of missions, history of doctrine, and the history of creeds and confessions.

### 3.3 Systematic Theology

Systematic theology takes the materials furnished by exegetical and historical theology and arranges them in logical order under the great heads of theological study. But the contributions of exegetical and historical theology must be carefully distinguished. The former is the only real and infallible source of the science; but the latter, in its exhibition of the progressive apprehension by the church of the great doctrines of the faith, often contributes to an understanding of the biblical revelation. Dogmatic theology is, strictly speaking, the systematization and defense of the doctrines expressed in the symbols of the church, though dogmatic theology is often used synonymously with systematic theology. Under systematic theology are included apologetics, polemics, and biblical ethics.

### 3.4 Practical Theology

This area of theology treats the application of theology in the regeneration, sanctification, edification, education, and service of men. It seeks to apply to practical life the things contributed by the other three departments of theology. Practical theology embraces areas such as homiletics, church organization and administration, worship, Christian education, and missions.

## 4. DIVISIONS OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

These are the categories which should form a part of any system of systematic theology:

**Bibliology:** From *biblos* + *logos*. This is the study of the Bible, i.e., revelation, inspiration, preservation,

canonization and illumination.

**Theology Proper:** From *theos* + *logos*. This is the study of the essence, being, and trinity of God.

**Angelology:** From *angelos* + *logos*. This is the study of angels, fallen and unfallen.

**Anthropology:** From *anthropos* + *logos*. This is the study of man, his creation, make-up, innocence and fall.

**Hamartiology:** From *hamartia* + *logos*. This is the study of sin, its nature, derivation and classifications.

**Soteriology:** From *soterios* + *logos*. This is the study of God's plan and work of salvation for mankind.

**Ecclesiology:** From *ekklesia* + *logos*. This is the study of the church, universal and local.

**Eschatology:** From *eschatos* + *logos*. This is the study of prophecy and last things. Dispensations may also be included.

**Christology:** From *Christos* + *logos*. This involves the study of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-Man.

**Pneumatology:** From *pneuma* + *logos*. This involves the study of the Person of the Holy Spirit.

## 5. THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN SALVATION

By His prescience God was fully aware that man would fall into sin and become utterly ruined even before He created him. Still, He created him for His glory and purpose and planned a way of redemption when He "chose us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him" (Ephesians 1:4). This purpose is indicated in human nature and in the Scriptures.

The fall of man occasioned the loss of his original innocence and holiness, but it did not rob him of all his spiritual knowledge.

### 5.1 The Knowledge of God

All men have some idea or conception of God, though it may vary greatly. Conerning those who claim to be atheists, it is doubtful if any of them would consistently stand by their avowed position under every circumstance. The Scriptures declare that men have this knowledge also on the testimony of the voice of creation (Romans 1:20; Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31). The purpose of God to provide salvation for man is

thus indicated in the remnant of the knowledge of God which He allowed man to retain.

### 5.2 The Knowledge of Sin

This is as universal as the knowledge of God (Romans 1:32). In fact, it is possible to meet with men who claim to be agnostics and yet readily admit the existence of sin. The presence of evil all around them is evidence too strong to be denied. Even those who claim they are "good enough" and need no savior, do not go so far as to say they have never committed sin. The heathen may have conceptions of sin which do not harmonize with Scripture, but they believe that certain things offend the deity in which they believe. Although the standard of moral judgments may be much lower than those set forth in the Bible, moral judgments are still constantly being made.

## 6. THE PLAN OF GOD IN SALVATION

Scripture shows us that the God has a definite plan of salvation. This plan includes the means by which salvation is to be provided, the objectives that are to be realized, the persons that are to benefit by it, the conditions on which it is to be available, and the agents and means by which it is to be applied. He has only one plan and that all must be saved in the same way, if they are to be saved at all, whether they be moral or immoral, trained or untrained, Jew or Gentile, whether living in the Old Testament period or in the present age.

### 6.1 The Revelation of God's Plan

The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the scientist, a source of unorganized or only partly organized facts out of which he formulates his generalizations. As it is unsafe for the scientist to draw conclusions before he has made a sufficient number of inductions, so it is unsafe for the Bible student to formulate doctrines out of isolated or insufficient proof-tests. Because of this, the Scripture must be studied as a whole if we are truly to know God's plan.

### 6.2 The Outline of God's Plan

Cetain matters are included in God's plan. The Scriptures teach that God has provided salvation in the person and work of His Son. This Son was made to assume our flesh, die in our stand, rise again from the dead, ascend to the Father, receive the place of power at God's right hand, and appear before God in the believer's behalf. He is to come again to consummate redemption. This work of God's Son was for the purpose of saving us from the guilt, the penalty, the power, and ultimately the presence of sin. Salvation was provided for the world in some general sense, but more particularly for the elect, those who will believe in Christ and walk in his ways. Repentance is necessary for salvation, but merely as a preparation of the heart and not as a price paid for the gift of life. Faith is the only condition to salvation, and it is the gift of God. The Holy Spirit is the agent in the application of salvation to the individual soul. He uses the

Word of God to bring about conviction, to point the way to Christ, and to regenerate the soul. he continues the work of sanctification in the believer's life. Salvation is not complete until the believer is resurrected and presented holy and blameless to Christ by the Holy Spirit.

### 7. THE METHODS OF GOD IN SALVATION

Although God has but one plan of salvation, He has various ways of dealing with man in regard to it, and these over a long period of time. The Scripture intimate that this long time of preparation was needful. They state, "But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (Galatians 4:4).

The object of this time of preparation was threefold:

1. to disclose to man the true nature of sin and the depth of depravity to which he had fallen;
2. to reveal to him his powerlessness to preserve or regain an adequate knowledge of God, or to deliver himself from sin by philosophy and art; and
3. to teach him that forgiveness and restoration are possible only on the ground of a substitutionary sacrifice.

The means God employed to accomplish these objectives are numerous. He used a perfect environment, conscience, human government, inspiring promises, and the Mosaic Law. At present He is using the fuller New Testament revelation, and in the future He will rule personally with a rod of iron. Under each of these tests there was a failure, and each ended in judgment. This will be the case in the present age and in the age to come. This is clearly seen on a closer examination of the Scriptures in their division of time into periods or dispensations.

## Division of Time or Dispensations

(Note: Please note that the years given in below table are for reference only and therefore should not be dogmatically held.)

| **Beginning Years** | **Dispensations / Ages** | **Historical / Future Periods** |
|---|---|---|
| 4??? BC | Innocence | Adam and Eve |
| 4??? BC | Conscience | Adam to Noah |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2485 BC | Human Government | Noah to Abraham |
| 2055 BC | Covenant / Promise | Abraham to Moses |
| 1625 BC | Law | Moses to Christ |
| AD 32 | Grace | The Church Age |
| AD ???? | Tribulation | Seven Years, Still Future |
| AD ????+7 | Millennium | One Thousand Years, Still Future |

## 7.1 In the Old Testament Era

### *7.1.1 Innocence*

God placed our first parents in the garden of Eden, a most perfect environment. He had created them without a carnal nature and made every provision for their happiness and holiness. He subjected them to a simple test and warned them of the consequences of disobedience. He entered into personal fellowship with them. But when Satan came under the guise of a serpent, Eve listened to him, ate of the forbidden fruit, gave to her husband also, and he ate. As a result, they became guilty before God; their nature became corrupt; they died spiritually; and they transmitted the effects of their sin to their offspring. They did not retain the true knowledge of God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened. God expelled them from the garden after he had pronounced a curse upon the serpent and the ground.

### *7.1.2 Conscience*

Conscience now became active, and man was given the opportunity to show that the law of God written in man's nature was sufficient to bring him back to God. But Cain himself was a murderer; and though for a time there was godliness in the line of Seth, by and by all piety disppeared. All flesh corrupted its way and every imagination of the thought of the heart was only evil continually. There was no seeking after God. The voice of conscience was insufficient to cause man to seek after God and His way of salvation. God was obliged to visit the world in judgment. Only Noah and his house were saved; the rest were destroyed by the deluge that God sent as a visitation upon man for his sin.

### *7.1.3 Government*

After the flood God gave Noah information concerning human government. Murderers were to be legally executed. This is the highest function of government, and it implies every lesser function. Yet man was to rule for God, and men were to be directed by God through just and holy laws. Men, however, made a great federation and erected a tower for the purpose of idol worship. The glory and pride of man seems to

have been the chief purpose in the erection of the tower of Babel. Man had ceased to rule for God and had begun to rule for himself. God, accordingly, came down in judgment upon the disobedient race and confounded their speech. Then the peoples were scattered over the face of the earth and a divided nation arose. The governments did not have God in their thinking, and man degenerated into idolatry.

### *7.1.4 Covenant*

God then called on Abraham to leave his country and follow Him into a new land. Abraham obeyed God, and God made a covenant with him. He promised to give to him a great posterity, to give the land in which he was a stranger to his posterity, and to make him a blessing to all nations. The latter promise looked forward to the coming of Messiah, but was not limited to that event. He and his descendants were to be a spiritual blessing to the nations through all time as well. The promise was repeated to Isaac and Jacob. Jacob and his family moved to Egypt. The outcome was persecution from the Egyptians and divine deliverance from the house of bondage.

### *7.1.5 Law*

At Mount Sinai God proposed the covenant of works, and the people accepted it. They promised to do "all that the Lord has spoken" (Exodus 19:8). But it is evident that the people did not reckon with the depravity of the human heart, nor the power of Satan. Before Moses could deliver the Ten Commandments, written on two tables of stone, Israel had made an idol and had begun to worship it. The story of Israel's failure at Kadesh-barnea, under the judges, and during the monarchy are well known. Under the judges, God several times subjected them to oppressing nations, and after a short time He had the northern kingdom taken to Assyria, and about 135 years later the southern kingdom to Babylon. Some fifty or sixty thousand returned from Babylon, but their conduct was little better.

When Jesus their Messiah came, they rejected Him and demanded that the Romans crucify Him. Finally, God sent these same Romans to destroy their city and temple and to scatter the people over the face of the whole earth. They honored the law with their lips, but their hearts were far from God. It was proved that legal prescriptions cannot make man seek after God, nor can animal sacrifices change the heart.

## 7.2 In the Present Era (Church)

A greater change of method has taken place for the present. This is the church or called grace period. After all the previous methods, finally the Savior Himself appeared. By His death He made atonement for the sins of Old Testament believers as well as for those of New Testament believers (Romans 3:21-26). God now offers to every man salvation through Jesus Christ. Prior to this age the plan of salvation was, in many instances, but dimly apprehended; now the whole scheme is laid open to every man that will know it. All that is required of any man is to accept what God has provided in Christ. If a man by faith accepts the offer of life, he is born again of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit follows up the work begun in regeneration and perfects holiness in the believer. Simple and clear as this plan is, both Scripture and observation teach us that man does not readily respond to the gospel invitation.

### 7.3 In the Future Era

#### *7.3.1 Tribulation*

Indeed, we are told that as the end of the age approaches, many will depart from the faith and ungodliness will abound. God will take his church home to himself and deliver the rest of earth's population over to the awful seven years Tribulation Period that is to come. But even in the church age unbelief is rampant and the believing are few.

#### *7.3.2 Millennium*

A still greater change is promised to come for the millennial period. Christ must reign in every realm into which sin has entered. He came once and offered to be Israel's king and savior, but the majority turned a deal ear to his offers. He will come again in glory and take charge of this world by force. As the son of David, He will institute an earthly kingdom. Israel will be the centre of that kingdom and Jerusalem will be the capital. All nations will come to worship at Mount Zion. The period will begin with a converted world, for Christ will judge the armies that come against Him at Armageddon, judge the nations that sent them, and bind Satan. Only the saved of earth will enter into the kingdom. But many people will be born during the millennium, and they will not all become true believers. Some will yield only feigned obedience. Sin will be put down with a rod of iron, but much conformity will be only outward. The hypocrisy of many will become evident at the close of the millennium, for when Satan will be loosed for a little season, he will secure the adherence of the half-hearted believers. Judgment will fall upon the new rebellion, and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire. The kingdom, too, will not succeed in making the world righteous. Only the grace of God in the individual heart can change the life permanently in any age; and since not all will receive that grace in any age, not all will be saved.

So God will show that men must be born again. He will have tried them under different circumstances and in different ages, but every age ends in man's failure.

## 8. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. **Survey of Theology II**, Lesson 1, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
2. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapters I, II, III, IV and XXI, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.

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# Chapter Two - Predestination and Election

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO SOME IMPORTANT TERMS

### 1.1 Predestination

*Protithemi* (to set forth beforehand) and *prohorize* (to determine beforehand) are synonymous Greek terms, which translate into the verb form "predestine" or the noun form "predestination" in English. In Scripture both events and people are predestined. For example, in Acts 4:27-28 Herod, Pilate, and the religious leaders did to Jesus whatever God's hand had "predestined" to occur. In Roman 8:29 believers are "predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son," and in the next verse the word is used in connection with their calling, justification, and glorification, relating ultimately to election. In Ephesians 1:11 "all things" are predestined according to the counsel of God's will. The concept is comprehensive in scope and does not allow us to speculate that anything happens apart from the eternal plan of God. Simply stated, when God predestines He makes certain to happen whatever He plans or decrees, and everything is thus predestined.

Does this make history merely a series of "programmed" events and all people robots? The answer is **NO**. "Predestine" does not always mean an event was directly caused by God. For example, God foresees the sins of men and allows them as part of His eternal plan or predestination. He predestines by permission all things which are contrary to His holy character.

On one hand, all that occurs is certain to occur according to God's predestination. On the other hand, sinful deeds and good acts of obedience on the part of human beings are not caused directly by God. Sin is permitted, while believers' obedient acts are prompted and encouraged by the Holy Spirit (they are also empowered by the Spirit, but the decision to obey is truly that of the believer).

To deny predestination is to think of God inadequately and will eventually lead to humanistic thinking, the deification of man himself. But fully understanding predestination is an impossible task. One hazard to avoid in coming to terms with predestination is denying human responsibility in decision making. God regards men as responsible creatures - that is clear.

### 1.2 Election

Election is part of the larger concept of predestination. Wherever the word is used in Scripture it applies to the eternal choice by God of those whom He eventually calls and justifies. It is never used directly in connection with those who ultimately are lost, yet many believe that election to salvation implies an "election" to damnation (strict Calvinism). Such passages as Romans 9:6-18, which we will examine, are cited as evidence for this election to damnation, usually referred to as "reprobation."

A more moderate Calvinistic view is that all men are alienated and lost as a result of the Fall. Furthermore, God eternally chooses to bestow special grace on a few to be softened and turned to faith while He merely allows the rest to continue in their rebellion. This view is called "preterition."

At the other end of the spectrum are Arminians, who believe that God elects only those whom He knew through His foreknowledge would believe. They base their view on such passages as 1 Peter 1:1-2, which says believers are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Such a view assumes something most Calvinists would deny: some people, apart from any intervention by God to change their predisposition to rebel, will believe and turn to God.

Either position, Calvinist or Arminian, is faced with a similar problem. The Calvinist faces the problem of why God did not elect all mankind when He was able to do so, and the Arminian is faced with the problem of why God did not make those who reject God's mercy inclined to accept it when He was able to do so.

The only altenative to either of these positions is that of universalism, which teaches that all mankind is elect. The problem with this position is that part of the Bible must be rejected as true, for the Bible clearly teaches that some will ultimately be condemned to hell.

## 2. THE DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEWS OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

### 2.1 The Meanings of Election

Election is:

1. A sovereign act of God.
2. God is under no obligation to elect anyone, since all have lost their standing before God.
3. It is not due to any contraint laid upon God.
4. It is an act of grace, in that He chose those who were unworthy of Salvation.
5. God chose to save them "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:4).
6. God chose those whom He **foreknew**.

But how do foreknowledge and predestination relate to election? Scripture indicates that election is based on foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:1f; cf. Romans 8:29), but the actual meaning of foreknowledge is debated:

1. Is it merely prescience or foresight?
2. Does it relate more closely to actual choice?
3. Does God, in His foreknowledge, perceive that each man will do in response to His call and then elect Him to Salvation in harmony with this knowledge?

4. Does foreknowledge mean that God, from eternity past, looked with favour upon some and then elected them to Salvation?

## 2.2 The Debate of the Actual Meaning of Foreknowledge

We have different perspectives concerning the definition of election:

1. Is election the sovereign act of God whereby He chose some to Salvation solely on the basis of sovereign grace apart from the merits or acts of the individual? or
2. Is it the sovereign act of God whereby He chose those whom He foreknew would respond to His gracious invitation?

Both of these positions are set forth in the following paragraphs with arguments for and against:

1. Election based on prescience; and
2. Election based on the choice of God.

## 2.3 Election Based on Prescience

In this position, God in His foreknowledge foresaw those who would respond to His offer of Salvation and actively elected them to Salvation. That is, election is that sovereign act of God in grace whereby He chose in Christ for Salvation all those whom He foreknew would accept Him. The repeated teachings of Scripture that man is responsible for accepting or rejecting Salvation suggest that it is man's response to the Gospel that is the basis of the God's election. The elect are those whom God foresees will respond personally to the Gospel. In this position, the role of God is quite **passive**, His action of election is purely based on the choice of human beings.

Closely related to election is predestination or foreordination. The Greek verb occurs several times in the New Testament (Acts 4:28; Romans 8:29f; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5, 11). It carries the idea of appointing beforehand. Though election and predestination are similar in meaning, they may be distinguished in this manner:

1. In election God has intended to save those who accept His Son (first step).
2. In predestination God has accomplished that purpose (second step).

In other words, the God has elected those who accept His Son (i.e. the elect or called true Christians) and then He has predestined to give Salvation to all the elect.

Thus Paul writes, *"Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29) and "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself" (Ephesians 1:5; cf. v.11).*

### *2.3.1 Biblical support for this view of election*

The Bible supports this position in the following ways:

1. Scripture teaches that God's Salvation bringing grace has appeared to all men, not merely the elect (Titus 2:11). Though mankind is hopelessly dead in trespasses and sins and can do nothing to obtain Salvation, God, by His grace, has restored to all men sufficient ability to make a choice in the matter of submission to God. That is to say, the God has restored to the sinner the ability to make a favorable response to God. Thus God, in His grace, has made it possible for all men to be saved. There is no merit of any human efforts in this transaction; it is all of the grace of God.

2. The Bible clearly teaches that Christ died for all (1 Timothy 2:6; 4:10; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:2; 4:14). God does not desire "for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9; cf. Ezekiel 18:32). The invitation to Salvation is to all, to "whoever" (John 3:15f; 4:13f; 11:26; 12:46; Acts 2:21; 10:43). It is difficult to conceive of a universal invitation to which only the few have the ability to respond.

3. There are numerous exhortations to turn to God (Isaiah 31:6; Joel 2:13f; Matthew 18:3; Acts 3:19), to repent (Matthew 3:2; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30), and to believe (John 6:29; Acts 16:31; 1 John 3:23). Paul writes, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing Salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11). This results in the freeing of the will in the matter of Salvation. In this way man can make an initial response to God, as a result of which God can give him repentance and faith. If a man is willing to turn to God, then God will turn to him (Jeremiah 31:18ff) and grant him repentance (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25) and faith (Romans 12:3; 2 Peter 1:1).

4. Scripture bases upon on foreknowledge (Romans 8:28-30; 1 Peter 1:1f), and to say that God foreknew all things because He had arbitrarily determined all things is to ignore the distinction between God's efficient and His permissive decrees. God foresaw that sin would enter the universe but He did not efficiently decree it. Surely He can also foresee how men will act without efficiently decreeing how they will act. God knows how man will respond to the Gospel invitation, but He does not arbitrarily necessitate that response.

5. The justice of God must also be considered. Is it fair for the God to choose some from the mass of guilty and condemned men, provide Salvation for them and efficiently secure their Salvation, and yet do nothing about all the others? God would not be partial if He selects some from this multitude of men and does things for them and in them which He does not do for others. Common grace has been extended to all, and everyone has the ability restored to Him to be "willing to do His will" (John 7:17). The Salvation bearing the grace of God has appeared to all men; but some receive the grace of God in vain. Only if God makes the same provisions for all and makes the same offers to all, is He truly just.

6. Acceptance of this view of election tends logically to great missionary endeavor. Christ sent his

disciples into all the world, and He instructed them to preach the Gospel to every human beings. If election means that all those whom God has arbitrarily chosen will certainly be saved and that all those whom He has not chosen will not be saved, why should the Christian be overly concerned about preaching the Gospel to every human beings? But the knowledge that Salvation is available to all stimulates and motives missionary activity.

### *2.3.2 Some objections to this view of election*

Certain objections have been raised against this understanding of election. These objections must be answered:

1. There are statements that the Father gave certain ones to Christ (John 6:37; 17:2, 6, 9), and it is assumed that this was an arbitrary act of God by which the rest were left to perish. But it is more probable that He did this because of what He foresaw they would do, than merely to exercise sovereign authority.

2. Christ said, "No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). This verse, however, must be read in light of another statement by Christ, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). There issues a power from the Cross of Christ that goes out to all men, though many continue to resist that power.

3. Paul writes that God works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). It is assumed that there is nothing a sinner can do until God does these things in him. But this text is not addressed to unbelievers, but to believers. Jesus plainly said to some of the Jews, "You are unwilling to come to me, that you may have life" (John 5:40), clearly implying that they could if they would.

4. In Romans 9:10-16 God is said to have chosen Jacob rather than Esau, even before they were born and before they had done either good or bad. But two things should be noted. Though it is said that they had not yet done either good or bad, it is not said that God did not know who would do the good and who would do the bad. Esau consistently chose the profane things of life, and Jacob, though far from constant in the things of God, chose the more spiritual things. Further, the choice of Jacob rather than Esau was a choice to outward and national privilege, not a choice to Salvation directly. Scripture declares that not all the descendants of Israel (Jacob) are Israel, and not all the children of Abraham are children of promise. A descendant of Esau can be saved as readily as a descendant of Jacob.

5. Acts 13:48 reads, "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." That this cannot refer to an absolute decree is evidenced by the fact that in v. 46 Paul had already declared that the Jews by their own personal choice rejected the message. Thus God had ordained to Salvation those whom He foresaw would believe.

6. Again, Ephesians 1:5-8; 2:8-10 represent Salvation as originating in the choice of God and as being all of grace. But this does not contradict the view being presented. God must take the initiative, and He does in grace. If it were not for the operation of His grace upon the heart of the sinner, no man could be saved. But this grace does not save the man, it merely enables him to choose whom he will serve.

7. Scripture teaches that repentance and faith are gifts of God (Acts 5:31; 11:18; Romans 12:3; Ephesians 2:8-10; 2 Timothy 2:25). But it would seem very strange if God should call upon all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9) and believe (Mark 1:14f) when only some may receive the gift of repentance and faith.

8. Finally, some claim that if predestination is not unconditional and absolute, then God's whole plan is uncertain and liable to miscarriage. But this could only be true if God had not foreknown the outcome and had not adopted it as His plan. God has foreseen all that will happen and has accepted these eventualilties into His program. His plan is certain though not all the events in it are necessitated.

### 2.4 Election Based on the Choice of God

The second approach to election is to understand foreknowledge as the God is actively looking with favor upon some and then He is electing them to Salvation. In this approach foreknowledge is not mere prescience, but more closely related to the God's actual choice of God. His foreknowledge is His choice.

Further, the term "know," often carries the idea of "to know with appreciation," and "to know lovingly." Examples of this can be found in both the Old and New Testaments. God declares, "You only have I chosen (known) of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). *Keil* suggests that the term "acknowledge" be used in this verse. He writes, *"Acknowledgment on the part of God is not merely taking notice, but is energetic, embracing and penetrating with divine love."* He continues by saying that it *"not only includes the idea of love and care, as in Hosea 13:5, but expresses generally the gracious fellowship of the Lord with Israel, as in Genesis 18:19, and is practically equivalent to electing, including both the motive and the result of election."* (*Keil*, **The Twelve Minor Prophets**, I, p.259).

The sons of Eli *"did not know the Lord and the custom of the priests with the people"* (1 Samuel 2:12f). Surely this does not mean that they were unaware of God or His Levitical regulations; rather they did not acknowledge or have proper respect and appreciation for God and His regulations. The verb "know" is used in similar fashion in the New Testament. Paul writes of our obligation to know (appreciate) our spiritual leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:12). John writes, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3). Surely this is more than to be aware of God; it is rather to have a loving relationship with God, to acknowledge Him. With this in mind, can we not interpret God's foreknowledge as God, in eternity past, looking with favour upon some and then electing them to Salvation? Foreknowledge is preceding to election, and both are determinative acts of God. In this position, foreknowledge is not passive knowledge, but **active**.

### *2.4.1 Biblical support for this view of election*

Ultimate reasons for election are beyond the scope of the human mind. We finally leave the understanding of it with a wise, sovereign, and loving God. We rest ourselves in the words of Deuteronomy 29:29, *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."* But there are several arguments which can be given in support of this doctrine:

1. There are clear Biblical statements in support of election. Acts 13:48 reads, "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (cf. Romans 8:27-30; Galatians 4:9; Ephesians 1:5, 11; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:1f; 2:9).

2. The whole process of Salvation is a gift of God (Romans 12:3; Ephesians 2:8-10). Granted, man must respond to the Gospel, but even His ability to respond is a gift of God. To the Philippians Paul wrote, "God ... is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (2:13).

3. There are verses which speak of men having been given to Christ (John 6:37; 17:2) and of the Father drawing men to Christ (John 6:44).

4. There are examples in Scripture of the sovereign calling of God upon individuals, such as Paul (Galatians 1:15) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5; cf. Psalm 139:13-16). It is possible that the God foreknew that Paul and Jeremiah would respond to His calling.

5. It is on the basis of election that the appeal to a godly life is made (Colossians 3:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 2:9).

6. Election is portrayed as being from all eternity. God "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 Timothy 1:9).

7. Christians pray to God for the Salvation of others and by giving thanks for Salvation, Christians everywhere acknowledge and confess God's sovereignty in Salvation. If the God's election is passive, then it is meaningless or invalid for Christians to pray to God for the Salvation of others. In all of this, we recognize a mystery in God's sovereign working in the free will of man.

### *2.4.2 Some objections to this view of election*

Several objections may be raised to this view of election:

1. It makes foreknowledge and election virtually the same. It is argued that to foresee is merely to know beforehand. God foresaw that sin would enter the world, but He did not necessitate it, He

merely permitted it. In the same fashion, God foresaw how man would respond when presented with the Gospel, and then elected those whom He foresaw would respond favorably. It has been demonstrated that for God to know someone is often more than just to have a knowledge of the person. Rather, it speaks of having a personal relationship with. Thus, foreknowledge is active, not passive. Further, the doctrine of election retains the sovereignty of God. He can determine to save whomsoever He will. Luke reports of the response to the Gospel at Antioch of Pisidia, "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:38).

2. It is argued that if election is limited by God, surely the atonement must be limited as well. This is contrary to the many Scriptures which teach unlimited atonement (John 1:29; 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2). Man remains responsible for rejecting the atonement. It is available to all, but man willfully turns aside from it. That some men reject it, limits the effectiveness of it, but not its availability. An illustration could be used of those who crucified our Lord. It was ordained by God that Christ be crucified, but the men who actually did it will be held responsible (Acts 2:23; 4:27f). Jesus said, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes" (Matthew 18:7). Salvation is available for all, it is unlimited. But it is effectively limited by man's rejection of it. *Ryrie* counsels: *"Balance is the great need in considering this doctrine. While one must not lose sight of the reality of responsibility, that responsibility must not obscure the full meaning of grace. Grace concerns origins, responsibility concerns reactions. God originated His plan of Salvation and based it entirely on grace yet man is entirely responsible for acceptance or rejection of God's grace"* (*Ryrie*, **The Grace of God**, p.85).

3. It makes God responsible for reprobation. Why God did not elect some to Salvation is a deep mystery. But let us remember that election deals not with innocent creatures, but with sinful and guilty human beings. That any should be saved is a matter of pure grace (Ephesians 2:8). Those not included in election suffer only their due reward. We should rather praise God for saving any, than charge Him with being unfair in saving just the few. God does not delight in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11), and He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9), but man's iniquities have brought him separation from God (Isaiah 59:2). The decree of reprobation, if it indeed can be spoken of in that fashion, is a decree to do nothing, a decree to leave the sinner to himself, to his own self-hardening and self-destruction. It is not correct to say that God elects some to hell. When Peter writes, "They stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed" (1 Peter 2:8), his teaching is that they were appointed, not to disobedience, but to stumble because they are disobedient. In like manner Paul's conclusion, "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires" (Romans 9:18), must be understood. God leaves man to his own destructive and self-hardening ways, and in that sense He hardens man's heart.

4. Election discourages evangelism. It is asked, if only the elect will be saved, why evangelize? Those who are elect to Salvation will be saved; those who are not elect will not be saved; therefore, why evangelize? Several things should be noted: (a) The last command of Christ was to communicate the Gospel to the world (Acts 1:8). This command is our mandate. God has chosen

evangelism as the method through which His election finds its fulfillment (Acts 13:48; 18:10). (b) This doctrine gives the Christian encouragement as he shares his faith. Paul writes, "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the Salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10). (c) The child of God who begins to comprehend the great love of God toward him in choosing him for Salvation has renewed motivation to share this great truth of Salvation with others. Paul declares, "The love of Christ controls us" (2 Corinthians 5:14), and he continues a few verses on, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (v. 20).

5. It portrays God as partial and arbitrary. Perhaps on the surface this objection seems valid, but two things must be noted: (a) It has nothing to do with partiality, because there is nothing in man which commends him to God. (b) To speak of election as arbitrary, indirectly accuses God of not being wise, free, and loving. Election is done by a wise and loving God.

6. This view of election instills pride within the elect. But surely this is not so. Human works and effort bring about pride (Luke 18:11f; Romans 4:2; Ephesians 2:9); the sovereign grace of God causes worship.

Whichever of these two approaches to the doctrine of election might seem more appropriate and Biblical to us, our response should be that of the apostle, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfaithomable His ways!" (Romans 11:33). We conclude with Paul, "To Him be glory forever. Amen" (v. 36; cf. Isaiah 55:8f).

## 3. EXAMINING CRUCIAL PASSAGES RELATING TO ELECTION

We want to be fair in presenting all the points of view about the doctrine of election. Let's examine some crucial Biblical verses in-details:

### 3.1 Romans 8:28-30

This passage is a description of election from the strictly divine perspective. The word elect does not appear, but the term predestined does, and those who are believers are clearly involved:

> *"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. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son ... and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."*

The most striking feature about this message is the sovereignty of God and the certainty of the ultimate outcome in the process from divine election to the final consummation in glorification. Everyone of those who was "foreknown" and "predestined" is finally "glorified" (Note: the certainty implied in the use of the past tense). The unalterable process begins in the eternal counsel of God (past) and reaches to the eschatological culmination (future).

| Eternal Counsel of God | Human History | Eschatology |
|---|---|---|
| foreknew | called | glorified |
| predestined | justified | |

"Called" is usually used of those who have believed, and thus it implies a call that has been effective, not rejected. This is referred to as "efficacious call" or "efficacious grace." "Justified" means "declared righteous through faith, though yet a sinner." "Glorification" is being "conformed to the image of His Son," according to verse 29.

To summarize:

1. Foreknowledge and predestination are closely connected.
2. God is absolutely sovereign in election.
3. The outcome of election (glorification) is certain.
4. God guarantees this outcome by calling and justifying those whom He has predestined, and the "call" is always effective; that is, it always produces belief.

**3.2 2 Peter 1:10**

The word election is used in 2 Peter 1:10 in the context of its effect on Christian behaviour:

> *Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.*

At first glance, it may appear that Peter is implying that one's "calling" and "election" are not secure and must be made certain by adding human obedience as a requirement for maintaining it. The Biblical teaching about grace as well as passages like Romans 8:30 make this interpretation unlikely.

I believe that calling and election are inevitably manifested in one's life, because the one who is genuinely called and elected has been generated and possesses the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. One therefore must "make certain" of such a calling, not before God, as though it is a human work to supplement the divine, but to himself and before others. Though it is "inevitable," Peter nevertheless makes it a command, and obedience to all commands is both motivated and enabled by the Holy Spirit (Philippians 2:12, 13).

The context is the key to this interpretation. According to 2 Peter 1:4, believers become "partakers of the divine nature" (regeneration), "having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." Verses 5-9 describe the character qualities that result. By demonstrating this kind of character, the believer "proves" he has truly been called and elected.

In summary:

One "makes certain" his election to all who observe his life by living out the "divine nature" that is in him.

### 3.3 Romans 9:6-23

#### *3.3.1 Background*

Why did the nation of Israel reject Jesus as their Messiah? Romans 8 stresses the sovereignty of God in Salvation, especially in verses 29 and 30. Paul says whomever God elects, He ultimately saves. Why was the call of Jesus and the apostles for repentance and faith rejected by Israel?

#### *3.3.2 Paul's answer to the problem of Israel*

Paul gives a concise answer: "But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel" (v.6).

The "word of God" - God's covenant with Israel through Abraham - had not failed. Not every Israelite is really a son of Israel. True Israelites are those who trust God. Among the chosen people is a select remnant of Israelites to whom God is able to carry out His covenant promises. In other words, God is sovereign and unfailing in Salvation. To be among the chosen nation is not necessarily to be "chosen" as an individual. There is a corporate election (the nation of Israel) and an individual election (the believer). Through the latter, the God perfects His covenant promises.

### 3.4 Some Difficulties with Election

Romans 9 alludes to some difficulties that have perplexed theologians or ages. Such questions have been stated in the following ways:

1. Isn't election arbitrary favoritism by God?
2. Doesn't election make us mere robots without responsibility for decisions?
3. Can those who are not elect be saved if they turn to God?
4. How can God judge those who are not elect, since God does not effectively "call" them as He does the elect?

### *3.4.1 Isn't election arbitrary favoritism by God?*

Statement in Romans 9:13 and 18 seem to imply arbitrary favoritism on the part of God: *"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated"* (9:13)*; and "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires"* (9:18). These verses also have been cited as evidence that God "reprobates" (elects to hell) some men. The first of these, concerning Jacob and Esau, is quoted by Paul from Malachi 1:2-3. It is an assessment of God's feelings toward the descendants of Jacob (Israel) and the descendants of Esau (Edom) based on the fact that Jacob loved the birthright and Esau despised it (see Hebrews 12:16-17). Therefore, it is not a statement of God's eternal elective choice of one above the other. Paul's use of it here could mean that God rejected Esau because he never sought Him through repentance, nor did his descendants, as a consequence of God's leaving him to his own inclinations.

The second statement about God's hardening whom He desires might be interpreted, in light of Pharoah's actions, as a judicial hardening in response to Pharoah's own self-hardening. See Exodus 4:21; 7:3, 13; 8:15, 32; and 9:34 where it could be interpreted that Pharoah first hardened his own heart.

In summary:

Reprobation is not taught in these passages, though some people may assume that if God chooses some to be saved He, in effect, condemns or reprobates the rest. We might better apply the doctrine of election to the saved alone and merely answer the question, Why do some go to hell? It is because they reject the truth of the Gospel provided to save them.

### *3.4.2 Doesn't election make us mere robots without responsibility for decisions?*

Romans 9:19 implies another perplexing question about election: Does election make us mere robots who really should not be held responsible for our choices, since we merely choose as God has "programmed" us? Paul puts it this way: "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?'" His answer seems to be, "Who are you to challenge the justice or rights of God, considering who God is? God can do as He pleases!" Then in verses 22-23 Paul implies that no one is really "programmed." He refers to "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction," which God "endures" (suggesting *permission* to sin, not *causing* to sin). The word *prepared* here means "prepared by a process" - not by divine decree - and could be translated "self-prepared." Only in verse 23 are the "vessels of mercy" (believers) "prepared beforehand" (a different word meaning "prepared by appointment"). The "vessels of wrath" (those ultimately lost) are responsible for their own choices.

### *3.4.3 Can those who are not elect be saved if they turn to God?*

These same verses also answer the question, Can a person who is not elect turn to God and be saved? The answer is that the non-elect do not or will not turn to God and be saved. They harden themselves.

### *3.4.4 How can God judge those who are not elect, since God does not effectively "call" them as He*

***does the elect?***

The "vessels of wrath" (those ultimately lost) are responsible for their own choices. The God has already endured them and has provided the Gospel for them. They first hardened their own hearts to reject the truth of the Gospel provided to save them, therefore they are deserved to go to hell.

## 4. EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOREKNOWLEDGE AND ELECTION

First Peter 1:1-2 says election is *"according to the foreknowledge of God the Father."* Does this mean that God simply knows who will believe and who will not and thus "elects" those who He knows will someday believe? This is possible, depending on the meaning of "foreknowledge" as it is used in this context. If foreknowledge only means that God knows what will happen in advance (because He is omniscient), it is reasonable to interpret here that election is based on the foreknowledge God has of who will believe.

### 4.1 Problems of Election Based on Prescience

This view is not without its problems, though. Some see a possible contradiction in basing election on foreseen faith with Romans 9:11-12. Election, in this passage, is according to God's choice, not man's choice. For faith would be a "good work" if it arose solely within that individual apart from God's help. But in Ephesians 2:8 faith is described as a "gift of God."

Furthermore, it is possible that "foreknowledge" in 1 Peter 1:2 goes beyond simply "knowing ahead of time." In Romans 11:2 foreknowledge takes on the Old Testament meaning of "loved beforehand," a predetermined covenant relationship such as God had with His chosen people, Israel. Note the meaning of the word *know* in the following passages: Genesis 4:1; Hosea 13:4; Amos 3:2 ("chosen" in the NASB is the Hebrew word *known*); Matthew 7:23; and 1 Peter 1:20. More than simple knowledge is involved in these texts. Intimate love and covenant relationship is the distinctive meaning.

### 4.2 The Meaning of Foreknowledge Depends on the Meaning of Total Depravity

"Foreknowledge" is the basis of election, but this may mean either:

1. foreseen faith; or
2. predetermined covenant relationship.

One's view of the depravity of man will ultimately determine which of these two possibilities he chooses. If man is not the object of total depravity, and is able to have faith apart from a gracious intervention of God, then election is based on the foreknowledge of God, or simply foreseen faith.

However, if total depravity means unalterable rebellion against God, and faith is not possible until God softens the heart of the sinner, then foreknowledge depicts a predetermined covenant relationship, whereby God, in His mercy, grants a man the ability to have faith. Foreknowledge, then, is more than foreseen faith; it is God choosing man, not man choosing God.

## 5. THE DOCTRINE OF VOCATION

This is the doctrine of God's call. The grace of God is magnified not only in the provision of Salvation, but also in the offer of Salvation to the undeserving. We may define God's call as that act of grace by which He invites men to accept by faith the Salvation provided by Christ.

### 5.1 The Persons Called

The Scriptures indicate that Salvation is offered to all. It is offered to the "predestined" (Romans 8:30), to "all who are weary and heavy-laden" (Matthew 11:28), to "whoever believes in Him" (John 3:16; cf. 3:15; 4:14; 11:26; Revelation 22:17), to "all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 45:22; cf. Ezekiel 33:11; Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; John 12:32; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9), and to "as many as you find" (Matthew 22:9).

At this point two questions arise:

1. If some are elect and others not, is the call of God sincere for all? If the call of God is sincere for all, is it compatible with the doctrine that the sinner by nature is unable to obey? It must be remembered that the inability is a moral inability, not a physical inability. Man's inability is because of his own evil will, for which man himself is responsible. The question is further asked, how is this call compatible with election? But the difficulty is the same whether we speak of God's permitting men to reject the call or whether we speak of God's foreknowing that some would reject it.

2. A second question relates to the efficacy of the call. Is the call irresistible? This term might leave a wrong impression of God bringing outside pressure on the human mind. But surely we acknowledge that God works in man to do His will (Philippians 2:13). God is able to work sovereignly in the hearts of men to cause them to respond personally and by their own volition to the call of God to Salvation. The coming together of sovereignty and free will as they relate to the call of God are shown in an amazing way by John, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 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" (John 1:11-13). In other words, the God actively invites human beings to respond His call to Salvation but He will not force any men to accept His call. It doesn't mean that the God is not powerful enough. It is simply because the God

respects the free will of men.

### 5.2 The Object of the Call

The things to which He calls men are repentance (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:14f; Acts 2:38; 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9) and faith (Mark 1:15; John 6:29; 20:30f; Acts 16:31; 19:4; Romans 10:9; 1 John 3:23).

### 5.3 The Means of the Call

God has a variety of means by which to call men:

1. He calls men through the Word of God (Romans 10:16f; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:14).

2. He also calls men by His Spirit (John 16:8; Hebrews 3:7f; cf. Genesis 6:3). The Holy Spirit urges the sinner to come and accept Christ.

3. God uses His servants to call men (2 Chronicles 36:15; Jeremiah 25:4; Matthew 22:2-9; Romans 10:14f). Jonah is a good example of God's use of human messengers to bring a city to repentance. The Word of God must be brought to the unsaved by regenerated persons, persons who can testify to the power of the Word and the Spirit in their own lives (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

4. God calls by His providential dealings with men. His goodness is intended to bring men to repentance (Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 2:4), but if that does not succeed, then His judgments are to do it (Psalm 107:6, 13; Isaiah 26:9).

## 6. MY FINAL CONCLUSIONS ON THIS CHAPTER

After examining all the above mentioned points of view about the doctrine of election, I would like to draw my own conclusions in this chapter:

1. God foresaw that sin would enter the world, but He did not necessitate it, He merely permitted it.

2. God has taken the initiative to provide Salvation. The whole process of Salvation is a gift of God (Romans 12:3; Ephesians 2:8-10). Even man's ability to respond to the Gospel is a gift of God. But this grace does not save the man, it merely enables him to choose whom he will serve.

3. God's Salvation bringing grace has appeared to all men, not merely the elect (Titus 2:11). God has restored to all men sufficient ability to make a choice in the matter of submission to God.

4. The God is truly just because He makes the same provisions for all; but some receive the grace of God in vain.

5. God foresaw how man would respond when presented with the Gospel, and then elected those whom He foresaw would respond favorably. The God is having a personal relationship with the man. Thus, foreknowledge is active, it is more than foreseen faith.

6. The logical steps in the God's election is as follows: (a) In the first beginning, the God has provided all men the sufficient ability to accept the Gospel. (b) And then, some men will accept the Gospel while other men will reject the Gospel by their own free will. (c) The God elected all those whom He foresaw would respond favorably. (d) The God has entered a personal relationship with the elect and has provided personal care and eternal security to them. (e) The God still has the sovereignty to elect the other sinful men in order to achieve His Eternal Plan. Therefore, the whole election process is both "man is choosing God" and "God is choosing man."

7. The doctrine of election retains the sovereignty of God. He can determine to save whomsoever He will, therefore it is valid for Christians to pray to God for the Salvation of others. We recognize a mystery in God's sovereign working in the free will of man.

8. Christ died for all (1 Timothy 2:6; 4:10; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:2; 4:14). Scriptures teach unlimited atonement (John 1:29; 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9). Man remains responsible for rejecting the atonement. It is available to all, but man willfully turns aside from it. That some men reject it, limits the effectiveness of it, but not its availability.

9. The outcome of election (glorification) is certain. God guarantees this outcome by calling and justifying those whom He has predestined. The "call" is always effective as it always produces belief.

10. Election is not arbitrary favoritism by God. We should apply the doctrine of election to the saved alone. Why do some go to hell? It is because they reject the truth of the Gospel provided to save them.

11. Election doesn't make us mere robots without responsibility for decisions. No one is really "programmed." Those ultimately lost are responsible for their own choices. The God has already endured them and has provided the Gospel for them. They first hardened their own hearts to reject the truth of the Gospel provided to save them, therefore they are deserved to go to hell.

12. The non-elect do not or will not turn to God and be saved. They harden themselves.

13. The God's call is irresistible from the divine sense (as the God is Almighty) but He allows human beings to resist His call. God invites human beings to respond His call to Salvation but He will not

force any men to accept His call. It doesn't mean that the God is not powerful enough. It is simply because the God respects the free will of men.

In summary, in treating election and calling as the application of Christ's redemption, we have observed the following order. God decreed:

1. to create man;
2. to permit the fall;
3. to provide in Christ redemption sufficient for all;
4. to elect some to Salvation; and
5. to send the Holy Spirit to secure the acceptance of redemption on the part of the elect.

In addition, I believe that the logical steps in the God's election is as follows:

1. In the first beginning, the God has provided all men the sufficient ability (i.e. prevenient grace) to accept the Gospel.
2. And then, some men will accept the Gospel while other men will reject the Gospel by their own free will.
3. In general, God elected all those whom He foresaw would respond favorably (i.e. election dependent upon divine foreknowledge).
4. God has entered a personal relationship with the elect and has provided personal care and eternal security to them.
5. In some cases, God still has the sovereignty to elect the other sinful men in order to achieve His Eternal Plan (i.e. election is of no foreseen merit).

Therefore, based on God's wise and holy counsel, the whole election process is both "man is choosing God" and "God is choosing man."

More information on the topic of "Predestination and Atonement" can be found at the **Biblical Studies Foundation**, Internet Edition.

## 7. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


1. **Survey of Theology II**, Lesson 1, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
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3. **The Extent of the Atonement: Limited Vs. Unlimited (Part 1)**, Biblical Studies Foundation, Internet Edition, 1996, by Dr. Ron Rhodes.
4. **The Extent of the Atonement: Limited Vs. Unlimited (Part 2)**, Biblical Studies Foundation,

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# Chapter Three - The Accomplishments of the Death of Christ

## 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST

The work of Christ has specific reference to the death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Christ. First, we consider our Lord's death. Contrary to the facts in the case of ordinary men, the death of Christ rather than the earthly life of Christ is of supreme importance. This is evident from many considerations.

### 1.1 It is Foretold in the Old Testament

The death of Christ is the subject of many types and prophecies in the Old Testament, for examples:

1. the sacrifice of Abel (Genesis 4:4);
2. the ram on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:13);
3. the sacrifices of the patriarchs in general (Genesis 8:20; 12:8; 26:25; 33:20; 35:7);
4. the Passover lamb in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-28);
5. the Levitical sacrifices (Leviticus 1-7);
6. Manoah's offering (Judges 13:16-19);
7. Elkanah's yearly sacrifice (1 Samuel 1:21);
8. Samuel's offerings (1 Samuel 7:9f; 16:2-5);
9. David's offerings (2 Samuel 6:18);
10. Elijah's offering (1 Kings 18:38);
11. Hezekiah's offerings (2 Chronicles 29:21-24);
12. the offerings in the days of Joshua and Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:3-6) and Nehemiah (Nehemiah 10:32f).

These all point to the one great offering to be made by Christ. Further, there are prophecies that point forward to the death of Christ:

1. the Psalms prophesy the betrayal of Christ (Psalm 41:9; cf. John 13:18; Acts 1:16);
2. the crucifixion and the attendant events (Psalm 22:1, 7f, 18; cf. Matthew 27:39f, 46; Mark 15:34; John 19:23f);
3. the resurrection (Psalm 16:8-11; cf. Acts 2:25-28);
4. Isaiah writes, "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities" (53:5).

5. Daniel indicates that after sixty-nine weeks Messiah will be cut off and have nothing (9:26).
6. Zechariah foretells the selling of Christ for thirty pieces of silver and the investment of that sum in a potter's field (11:12f; cf. Matthew 26:15; 27:9f).
7. Zechariah also predicts the striking of the shepherd (13:7) and the opening of a fountain for sin and impurity (13:1).

Thus it is clear that the death of Christ is an important part of the teaching of the Old Testament.

### 1.2 It is Prominent in the New Testament

The last week of our Lord's earthly life occupies about one-fifth of the narractives in the four Gospels. Similarly, the Epistles are filled with references to this historic event. Manifestly, the death and resurrection of our Lord were esteemed of supreme importance by the Holy Spirit, the author of Scripture.

### 1.3 It is the Chief Purpose of the Incarnation

Christ did not come primarily to set us example or to teach us doctrine, but to die for us (Mark 10:45; Hebrews 2:9, 14; 9:26; 1 John 3:5). His death was the accomplishment of a definite purpose in connection with the incarnation. It is the redemption of the lost through the Lord's death on the Cross.

### 1.4 It is the Fundamental Theme of the Gospel

The term "gospel" means "good news." The death of Christ for man's sin is good news; it implies that man does not need to die for his sin. The Mosaic Law, the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching and example of Christ, all show to us our sin and reveal to us the need of a Saviour, but they do not provide the remedy for sin. This remedy is found only in the death of Christ.

### 1.5 It is Essential to Christianity

Other religions base their claim to recognition on the teaching of their founders; Christianity is distinguished from all of them by the importance it assigns to the death of its founder. Take away the death of Christ as interpreted by the Scriptures, and you reduce Christianity to the level of the ethnic religions. The subject of apostolic preaching was Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23; 2:2; Galatians 6:14).

### 1.6 It is Essential to Our Salvation

The Son of Man must be lifted up if man is to saved (John 3:14f); the grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die if it is to bring forth fruit (John 12:24). God cannot pardon sin merely on the ground of the sinner's repentance. In order that God might be able to pardon a sinne and to remain righteous at the same time, Christ paid the sinner's penalty (Romans 3:25f). Christ repeatedly said that He must suffer many things, be killed, and be raised the third day (Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; 17:25; John 12:32-34). The two men who were in the tomb after Christ had arisen reminded the women who came to anoint the body that Christ said that He must be crucified and arise again (Luke 24:7). Paul sought to prove to the Thessalonians the necessity of Christ's death (Acts 17:3). From God's standpoint, the death of Christ is an absolute necessity if man is to be saved.

### 1.7 It is of Supreme Interest in Heaven

When Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, they conversed with Christ "of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sang a song of the redemption accomplished through the death of Christ (Revelation 5:8-10). Even the angels around the throne, though not in need of redemption themselves, joined in the song of the Lamb who was slain (Revelation 5:11f).

## 2. MISINTERPRETATIONS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST (INADEQUATE THEORIES OF THE ATONEMENT)

In order to obtain a clearer apprehension of the Scriptural doctrine of the death of Christ, it is well to look first at the erroneous views of this truth that have been put forward:

1. the accident theory;
2. the martyr theory;
3. the moral influence theory;
4. the governmental theory;
5. the commercial theory;
6. the ransom to Satan theory;
7. the recapitulation theory;
8. the dramatic theory; and
9. the Barthian theory.

### 2.1 The Accident Theory

This view sees no significance in the death of Christ. He was a man and, as such, subject to death. His principles and methods did not appeal to the people of his day and so they killed him. It may have been unfortunate that so good a man was killed, but nevertheless his death had no meaning for anyone else. This is a common humanistic approach.

However, his death was no mere accident. It was clearly foretold in the Old Testament (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 11). Christ foretold repeatedly that He would die by force (Matthew 16:21; 17:22f; 20:18f; Mark 9:31; Luke 9:44; 22:21f; John 12:32f; 15:20). Christ came with a definite purpose of dying, and so His death was no accident.

### 2.2 The Martyr Theory

This theory is proposed by *Socinus* (AD 1539-1604), also called the Example Theory, holds that Christ's death was that of a martyr. He was killed because he was faithful to his principles and to what he considered his duty by men who did not agree with him in these respects. He is an example of fidelity to truth and duty. This view assumes that the only thing needed to save man is to reform him. Christ's example is to teach man to repent of his sins and to reform.

This theory is defective in the following ways:

1. ignores the fundamental idea of the atonement wherein the atonement has to be made to God (Exodus 12:13, 23; Romans 3:24f; Hebrews 2:17; 9:11-14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10);

2. makes Christ's example sufficient to save, whereas his example is intended for believers only (Matthew 11:29; 1 Peter 2:21, 24; 1 John 2:6);

3. logically leads to a perversion of every fundamental doctrine of Scripture, such as inspiration, sin, the deity of Christ, justification, regeneration, and eternal retribution; and

4. furnishes no satisfactory explanation of Christ's unmartyrlike agony in Gethsemane and on the Cross, and the Father's withdrawal from him (Matthew 26:37-39; 27:46; John 12:27; cf. Paul's behaviour in suffering, Philippians 1:20-23, and Stephen's, Acts 7:55-60). Even if the death of Christ as thus interpreted did move men to moral improvement, it cannot atone for the sins already past, nor yet save the sinner (John 6:53; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 1 Peter

1:19; Revelation 7:14).

### 2.3 The Moral Influence Theory

This theory is proposed by *Abelard* (AD 1079-1142), also called the Love of God Theory, holds that the love of God manifested in the incarnation, the sufferings and death of Christ, are to soften human hearts and lead them to repentance. The atonement is not for the purpose of satisfying divine justice, but rather of expressing divine love.

This view of the atonement is woefully deficient, for it presents Christ as suffeirng with the sinner rather than in the sinner's stead. To this theory we reply that:

1. though Christ's death is an expression of God's love (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8), man knew that God loved him long before Christ came (Deuteronomy 7:7f; Jeremiah 31:3; cf. Malachi 3:6);

2. a mere stirring of the emotions does not lead to repentance;

3. this theory contradicts the representations of Scripture that God must be propitiated before he can forgive (Romans 3:25f; Hebrews 2:17; 9:14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10);

4. it grounds the death of Christ in the love of God rather than in his holiness; and

5. on this theory it is difficult to explain how the Old Testament believers were saved, since they did not have this object lesson of the love of God.

The atonement must not be reduced to a play in which the actor appears to be moved by sincere motives, when in reality he is merely working upon the emotions of the audience. While men are influenced deeply by the demonstration of love at Calvary, they must also come to terms with the wrath of God against sin which is revealed at the Cross.

### 2.4 The Governmental Theory

This theory is proposed by *Grotius* (AD 1583-1645). God, in order to maintain respect for his law, made an example of his hatred of sin in the death of Christ. In that death he showed that sin is offensive to him and that it will be punished if it is not repented of. Christ did not suffer the precise penalty of the law, but God graciously accepted what he did suffer as a

substitute for our penalty. This bearing of substituted suffering on the part of Christ takes such a hold on the hearts of men that they repent, and since repentance is the only condition to forgiveness, God secures the Salvation of the sinner by the death of Christ. This theory is the Arminian view of the atonement.

About this theory several things must be noted:

1. Proper regard for law can only be maintained so long as the penalty is equivalent. Christ did not suffer the identical penalty, but he did suffer the equivalent penalty due the sinner. The infinite one could exhaust the infinite curse put upon the sinner, something a finite person could not do.

2. This theory does not explain why the example had to be a sinless person, nor does it account for the intensity of the suffering (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:23; Luke 22:44).

3. It does not do justice to the many passages which speaks of Christ's death as truly substitutionary (1 Peter 1:18f).

4. This theory is based on the good of society rather than on the justice of God. God must punish sin, not merely make a token display of justice. Christ bore our sins in our stead.

### 2.5 The Commercial Theory

This theory is proposed by *Anselm* (AD 1033-1109), also called the Satisfaction Theory, holds that sin violates the divine honor, and since it is committed against an infinite being, it deserves infinite punishment. It further holds that God's honor requires him to punish sin, while the love of God pleads for the sinner, and that this conflict between the divine attributes is reconciled by the voluntary sacrifice of Christ. In this manner, the divine claims are satisfied and God is free to pardon the sinner. This theory teaches the Christ suffered the exact equivalent for the deserved sufferings of the elect.

This view has several items of weakness:

1. It suggests a conflict between the attributes of God.

2. It places the honor of God above the holiness of God.

3. It does not place sufficient emphasis on the active obedience of Christ and his holy life.

4. It limits the atonement to the elect.

5. It speaks of the substitution in quantitative terms rather than qualitative. The infinitely holy Son of God gave his life and died in man's stead so that all who respond in faith will not die but will have abundant life (John 10:10).

### 2.6 The Ransom to Satan Theory

This theory is proposed by *Origen* (AD 185-254). The death of Christ was a ransom paid to Satan to satisfy any claims Satan had against man. Ultimately Satan was deceived. He taught that God paid the ransom to Satan, who held sinners in bondage. Actually, man is in bondage to sin, not Satan - he merely exploits our condition. This ransom is not paid to Satan, but to God. Satan has no legal claims against the sinner. Please note that Satan himself is also a sinner, he sins against the God.

### 2.7 The Recapitulation Theory

This theory is proposed by *Irenaeus* (AD 130-202). Christ recapitulated in Himself all the stages of life including what belongs to us as sinners. His obedience substituted for Adam's disobedience, and this should effect a transformation in our lives.

### 2.8 The Dramatic Theory

This theory is proposed by *Aulen* (AD 1879-1978). Christ in His death gained victory over the powers of evil.

### 2.9 The Barthian Theory

This theory is proposed by *Barth* (AD 1886-1968). Christ's death was principally a revelation of God's love and His hatred of sin.

### 2.10 Summary

All of these viewpoints may perhaps be cataloged under three basic categories:

1. views which related the death of Christ to Satan (*Origen, Aulen*);

2. views which consider His death as a powerful example to influence people (*Abelard, Socinus, Grotius, Barth*); and
3. views which emphasize punishment due to the justice of God and substitution (*Anselm, though deficient, Reformers*).

The misinterpretations are usually characterized by a failure to see the connection that exists between the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament and the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God. The words used in the New Testament and the clear comparisons made by the writer of Hebrews all point to the fact that the Old Testament animal sacrifices were types, or foreshadows, of the death of Christ.

In most of the theories presented there is a measure of truth, and they are true as far as they go, but they do not go far enough. It is true that Christ died as a result of his loyalty to what he believed, that the death of Christ was an expression of the love of God, and that the death of Christ removed the stain from God's honour. But these are only partial explanations of Christ's death and secondary in significance in comparison with the main idea of his death. In the next section, we will talke about the true meaning and extent of Christ's death.

## 3. THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRIST'S DEATH

In giving a definition of the atonement, several items must be noted:

### 3.1 It is Vicarious / The Concept of Substitution

Substitution is what the Bible presents as the essential meaning of the death of Christ. Jesus Christ died vicariously in place of the sinner. Leviticus 1:4 is a vivid example of the idea of substitution: "And 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" (italics mine). This is a picture of the guilt of the individual being transferred to the innocent substitute, and the substitute's death in his behalf. The Bible refers to such transfers as "imputation" (Romans 5:15).

In the case of Christ, an additional transfer is made from Christ to the sinner at the time of his faith and conversion - the righteousness of Christ. He takes on our guilt; we take on His righteousness. It is a legal transaction ordained by God Himself (read 2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:6).

It is evident that Christ did not die for his own sin (John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). Everywhere it is said that he died for the sins of others. The suffering of Christ were not just the sympathetic sufferings of a friend, but the substitutionary sufferings of the Lamb of God for the sin of the world. Isaiah writes, "But He was pierced through for our

transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening of our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed ... But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (53:5f). Note some of the other Scriptures: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8); "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3); "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:210); "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the Cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24); and "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus himself said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45) and "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). He died in our stead as the true Passover lamb (Exodus 12; 1 Corinthians 5:7) and was the true sin-offering (Isaiah 53:10), of which the ones on the Old Testament economy were but types (Leviticus 6:24-30; Hebrews 10:1-4; cf. also the scapegoat, Leviticus 16:20-22).

It is objected that it is immoral for God to punish an innocent one, and that for that reason alone Christ's death is not substitutionary. But the error in this view lies in the assumption that God and Christ are two beings as different from each other as two individual men. Since Christ is God incarnate, the substitute is God himself. It is not unjust for the judge to pay the penalty himself. Furthermore, Jesus volunteered to be the substitute (read John 10:15, 17f).

The second objection is that if a substitute pays the debt we owe, God cannot collect the debt also from us but is morally bound to let us go free; that is, on this theory God does not exercise mercy in forgiving us, but merely does his duty. But this objection is likewise removed by the fact that the one who pays the debt is not a third party, but the judge himself. Forgiveness is, therefore, still optional with him and may be offered upon terms agreeable to himself. The terms which God has laid down are repentance and faith. The obedience of Christ, therefore, does not make ours unnecessary, but still requires us to meet the terms before we can become the beneficiaries of his atoning death.

### 3.2 It is Satisfaction

Since holiness is God's fundamental attribute it is only reasonable that he should be given some satisfaction to remove the outrage of sin. The death of Christ supplies this satisfaction.

#### *3.2.1 It satisfies the justice of God*

Man has sinned against God and has incurred his displeasure and condemnation. God cannot free the sinner until the

demands of justice are satisfied. God will not, apart from substitution, clear the guilty (Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18). Only through Christ's death could God be just while justifying the sinner (Romans 3:25f). In whatever God does, his justice must be maintained; Christ's death fully satisfied the just demands of God.

### *3.2.2 It satisfies the law of God*

Christ's death is a satisfaction of the law of God. The law of God is grounded on the very nature of God, and transgression of that law brings with it a penalty. The sinner could not meet the demands of divine law, but Christ, as our representative and substitute, did. Thus God made provision for a vicarious satisfaction through the active and passive obedience of Christ (Romans 8:3f). By his obedience and sufferings and his life of perfect righteousness, Jesus fulfilled all the demands of the law. Paul speaks of Israel, saying, "Not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:3f).

### *3.2.3 It is involved in atonement*

The death of Christ is an atonement and a propitiation. Leviticus 6:2-7 speaks of individual atonement for individual sin: "When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against the Lord, ... he shall bring to the priest his guilt offering to the Lord, ... and the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord; and he shall be forgiven for any one of the things which he may have done to incur guilt." Leviticus 4:13-20 makes reference to national atonement for national transgression: "If the whole congregation of Israel commits error, ... and they become guilty; ... Then the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the Lord, and the bull shall be slain before the Lord ... So the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven." From these passages it is evident that the bull or ram must die, and that forgiveness is possible only on the ground of the death of a substitute. The Hebrew word for atonement in these and similar passages is *kaphar*, often translated "to make atonement." It means literally "to cover over" so as not to be seen. The thought of covering sins from the eye of God is suggested in verses such as "Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities" (Psalm 51:9); "For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isaiah 38:17); and "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).

### *3.2.4 It is involved in propitiation*

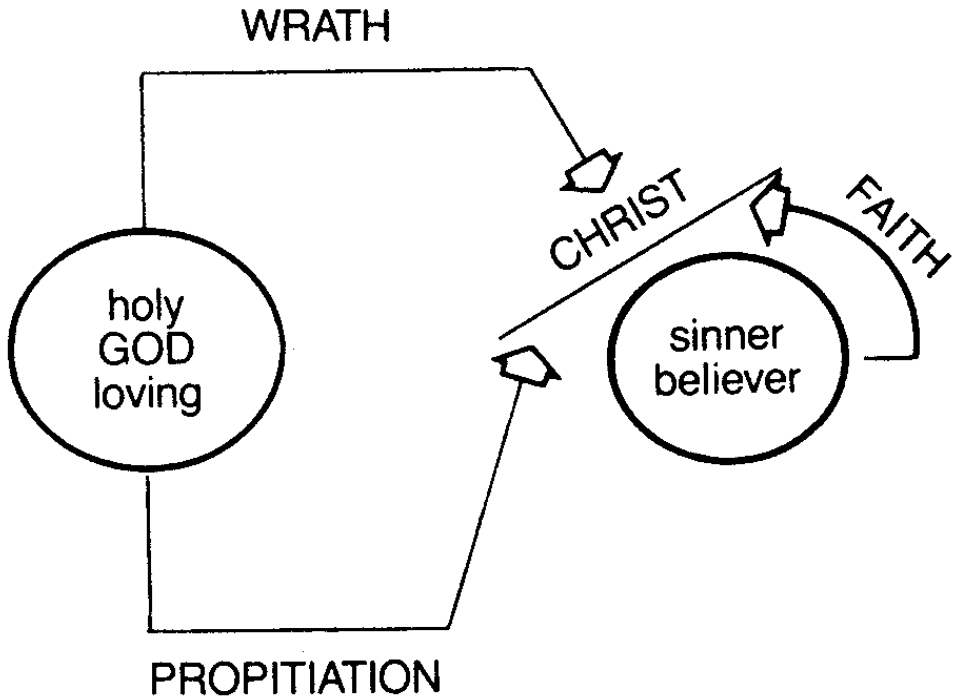
The definition of "propitiation" is because God is just and holy, sin has violated His character and must be punished. Jesus

has died to take our punishment and God is satisfied with this as a payment - God is propitiated (satisfied) with the death of Christ for sin. Read Isaiah 52:13; 53:10-11.

The New Testament represents Christ's death as appeasing God's wrath. Paul says, God set him forth "publicly as a propitiation" (Romans 3:25), and Hebrews uses this term for the mercy seat at the tabernacle (Hebrews 9:5). John declared that Christ "is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2; cf. 4:10); and Hebrews states that Christ became a merciful and faithful high priest "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (2:17). The tax-gatherer's prayer was literally, "God be propitious to me, the sinner" (Luke 18:13). By his death, Christ appeased God's holy wrath against sin.

The concept of propitiation assumes two basic attributes of God - His love and His holiness. The sinner, apart from this provision, faces the wrath of God (Romans 1:18). But God, because He is loving, provides Christ's death as the satisfying payment. By faith the sinner appropriates this provision, and God is both "just and the justifier" (Romans 3:26).

The following chart will illustrate the concept of propitiation:



God's wrath is directed toward the sinner. But as a result of His love, God provides Christ as a propitiation which intervenes between His wrath and the sinner who believes.

### *3.2.5 It is involved in reconciliation*

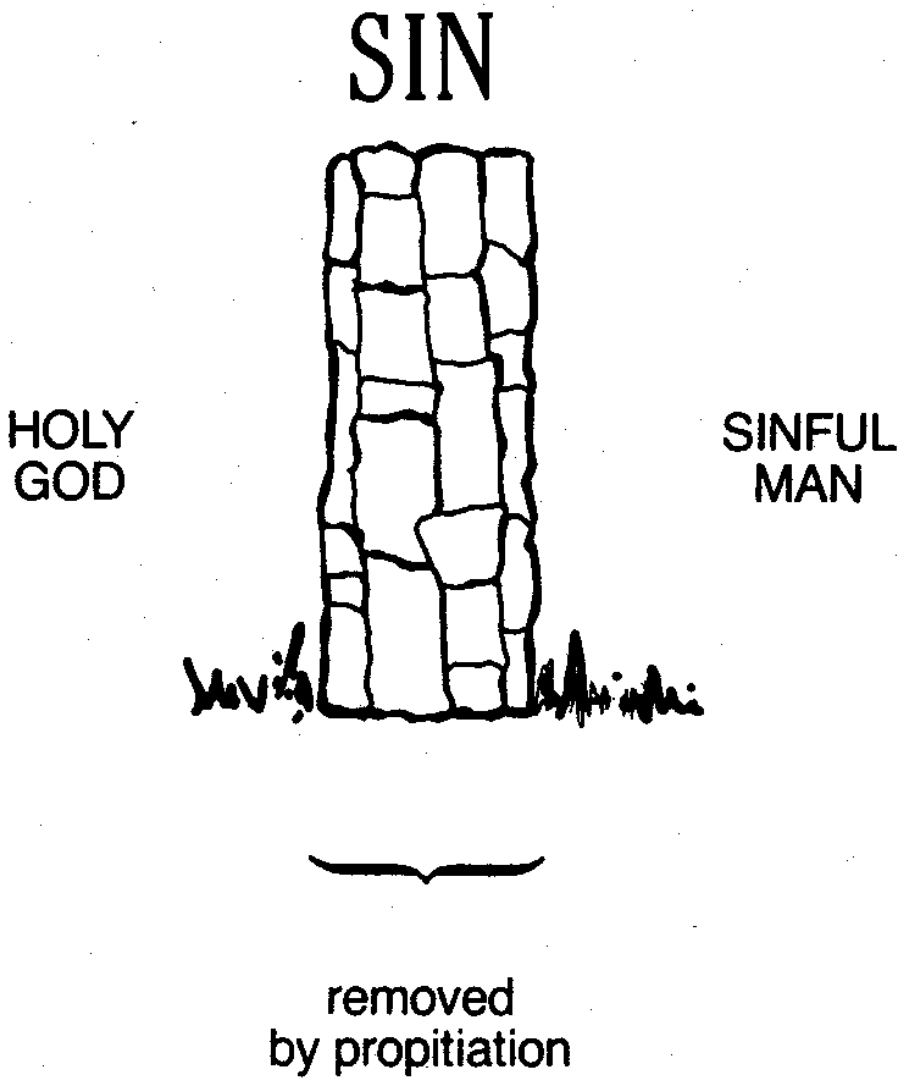
"Reconciliation" can be defined first in terms of its provision at the cross: Man's state of alienation is changed so that God can offer Salvation. Second, it happens at the time of the sinner's conversion: Man's state of alienation is changed so that he is at peace with God.

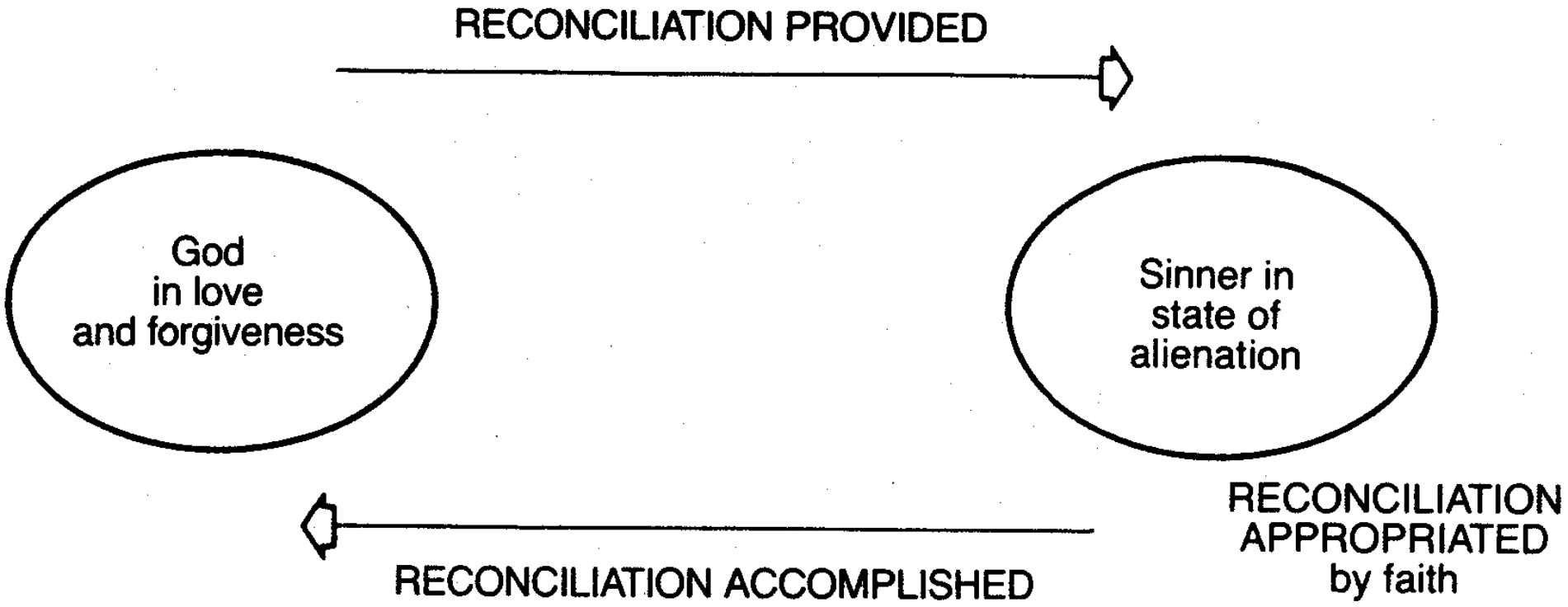
Closely connected with the idea of propitiation is the thought of reconciliation. The Two ideas seem to be related to each other as cause and effect; Christ's death "propitiated" God, and as a result God is "reconciled" (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18f; Ephesians 2:16). Paul uses the term "reconciliation" to refer to the relationship of peace which is brought about by the death of Christ, to the communion in contrast with the previous enmity, to the reconciliation as the removal of all obstacles, to the access to the Father. In the Scriptures the term reconciliation is applied to both God and man (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

The thought is something like this. At first God and man stood face to face with each other in perfect harmony. In sinning, Adam turned his back upon God. Then God turned his back upon Adam. Christ's death has satisfied the demands of God and now God has again turned his face toward man. It remains for man to turn around and face God. Since God has been reconciled by the death of His Son, man is now entreated to be reconciled to God. In the largest sense of that word, God has reconciled to himself, not only man, but also things in heaven and on earth (Colossians 1:20). Due to this reconciliation, God sends temporal blessings upon the unsaved (Matthew 5:45; Romans 2:4), extends an opportunity to man to repent (2 Peter 3:9), and will deliver heaven and earth from the results of the fall (Romans 8:19-21).

We conclude that not only was man reconciled to God, but that God was "reconciled" to man through propitiation. None of the actual texts that discuss reconciliation say this clearly. I do not believe Scripture teaches that God needed "reconciliation." God needed "propitiation" for the sake of His holiness, but reconciliation pertains to one's attitude toward another. Man was an enemy of God, but nowhere does Scripture say that of God. On the contrary, "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8) God loved us, and this is just the opposite of saying that God needed reconciliation.

The following illustration summarizes the two aspects of reconciliation:


SIN
HOLY GOD
SINFUL MAN
removed by propitiation




**3.3 It is a Ransom / The Concept of Redemption**

The definition of "redemption" is when Christ died, He provided the payment of a ransom through His blood, which makes it possible for a believing sinner to be set free from both the bondage and consequences of sin. The term "redemption" alludes sometimes to the payment of a debt and sometimes to the liberation of a captive. Christ's sacrifice provided for both.

In the New Testament the words used for the concept of redemption are the same words used for the purchase of slaves in the marketplace (Greek, *agona*). We as believers choose to serve, or not to serve Christ. Ultimately our regeneration and gratitude make us willingly obedient to Christ, our new Master.

The death of Christ is represented as the payment of a ransom. The idea of ransom is that of the payment of a price in order to set another held in bondage free. Thus Jesus said that he had come to give his life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45), and the work of Christ is spoken of as a redemption (Luke 1:68; 2:38; Hebrews 9:12).

This ransom is not paid to Satan, but to God. The debt that requires cancelling is due to God's attribute of justice; Satan has no legal claims against the sinner, and so does not need to be paid before the sinner can be set free. Please note that Satan himself is also a sinner, he sins against the God.

Scripture teaches that we are redeemed through the death of Christ. This redemption is:

1. from the penalty of the law, or as Paul says in Galatians 3:13, "from the curse of the Law," by Christ's having become a curse for us;

2. from the law itself, by our being made dead to the law by the body of Christ (Romans 7:4);

3. from sin as a power, by Christ's death to sin and our death to it in him (Romans 6:2, 6; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18f), so that we need no longer submit to the domination of sin (Romans 6:12-14);

4. from Satan, who held man in captivity (2 Timothy 2:26), likewise through Christ's death on the cross (Hebrews 2:14f); and

5. from all evil, both physical and moral, including our present mortal body (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14), to be fully granted at the return of Christ (Luke 21:28).

Ransoms are usually paid to someone. To whom was the ransom paid when Christ died on the cross? Some of the early church fathers (for example, Origen) taught that God paid the ransom to Satan, who held sinners in bondage. It is true that Satan holds sinners in a kind of bondage (2 Timothy 2:26) that causes them to do what he desires, rebel against God. Actually, man is in bondage to sin, not Satan - he merely exploits our condition. How could the blood of Christ be a "payment" to him? The payment, in reality, was made to the law or holiness of God. His character demanded just retribution.

**4. THE EXTENT OF CHRIST'S DEATH**

This also is a subject about which there is much difference of opinion. Did Christ die for the whole world, or only for the elect? If for the whole world, then why are not all saved? And if for the whole world, in what sense? If for the elect only, then what about the justice of God?

### 4.1 Christ Died for the Elect

The Scriptures teach that Christ died primarily for the elect. Paul writes that God "is the Saviour of all men, especially of believers" (1 Timothy 4:10); and Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28) and "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me, for They are Thine" (John 17:9). Scripture further declares, "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25) and "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 Timothy 1:9; cf. Revelation 13:8). He died for the elect, not only in the sense of making Salvation possible for them, but also in the sense of providing it for them when they believe.

### 4.2 Christ Died for the Whole World

This is clear from several passages: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29); "Who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6); "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing Salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11); "He might taste death for every one" (Hebrews 2:9); "The Lord is ... not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9); and "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

There is a necessary order in a man's Salvation; he must first believe that Christ died for him before he can appropriate the benefits of his death to himself. Although Christ died for all in the sense of reconciling God to the world, not all are saved, because their actual Salvation is conditioned on their being reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

The sense in which Christ is the Saviour of the world may be thus summarized:

1. His death secured for all men a delay in the execution of the sentence against sin, space for repentance, and the common blessings of life which have been forfeited by transgression;

2. it removed from the mind of God every obstacle to the pardon of the penitent and restoration of the sinner, except his willful opposition to God and rejection of him;

3. it procured for the unbeliever the powerful incentives to repentance presented in the cross, by means of the preaching of God's servants, and through the work of the Holy Spirit;

4. it provided Salvation for those who do not willfully and personally sin (i.e. those who die in infancy or those who have never been mentally responsible) and assured its application to them; and

5. it makes possible the final restoration of creation itself.

We conclude that the atonement is unlimited in the sense that it is available for all; it is limited in that it is effective only for those who believe. It is available for all, but efficient only for the elect.

## 5. EXPLORING THE DIVINE BASIS FOR THE DEATH OF CHRIST: GRACE

### 5.1 The Definition of Grace

Grace is God doing for man what man cannot (or will not, as in justification by faith) do for himself. It is an undeserved, divine provision.

### 5.2 The Aspects of Grace

"Common," "efficacious," and "sanctifying" grace are convenient theological terms, not Biblical terms. Study the chart below:

| Toward all mankind | Believers at Justification | Believers during Santification |
|---|---|---|
| **"common" grace** | **"efficacious" grace** | **"sanctifying" grace** |
| Matthew 5:45 | Romans 8:30 | Philippians 2:12-13 |
| 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 | John 6:37, 44 | Galatians 5:14, 18 |
| John 16:8-11 | Ephesians 2:8 | 2 Peter 1:3, 10 |
| Romans 1:18-20 | - | - |

All mankind benefits in various ways by common grace (read Matthew 5:45; 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7; John 16:8-11; Romans 1:18). Essentially this prevents man in his fallen condition from descending to the lowest depths of depravity of which he is capable (Romans 1:28-32); it provides the essential human needs so that man might repent (Romans 2:4); and it reveals God in nature and man's conscience (Romans 1:18-21). It makes an otherwise hellish world tolerate and even makes

possible a measure of blessing and beauty so that man might perceive the goodness of God.

Efficacious grace is that which surmounts man's hardness and alienation and enables him to exercise faith (read Romans 8:30; John 6:37, 44; Ephesians 2:8). Calvinists prefer the word "efficacious" or "irresistible," because they believe that it is extended only to the elect.

Finally, sanctifying grace is necessary for believers to live godly lives (Philippians 2:12-13; Galatians 5:14, 18; 2 Peter 1:3, 10). This involves the work of the Holy Spirit in convicting of sin, bringing to repentance, and various forms of enabling the believer to obey God.

## 6. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. **Survey of Theology II**, Lesson 2, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
2. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapters XXV, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.

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# Chapter Four - The Application of the Death of Christ

## 1. CONVERSION

Conversion is that turning to God, and it represents the human response to the call of God. It consists of two elements:

1. repentance (Acts 2:38); and
2. faith (Acts 16:31).

The Scriptures never ask man to justify himself, to regenerate himself, or to adopt himself. God alone can do these things, but man by God's enablement can turn to God. The church at Jerusalem acknowledged, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18; cf. 2 Timothy 2:25). It seems clear that repentance and faith lead to justification, and justification leads to life, and not the reverse (Romans 5:17f). We look, then, at the two elements in conversion. In the genuine conversion of a man, repentance and faith happen simultaneously.

## 2. THE ELEMENT OF REPENTANCE

Although repentance and faith are closely linked together we need to consider each by itself.

### 2.1 The Definition of Repentance

Repentance is a change of mind or will in which a man turns from sin by acknowledging that he is a sinner and that he needs Jesus Christ to be his Saviour. At conversion, the sinner is helpless to alter his own life. What he needs is the work of God on his behalf. If repentance is genuine, the sinner has repudiated his sinfulness and desires righteousness. Thus a change of direction indeed follows repentance, but that is always accomplished as a work of God. To repent is not to do something, but to acknowledge the utter spiritual bankruptcy of one's life without God (Ephesians 2:12).

### 2.2 The Importance of Repentance

The importance of repentance is not always recognized as it should be. Some call upon the unsaved to accept Christ and

to believe, without ever showing the sinner that he is lost and needs a Saviour. But the Scriptures lay much stress on the preaching of repentance. Repentance was the message of the Old Testament prophets (Deuteronomy 30:10; 2 Kings 17:13; Jeremiah 8:6; Ezekiel 14:6; 18:30). It was the keynote of the preaching of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:15), of Christ (Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:3-5), of the twelve as such (Mark 6:12), and in particular of Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38; cf. 3:19). It was also fundamental to the preaching of Paul (Acts 20:21; 26:20). The dispensational change has not made repentance unnecessary in this age; it is definitely a comand to all men (Acts 17:30). This is what Paul said at Athens, the farthest removed from a Jewish environment. Repentance is something in which all heaven is supremely interested (Luke 15:7, 10; 24:46f). It is the fundamental of fundamentals (Matthew 21:32; Hebrews 6:1), because it is an absolute condition of Salvation (Luke 13:2-5).

### 2.3 The Meaning of Repentance

Repentance is essentially a change of mind, taking the word in a broad sense. It has, however, three aspects:

1. an intellectual;
2. an emotional; and
3. a volitional aspect.

Let us look at each of these more carefully.

#### *2.3.1 The intellectual element*

This implies a change of view. It is a change of view with regard to sin, God, and self. Sin comes to be recognized as personal guilt, God as the one who justly demands righteousness, and self as defiled and helpless. The Scriptures speak of this aspect of repentance as the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20; cf. Job 42:5f; Psalm 51:3; Luke 15:17f; Romans 1:32). Repentance also involves a change of mind concerning Christ. Peter called upon the Jews to see Christ not as a mere man, an imposter, or a blasphemer, but as the promised Messiah and Saviour (Acts 2:14-40).

#### *2.3.2 The emotional element*

This implies a change of feeling. Sorrow for sin and a desire for pardon are aspects of repentance. There is intense emotion in David's prayer, "Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the greatness of

Thy compassion blot out my transgressions" (Psalm 51:1). Paul writes, "I now rejoice, but that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret" (2 Corinthians 7:9f). Other verses which show emotion to be a part of repentance are Matthew 21:32; 27:3 (cf. Psalm 38:18).

### *2.3.3 The volitional element*

This element implies a change of will, disposition, and purpose. This is the inward turning from sin. There is a change of disposition to seek pardon and cleansing. Peter said, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38), and Paul writes, "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). The volitional element of repentance is contained in both these verses.

Confession of sin (Psalm 32:5; 51:3f; Luke 15:21; 18:13; 1 John 1:9) and reparations for wrongs done to men (Luke 19:8) are fruits of repentance, but they do not constitute repentance. We are not saved for repenting but if we repent. Repentance is not a satisfaction rendered to God, but a condition of the heart necessary before we can believe unto Salvation. Furthermore, true repentance never exists apart from faith. That is, one cannot turn from sin without at the same time turning to God. Conversely, we may say that true faith never exists without repentance. The two are inseparably bound together.

## 2.4 The Means to Repentance

A word should also be said about the means to repentance. On the divine side, repentance is the gift of God. Paul writes, "If perhaps, God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:25; cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18). On the human side, it is brought about by various things. Jesus teaches that miracles (Matthew 11:20f), even the coming of one from the dead (Luke 16:30f), are insufficient to produce repentance. But the Word of God (Luke 16:30f), the preaching of the gospel (Matthew 12:41; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:37f; 2 Timothy 2:25), the goodness of God toward his creatures (Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9), the chastisement of the Lord (Hebrews 12:10f; Revelation 3:19), belief of the truth (Jonah 3:5-10), and a new vision of God (Job 42:5f) are definite means that God uses to produce repentance.

### 2.5 The Components of Repentance

2 Corinthians 7:9-11 defines the essential nature of repentance:

1. Repentance often arises out of sorrow for sin (2 Corinthians 7:9);
2. Repentance means to condemn the sin of which we repent (2 Corinthians 7:11); and
3. Repentance is a "turning" of our will.

### 2.6 Conclusion

Repentance is a gift of God in the sense that the Holy Spirit brings about conviction of sin. Thus, "God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18). Along with faith it is a requirement of Salvation; it is the acknowledgment that one is a sinner in need of a Saviour. The sinner acknowledges his need to turn in repentance, while God brings about the actual turning in terms of new behaviour.

## 3. THE ELEMENT OF FAITH

Faith and repentance go hand in hand in conversion. True repentance leads to faith, and there is no "saving" faith without repentance. This is because repentance, which is an acknowledgment of need for a Saviour, requires a faith by which one entrusts himself wholly to the One who is able to meet his need for a Saviour.

A man's life is governed by what he believes and in what he has faith, and his religion by the person in whom he believes. But what Christ saw and rewarded in each of these cases was faith. This is true, and it ought to cause us to consider the place of faith in life. Let us consider it as an element of conversion.

### 3.1 The Definition of Faith

Faith is placing one's full trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

### 3.2 The Importance of Faith

The Scripture declare that:

1. we are saved by faith (Acts 16:31; Romans 5:1; 9:30-32; Ephesians 2:8);
2. enriched with the Spirit by faith (Galatians 3:5, 14);
3. sanctified by faith (Acts 15:9; 26:18);
4. kept by faith (Romans 11:20; 2 Corinthians 1:24; 1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 5:4);
5. established by faith (Isaiah 7:9);
6. healed by faith (Acts 14:9; James 5:15);
7. walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7);
8. surmount difficulties by faith (Mark 9:23; Romans 4:18-21; Hebrews 11:32-40);
9. God declares faith necessary in order to please Him (Hebrews 11:6);
10. regards unbelief as a great sin (John 16:9; Romans 14:23) and as putting a limit upon the manifestations of His power (Mark 6:5f);
11. faith makes us a constant blessing to others (John 7:38);
12. it leads us to put forth an effort in behalf of others (Mark 2:3-5);
13. it induces perseverance in service (Matthew 15:28); and
14. it obtains help for others (Acts 27:24f).

Surely, these benefits reveal the importance of faith.

### 3.3 The Meaning of Faith

Let us first distinguish between some terms that are sometimes confounded. Such as the terms:

1. belief;
2. hope;
3. the faith; and
4. faith.

The word "belief" is often used in the same sense as the word "faith"; but many times it serves to denote only one element of faith, namely the intellecutal. We must guard against a loose use of this term.

Hope has to do exclusively with the future, while faith has to do with the past, the present, and the future. Hope has

been defined as desire plus expectation, but Scriptural hope has in it also the elements of knowledge and assurance. It rests upon a truth revealed in the Scriptures.

By "the faith" we mean the sum total of Christian doctrine as contained in the Scriptures (Luke 18:8; Acts 6:7; 1 Timothy 4:1; 6:10; Jude 3).

Trust is a characteristic Old Testament word for the New Testament "believe" or "faith."

What then is faith? In conversion, faith is the turning of the soul to God, as repentance is the turning of the soul from sin. The Scriptures represent faith as an act of the heart. It therefore involves an intellectual, an emotional, and a volitional change. Men believe with the heart to be saved (Romans 10:9f). The Scriptures emphasize the intellectual aspect of faith in such references as Psalm 9:10; John 2:23f; and Romans 10:14. Nicodemus had faith in this sense of the term when he came to Jesus (John 3:2), and the demons, we are told, believe, for they know the facts concerning God (James 2:19). It is, no doubt, in this sense also that Simon Magus believed (Acts 8:13), for there are no indications that he repented and appropriated Christ. We conclude, therefore, that faith must be more than intellectual assent. Let us look at the three aspects necessary to faith.

### *3.3.1 The intellectual element*

This element includes belief in the revelation of God in nature, in the historical facts of Scripture, and in the doctrines taught therein as to man's sinfulness, the redemption provided in Christ, the conditions to Salvation and to all the blessings promised to God's children. While this element of faith is greatly disparaged in our day, it is nevertheless fundamental to the other constituents of faith. Paul says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). We know that there is a God; therefore, we believe in his existence (Romans 1:19f); we need to know the gospel in order to believe in Christ (Romans 10:14). Scriptural faith, therefore, is not the acceptance of a working hypothesis in religion, it is belief based on the best of evidence.

### *3.3.2 The emotional element*

This is emphasized in such Scriptures as Psalm 106:12f, "Then they believed His words; they sang His praise. They quickly forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel" ; Matthew 13:20f, "And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in

himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away" ; and John 8:30f; where the writer distinguishes between the many who believed on him and those who merely believed him. Compare also the scribe's assent to Jesus' statement as to what is the greatest commandment without accepting him as Saviour (Mark 12:32-34); and John 5:35; "He was the lamp that was burning and was shining, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light." All these references intimate a partial and temporary acceptance of the truth of God, as distinguished from a complete appropriation of its message and its Christ.

We may define the emotional element of faith as the awakening of the soul to its personal needs and to the personal applicability of the redemption provided in Christ, together with an immediate assent to these truths. But it must not stop here, for while the emotional element is certainly to be recognized as a constituent of faith, it must not be treated as if it were the sole characteristic of faith.

### *3.3.3 The voluntary element*

This element of faith is the logical outgrowth of the intellectual and the emotional. If a man accepts the revelation of God and His Salvation as true and comes to assent to it as applicable to himself personally, he should logically go on to appropriate it to himself. Each preceding term logically leads on to the succeeding; a man is not saved unless his faith has all three of these elements in it. The voluntary element, however, is so comprehensive that it presupposes the other two. Certainly, no one can be saved who does not voluntarily appropriate Christ, and no one can get an answer to prayer who does not wholeheartedly embrace the promises of God.

The voluntary element includes the surrender of the heart to God and the appropriation of Christ as Saviour. The former is brought out in such Scriptures as "Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways" (Proverbs 23:26); "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will given you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me" (Matthew 11:28f); and "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). That the Greek term *pisteuo* (to believe or trust) is used in the sense of surrender and commitment is seen in such statements as "But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men" (John 2:24); "They were entrusted with the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2); and "I had been entrusted with the gospel" (Galatians 2:7). The Scriptures frequently emphasize that man should count the cost before deciding to follow Christ (Matthew 8:19-22; Luke 14:26-33). The thought of surrender is also implied in the exhortation to accept Jesus as Lord. The command is "Believe in the Lord

Jesus" (Acts 16:31), and we must confess "Jesus as Lord" (Romans 10:9) to be saved. To believe in Him as Lord is to recognize Him as Lord until we ourselves abdicate. This note in faith is often overlooked or even referred to a later time of consecration, but the Scriptures connect it with the initial experience of Salvation. The appropriation of Christ as Saviour is abundantly taught in Scripture (read John 1:12; 4:14; 6:53f; Revelation 3:20).

### 3.4 The Source of Faith

As with repentance, there is a divine and a human side of faith.

#### *3.4.1 The divine side*

Jesus is "the author and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:2). Faith is a gift of God (Romans 12:3; 2 Peter 1:1), sovereignly given by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:9; cf. Galatians 5:22). Paul speaks of the whole aspect of Salvation as being a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8), and surely that includes faith.

#### *3.4.2 The human side*

Both the spoken and the written word of God produce faith. The Bible says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17), and "Many of those who had heard the message believed" (Acts 4:4). Not only is the word of God a means of faith, so is prayer (Mark 9:24; Luke 22:32). The disciples requested of the Lord, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). Further, the exercise of the faith we have will be a means whereby our faith will grow (Matthew 25:29; cf. Judges 6:14).

### 3.5 The Implications of Genuine Faith

Many today define faith as merely an intellectual assent to the historical fact that Jesus died for one's sins. This "faith" desires forgiveness of sin without any conscious desire for deliverance from sin - that is, it is not accompanied by repentance. This kind of faith results in little or no change in one's behaviour, no following after Christ. Genuine faith, on the other hand, includes more than an acknowledgment that Jesus Christ died for sin.

### 3.6 A Commitment to Christ

A believer becomes a disciple of Christ at the time of his conversion (read Matthew 19:16-26; Luke 9:57-62). Jesus required His disciples to "follow" Him from the very beginning of their faith in Him (John 1:43-2:11). A believer's commitment will grow as he allows the Holy Spirit to apply it in specific areas of his life.

### 3.7 A Transfer of Trust

Everyone puts "trust" in something, whether he is a believer in Christ or not. Unbelievers trust in good works, religious rituals, a belief that there is no God to be accountable to, etc. The Thessalonians turns from idols to trust in the living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Sole confidence must be placed in Jesus and His provision, or man's pride of personal achievement will enter in and frustrate the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8).

### 3.7 The Result of Faith

The results of faith are several:

#### *3.7.1 Salvation*

Our whole Salvation is dependent upon faith. From start to finish we are saved by faith, be it justification (Romans 5:1), adoption (Galatians 3:5, 14; 4:5f), or sanctification (Acts 26:18). Peter tells us that we are "protected by the power of God through faith" (1 Peter 1:5).

#### *3.7.2 Assurance*

It is true that assurance comes by the witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16; 1 John 3:24; 4:13), but, nevertheless, God refers the soul to the promises in the Word of God, and assurance comes when we believe them. Closely connected with assurance is peace (Isaiah 26:3; Romans 5:1) and rest (Hebrews 4:3), with the resulting joy (1 Peter 1:8).

#### *3.7.3 Good works*

Faith necessarily leads to good works. We have been saved apart from works (Romans 3:20; Ephesians 2:9), but yet "for good works" (Ephesians 2:10). Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). James emphasizes the manifestation of faith in

"works" (James 2:17-26). Paul stresses the insufficiency of the works of the law (Galatians 2:16; 3:10); yet he also emphasizes that "works" are the outgrowth of faith (Titus 1:16; 2:14; 3:8). These good works are the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22f; Ephesians 5:9).

### 3.8 Conclusion

Faith is both a human responsibility and a divine work. It involves the followings:

1. mind (acceptance of knowledge);
2. emotions (realization of need);
3. will (commitment and appropriation); and
4. it leads to "good works" (James 2:14-26).

Yet it is part of the "gift" of God in the phrase "saved by grace through faith" of Ephesians 2:8.

Faith grows as the believer learns to trust God for more and more, to acknowledge the lordship of Christ in specific ways, and to become a better disciple, all part of the process known as "santification."

## 4. THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

Conversion is followed by justification. Several aspects of this doctrine need to be considered.

### 4.1 The Definition of Justification

In regeneration man receives a new life and a new nature; in justification, a new standing. Justification may be defined as that act of God by which He declares sinners who have believed in Jesus Christ as right in His sight. Justification is judicial and also is a declarative act. It is not something wrought in man, but something declared of man. It is a legal work of God. The sinner is declared righteous for his faith in Christ, although in his behaviour he is still a sinner. In santification the believer is made righteous - his behaviour conforms to his legal status in Christ. This judicial concept is clearly seen in Romans 8:31-33. It does not make upright or righteous, but declares righteous. Several things are involved.

### *4.1.1 The remission of the penalty*

Since Christ has borne man's penalty for sin, God now remits it in the case of him who believes in Christ (Acts 13:38f; Romans 8:1, 33f; 2 Corinthians 5:21). The doctrine of justification means that God has pronounced the eschatological verdict of acquittal over the man of faith in the present, in advance of the final judgment.

Romans 4:6-8 says, "The man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works" (justification) has had his "lawless deeds" forgiven. Furthermore, this forgiveness means that his sin will not be taken into account by God ever again.

### *4.1.2 The restoration to favor*

The sinner has lost God's favor (John 3:36; Romans 1:18; 5:9; Galatians 2:16f). Justification is more than acquittal; the remission of the penalty is one thing, restoration to favor is another. The justified man becomes a friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23). He is made an heir of God and a fellow-heir of Christ (Romans 8:16f; Galatians 3:26; Hebrews 2:11).

### *4.1.3 The imputation of righteousness*

Justification supplied with a positive righteousness to a believer before he can have fellowship with God. How can God do that? By imputing to the believer the righteousness of Christ. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21; read also 1 Corinthians 1:30). This righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, and it is from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). God restores us to favor by imputing to us Christ's righteousness. This is the wedding garment that is ready for everyone who accepts the invitation to the feast (Matthew 22:11f; cf. Luke 15:22-24). The justified person is not yet righteous in himself, but he is righteous in the forensic sense, from the legal standpoint.

## 4.2 The Method of Justification

Abraham was justified by faith 14 years before he was circumcised (Romans 4:1-5; 9-12; cf. Genesis 15:6; 16:15f; 17:23-26) and that David rejoiced in the fact of an imputed righteousness (Romans 4:6-8). The New Testament doctrine of justification is a truth already known in Old Testament times. What is the method of justification?

### *4.2.1 It is not by works of the law*

Justification is not by the works of the law. Jesus referred the rich young ruler to the law when he asked how he might inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17-22), but Jesus did this simply to demonstrate to the young man that Salvation is impossible on that basis. He that would be justified by works must continue in all things that are written in the law (Galatians 3:10; James 2:10). This is no one has done nor can do. The law merely serves to reveal sin (Romans 3:20; 7:7) and to impel the convicted soul to flee to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Jesus taught that "the work of God" is to "believe in Him whom He has sent" (John 6:29). Men are not saved by doing the best they can, unless that doing is believing on the Lord Jesus.

### *4.2.2 It is by the grace of God*

"Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24) and "Being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). The mercy of God saved us (Titus 3:5; cf. Ephesians 2:4f, 8). We don't have the ability to attain it. It was the grace of God that led Christ to provide it; God was under no obligation to do it.

### *4.2.3 It is by the blood of Christ*

The believer is justified by the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9). "According to the Law, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). This sets forth the ground of our justification. Because Christ has borne the punishment of our sins in his own body, God is able to remit the penalty and to restore us to his favor.

### *4.2.4 It is by faith*

"A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 2:16; cf. Acts 13:38f; Romans 3:28; Galatians 3:8, 24). This is the condition of our justification, not the meritorious ground of it. If this were the case, faith would have to be regarded as a meritorious work of man. It is not *for* faith that we are justified, but *by* faith. Faith is not the price of justification, but the means of appropriating it. It is evident that the Old Testament saints were justified as well as the New Testament believers (Acts 13:38f; Romans 4:5-12; Galatians 3:8).

### 4.3 The Results of Justification

These can be summed up briefly:

1. There is the remission of penalty (Romans 4:7f; 2 Corinthians 5:19). The condemnation is gone (Romans 8:1, 33f), and there is peace with God (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14-17).

2. There is the restoration to God's favor (Romans 4:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

3. There is the imputation of Christ's righteousness (Romans 4:5). The believer is now clothed in a righteousness not his own, but provided for him by Christ, and is therefore accepted into fellowship with God.

4. There is heirship. "That being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

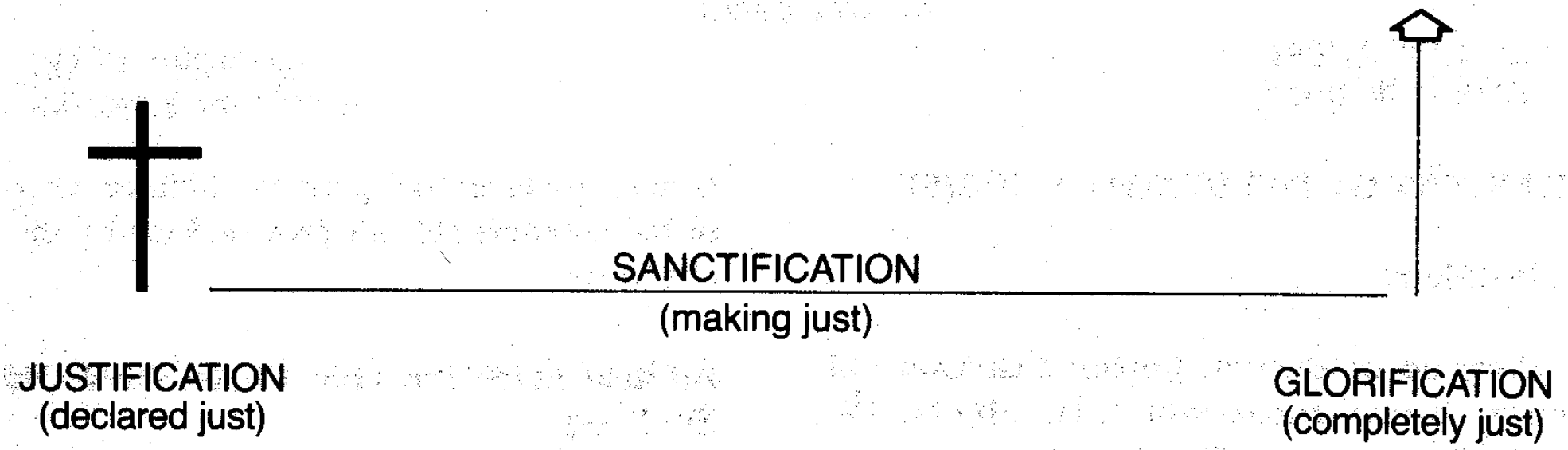
5. There is also a direct result in practical living. Justification leads to righteous living (read Philippians 1:11; 1 John 3:7). James emphasizes that a man have such a faith as will result in works, that is, a living faith (James 2:14-26).

6. The justified man is assured that he will be saved from the coming wrath of God (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).

7. He is also assured of glorification (Matthew 13:43; Romans 8:30; Galatians 5:5). These results are directly connected with justification.

### 4.4 Justification Provides the Judicial Basis for Santification

After justification, God has a basis to begin the practical work of sanctification in the believer's life. Sanctification picks up where justification leaves off, according to Romans 5 and 6, where Paul implies that the believers justified by grace cannot continue in sin. The relationship between justification and sanctification can be visualized as follows:




## 5. THE DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION

The doctrine of regeneration follows logically the doctrine of justification.

### 5.1 The Definition of Regeneration

Regeneration is that act of the Holy Spirit by which He imparts the divine life and nature to the believer so that he becomes a child of God who ultimately desires to be obedient to God.

It is common in modern times to think of being "born again" (John 3) as some kind of mystical, religious experience. What Scripture tells us, however, is that being born again (regeneration) is not an "experience" that the believer is conscious of, but something that God the Holy Spirit does within the believer. Certainly it will result in experiences of many kinds, all of which can be seen as part of sanctification.

### 5.2 The Meaning of Regeneration

From the divine side, the change of heart is called regeneration, the new birth; from the human side, it is called conversion. Regeneration may be defined as:

1. the communication of divine life to the soul (John 3:5; 10:10, 28; 1 John 5:11f);
2. the impartation of a new nature (2 Peter 1:4) or heart (Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26); and
3. the production of a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; 4:24).

This new spiritual life affects the believer's:

1. intellect (1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 1:18; Colossians 3:10);
2. will (Philippians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 13:21); and
3. emotions (Matthew 5:4; 1 Peter 1:8).

### 5.3 The Necessity of Regeneration

Scripture repeatedly declares that a man must be regenerated before he can see God. These claims of the Word of God are supported by reason and conscience. Holiness is the indispensable condition to acceptance into fellowship with God. But all humanity is by nature depraved, therefore mankind cannot have fellowship with God unless they are regenerated. Now this moral change in man can be brought about only by an act of the Spirit of God. He regenerates the heart and communicates to it the life and nature of God. The Scriptures represent this experience as a new birth, whereby a man becomes a child of God. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3; cf. 1:12; 1 John 3:1). Only the new birth can produce that holy nature within sinners that makes fellowship with God possible.

### 5.4 The Means of Regeneration

Scripture represents regeneration as the work of God. But there are a number of means and agencies involved in the experience.

#### *5.4.1 The will of God*

We are born of the will of God (John 1:13; James 1:18).

#### *5.4.2 The death and resurrection of Christ*

The new birth is conditioned on faith in the crucified Christ (John 3:14-16), and the resurrection of Christ is equally involved in our regeneration (1 Peter 1:3).

### *5.4.3 The Word of God*

We were brought forth "by the word of truth" (James 1:18 cf. 1 Peter 1:23). Paul speaks of "the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:26; cf. Titus 3:5). Some see baptism as a necessary pre-requisite to regeneration, but this makes Salvation dependent upon works. Clearly, Cornelius was born again before he received baptism (Acts 10:47). Acts 2:38 must be understood in the sense of being baptized because of the forgiveness of sins, rather than in order that they would be forgiven; just as John baptized because of repentance, rather than in order that those who were baptized would repent (Matthew 3:11).

### *5.4.4 The ministers of the Word*

God uses people in the redemptive process. Their contribution, however, consists simply in the proclamation of the truth and the appeal to decision for Christ (Romans 10:14f; 1 Corinthians 4:15; Philemon 10; cf. Galatians 4:19).

### *5.4.5 The Holy Spirit*

The real efficient agent in regeneration is the Holy Spirit (John 3:5f; Titus 3:5; cf. Acts 16:14; Romans 9:16; Philippians 2:13). Truth does not in itself constrain the will; besides, the unregenerate heart hates the truth until it is worked upon by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus teaches in John 3:3-8 that one must be "born of water and the Spirit." Interpretations of the meaning of "water" in this text are several:

1. Some take it literally to mean water baptism and often include the idea that baptism is necessary in some way to be regenerated.

2. Others believe it is symbolic of the Word of God, which certainly is involved in the event of conversion.

3. Another view is that it is a reference to human biological birth, the water that surrounds the fetus, and this is quite

plausible in this context, since Nicodemus refers to entering the mother's womb again; but it suffers from a lack of evidence that contemporaries of Jesus would have spoken that way.

4. Yet another view is that both "water" and "wind" (the actual word translated "Spirit" in the verse) are symbols of the Holy Spirit, since they appear this way in some Old Testament texts.

5. We believe it refers to the baptizing work of John the Baptist, something that Nicodemus would have been very familiar with. This would have related directly to repentance or faith, since John's baptism was commonly described as a "baptism of repentance" (Acts 19:4). Thus, repentance and the Holy Spirit brought about regeneration.

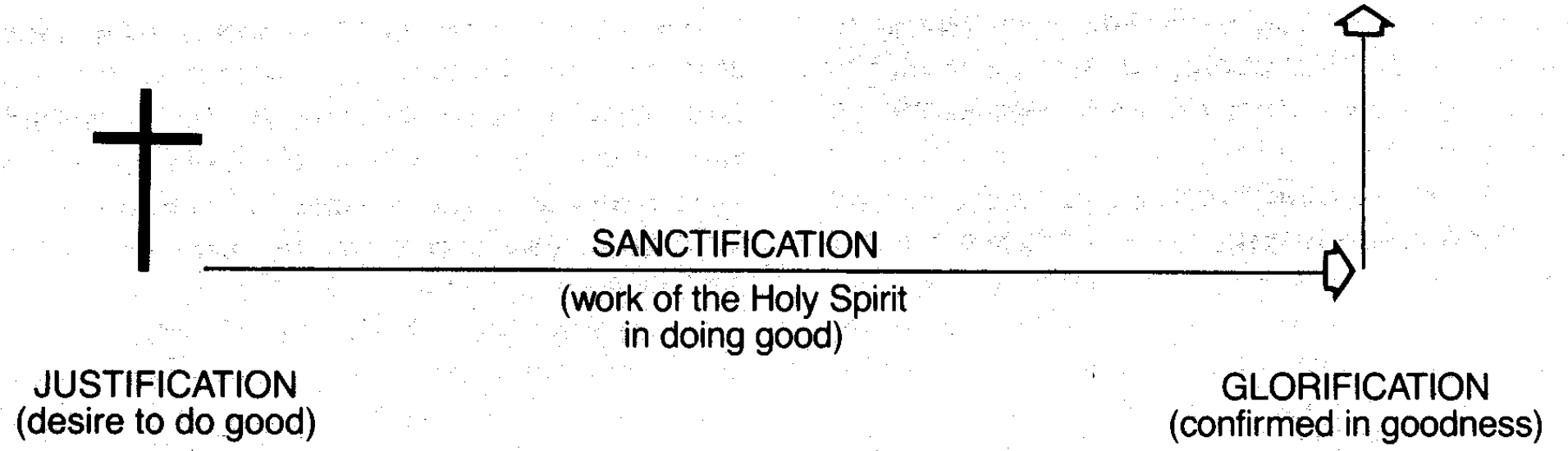
### 5.5 Regeneration Imparts New Life

Salvation makes "alive together with Christ" the one that was "dead in transgressions" (Ephesians 2:5). According to John 3:6 this is spiritual life, a contrast to physical life which is the only kind of life man has before regeneration. It is the capability of knowing and fellowshipping with God.

### 5.6 Regeneration Imparts a New Nature or Inclination

2 Peter 1:4 says that we are "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." This "nature" not as a new "person" within us, but a tendency or disposition toward obedience to God that characterizes our whole person as a "new creation" in Christ. To put it another way, we do not have a new nature, we are a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17), fundamentally desirous of pleasing God. (see also Romans 7:15-24 where Paul seems to be saying that he, the Christian, basically desires to do God's will, but within him is another "law" or principle of evil trying continually to sidetrack him into sin. This basic desire toward good is helpless in him to bring about good, but through the Holy Spirit he is able to fulfill the requirement of the law - Romans 8:1-4)

As justification provided a **legal** basis for sanctification, regeneration provides a **practical** basis, for it imparts this new desire to obey, which is the dynamic of the Holy Spirit toward obedience.




**5.7 The Results of Regeneration**

There are a number of definite results that follow regeneration. They serve as tests to whether a soul has been regenerated.

1. He who is born of God overcomes temptation (1 John 3:9; 5:4, 18). The present tense of all of these verbs indicates a life of habitual victory. Consequently, the regenerated person practices righteousness. This, however, is not to suggest sinless perfection.

2. The attitude of the regenerated is different. He habitually loves the brethren (1 John 5:1), God (1 John 4:19; 5:2), God's Word (Psalm 119:97; 1 Peter 2:2), his enemies (Matthew 5:44), and lost souls (2 Corinthians 5:14).

3. The regenerated person also enjoys certain privileges of a child, as the supply of his needs (Matthew 7:11; cf. Luke 11:13), a revelation of the Father's will (1 Corinthians 2:10-12; Ephesians 1:9), and being kept (1 John 5:18).

4. The man born of God is also an heir of God and a fellow-heir with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17). While the actual possession of the inheritance is for the most part still future, the child of God has even now a token of that inheritance in the gift of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13f). It is, of course, clear that these results are not directly

visible to the world, but they are, nevertheless, very real to the one who has been born into the divine family.

## 6. THE EXTENT OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST

### 6.1 The Problem

The doctrine of election implies that God only intends to save those whom He elects. This creates an apparent conflict with two passages, at least: 1 Timothy 2:4, which says that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"; and 2 Peter 3:9 which seems to concur, saying, God is "patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

It is difficult to satisfactorily reconcile these two apparently divergent concepts. But both seem to be Biblical teachings - election of only some, and universal love for mankind. Perhaps the resolution of the problem lies somewhere in the difference between the "desire" of God, out of his goodness, for all to be saved, and His sovereign, eternal decree of election, which includes permission for some to oppose His desires and reject the gospel.

Concerning the death of Christ, the doctrine of election raises the following question: Did God intend that the death of Christ should pay for the sins of only the elect whom He intended to save? In other words, if God intends only to save the elect, why should He make a provision of Salvation through the death of Christ for any but the elect?

However you answer this question, problems exist. Let's say you answer that Christ died for all mankind. Does this not seem to say that God's purpose in election is not consistent with His purpose in the death of Christ? Or, again, is God really sovereign? If He intended to save all men, and all are not saved, is not God "defeated"? Or, if Christ died for all, and this reflects the divine intent or purpose, and you say at the same time that God is sovereign, does this not teach that all men will ultimately be saved (universalism)?

Suppose you answer that Christ died only for the elect. Is the gospel not to be preached to all? And if it is preached to all, is it not dishonest of God to invite all to repent and believe when some of the listeners are not provided for by the death of Christ?

### 6.2 Biblical Evidence That Christ Died Only for the Elect

The theological statement of "Christ died only for elect" is also termed "limited redemption," "limited atonement," "particular redemption"; the view held by strict Calvinists.

### *6.2.1 Calvinism*

"Strict" Calvinism can be summarized in five points and remembered by the acrostic TULIP:

1. T = total depravity;
2. U = unconditional election;
3. L = limited redemption;
4. I = irresistible grace; and
5. P = perseverance of the saints.

### *6.2.2 Verses offered in support of Christ died only for the elect*

Following are some of the key verses cite in favor of limited atonement:

1. Matthew 1:21: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save *his people* from their sins."
2. Matthew 20:28: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom *for many*."
3. Matthew 26:28: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out *for many* for the forgiveness of sins."
4. John 10:15: "I lay down my life for *the sheep*."
5. Acts 20:28: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the *church of God*, which he bought with his own blood."
6. Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved *the church* and gave himself up for her."
7. Hebrews 9:28: "So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of *many people*; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation *to those* who are waiting for him."
8. John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his *friends*."

Upon first reading, verses such as these seem to support the idea that Christ died on the cross not for all people but for a particular group of people--His "people," the "many," the "church of God," His "sheep," His "friends."

### *6.2.3 Reasons for Christ died only for the elect*

If God intends to save only the elect, God therefore must have the same intention for the death of Christ which secures the Salvation of the elect. This is not to say that the value of Christ's death is limited; Christ's death is of infinite value. Neither is the offer of Salvation limited; the gospel is offered to all. What is limited is the intended provision of Christ's death, for God would provide only for those whom He intended to save. God's intent in election is the same as His intent in the death of Christ.

John 10:15 tells us that Christ died for the sheep (the elect), and not all "sheep" are His. Ephesian 5:25 teaches that Christ died for the church, and the church is composed only of the elect. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says that Christ "died for all, therefore all died, and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves." The "all's" seem to be limited to the elect if we interpret "therefore all died" as being those who actually "die" with Christ through faith and are "raised" with Him (Romans 6).

Similarly, the "all" must be limited in such verses as 1 Timothy 2:4 so that it means "all kinds" of men, not all men individually. The same must be said of John 3:16: God loved the "world" of the elect, not all men individually.

## 6.3 Biblical Evidence That Christ Died for All Men

The theological statement of "Christ died for all men" is also termed "universal redemption," "universal atonement," ; held by "moderate" Calvinists and Arminians.

### *6.3.1 Moderate Calvinism*

"Moderate" Calvinism is called this because it modifies the third point, limited redemption to unlimited redemption, but subscribes to the other four. Hence, they are often called "Four-point Calvinists" as opposed to "Five-point Calvinists."

### *6.3.2 Arminianism*

Arminianism was a reaction to strict Calvinism and constitutes a rejection and restatement of the Five point of "strict" Calvinism. For example:

1. Men are not totally depraved but are able to exercise faith on their own;
2. Election is not unconditional but is conditioned on foreseen faith;
3. Redemption is not limited but instead is unlimited;
4. Grace is not irresistible but all men are shown grace while some choose to resist it; and
5. All the saints will not necessarily "persevere" to ultimate Salvation, but some will lose their faith and fall into apostasy.

### *6.3.3 Scriptural arguments offered in support of Christ died for all men*

There are numerous verses that support the doctrine of unlimited atonement:

#### *6.3.3.1 Luke 19:10--Jesus Saves the "Lost"*

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save *lost*." The "lost" in this verse refers to the *collective whole* of lost *what was* humanity, not just to the lost elect. This is the most natural understanding of this verse.

#### *6.3.3.2 John 1:29--Jesus Takes Away the Sin "of the World"*

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin *of the world*." What is the "world" here? The fundamental idea of *kosmos* (world) in John's Gospel is to represent humanity in its fallen state.

#### *6.3.3.3 John 3:16--"Whoever" Believes in Jesus Is Saved*

"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." The Greek lexicons are unanimous that "world" here denotes humankind, not the "world of the elect."

It is critical to observe that John 3:16 cannot be divorced from the context that is set in verses 14 and 15, wherein Christ alludes to Numbers 21. In this passage Moses is seen setting up the brazen serpent in the camp of Israel, so that if "any man" looked to it, he experienced physical deliverance. In verse 15 Christ applies the story spiritually when He says that "whosoever" believes on the uplifted Son of Man shall experience spiritual deliverance.

#### *6.3.3.4 John 4:42--Jesus Is the Savior "of the World"*

"They said to the woman, We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior *of the world*." It is quite certain that when the Samaritans called Jesus "the Savior of the world," they were not thinking of the world of the elect. To read such a meaning into this text would be sheer eisogesis.

Likewise, when Jesus said, "I am the Light *of the world*" (John 8:12), He certainly was not thinking of Himself as the Light of the world of the elect. "The sun in the heavens shines on *all* men, though some, in their folly, may choose to withdraw into dark caves to evade its illuminating rays."

### *6.3.3.5 1 Timothy 4:10--Jesus Is the Saviour "of all Men"*

"We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour *of all men,* and especially of those who believe." There is a clear distinction in this verse between "all men" and "those who believe." Christ has made a provision of salvation for all men, though it only becomes effective for those who exercise faith in Christ.

### *6.3.3.6 Hebrews 2:9--Jesus Tasted Death "for Everyone"*

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death *for everyone*." The Greek word "everyone" (*pantos*) is better translated "each." If it be asked, why use the word *pantos* (each) rather than *panton* (all), we reply that the singular brings out more emphatically the applicability of Christ's death to *each individual man*. Christ tasted death for *every single person*.

### *6.3.3.7 Romans 5:6--Jesus Died "for the Ungodly"*

"At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died *for the ungodly*." It doesn't make much sense to read this as saying that Christ died for the ungodly among the elect. Rather the verse, read plainly, indicates that Christ died for *all* the ungodly of the earth.

### *6.3.3.8 Romans 5:18--Christ's Death Made Salvation Available to "All Men"*

"Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation *for all men*, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life *for all men*." Regarding the two occurrences of the phrase "all men" (". . . just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for *all men*, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for *all men* . . ."), the phrase must have the *same extent* in both clauses. In other words, just as *all men* on the earth were brought to a state of condemnation through one sin (Adam's), so Salvation was made available for *all men* by Christ's death on the cross (though the *reception* of this Salvation depends upon exercising faith in Jesus).

### *6.3.3.9 1 John 2:2--Jesus Atoned for the Sins "of the Whole World"*

"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins *of the whole world*." A natural reading of this verse, without imposing theological presuppositions on it, supports unlimited atonement.

### *6.3.3.10 Isaiah 53:6--The Iniquity "of us All" Was Laid on Jesus*

"*We all*, like sheep, have gone astray, *each of us* has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity *of us all*" (Isaiah 53:6). This verse doesn't make sense unless it is read to say that the same "all" that went astray is the "all" for whom the Lord died. In the first of these statements, the general apostasy of men is declared; in the second, the particular deviation of each one; in the third, the atoning suffering of the Messiah, which is said to be on behalf of all. As the first "all" is true of all men (and not just of the elect), we judge that the last "all" relates to the same company.

### *6.3.3.11 2 Peter 2:1--Jesus Paid the Price Even for Those Who Deny Him*

We are told that Christ even paid the price of redemption for false teachers who deny Him: "But there were also *false prophets* among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord *who bought them*--bringing swift destruction on themselves." It seems to point out most clearly that people for whom Christ died may be lost . . . . there is a distinction between those for whom Christ died and those who are finally saved.

### *6.3.3.12 John 3:17--Through Jesus Salvation Is Available to "the World"*

"For God did not send his Son into *the world* to condemn *the world*, but to save *the world* through him." The word

*world* is again repeated, that no man may think himself wholly excluded, if he only keeps the road of faith. Clearly God has made the *provision* of salvation available to all human beings.

### *6.3.3.13 The Universal Proclamation of the Gospel*

In keeping with the above verses, there are also many verses which indicate that the Gospel is to be universally proclaimed to *all* human beings. Such a universal proclamation would make sense only if the doctrine of unlimited atonement were true. Consider the following:

1. Matthew 24:14 says, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached *in the whole world* as a testimony *to all nations*, and then the end will come."
2. Matthew 28:19 says, "Therefore go and make disciples *of all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . ."
3. In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and *to the ends of the earth*."
4. Acts 17:30 says, "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands *all people everywhere* to repent."
5. Titus 2:11 says, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared *to all men*."
6. In 2 Peter 3:9 we read, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, *not wanting anyone to perish*, but *everyone* to come to repentance."

### *6.3.4 Reasons for Christ died for all men*

Several passages lead universal redemptionists to conclude that although the doctrine of election teaches God's intention to save only the elect, His intention in the death of Christ is to make a *provision* for all that will be *applied only* to the elect, because *only they* exercise the requirement of *faith*. Thus the purpose of God in election differs from the purpose of God in the death of Christ, enabling God to make an honest offer in the gospel to all mankind by saying "if you believe, you can be saved." Some, of course, will not believe, but that is due not to their non-election, but to their corrupted, rebellious inclinations stemming from the Fall, which God *permitted* but did not Himself cause.

Romans 5:15 teaches that as Adam's transgressions caused "the many" to die, the grace of God in Jesus Christ "abounds to the many." It seems apparent that "many" is equivalent to "all" in Romans 5:12 which says that through Adam's sin

"all" men died. Furthermore, Romans 5:17 states that this grace must be received before it can be applied. The sum of the passage, then, is that Christ's death is a *universal* provision with a *limited* application.

In 1 Timothy 2:4, 6, the "all men" of 2:4 and "ransom for all" of 2:6 are not to be interpreted as "all kinds" but rather "all individually." That is, the context requires it. For example, 1 Timothy 2:1-2 calls for prayers for "all men," which would have to mean all men individually, for not all kings and authorities are believers.

1 Timothy 4:10 describes God as "the Saviour of all men, especially of believers." Limited redemptionists interpret "Saviour" here in a very broad sense as it pertains to "all men." They say it is something similar to common grace. This interpretation seems to strain the thrust of the context, where "hope" can only mean Salvation. A much more natural interpretation is that by *provision* God is the Saviour of all men, but by *application* He is the Saviour especially of those who believe.

Finally, the three major provision of the death of Christ are stated as universal provisions. In 1 Timothy 2:6 Jesus is a ransom (redemption) for *all*; in 2 Corinthians 5:19 God is reconciling the *world*, not counting trespasses against them so that He can offer the word of reconciliation to them; and in 1 John 2:2, Christ is the propitiation for the "sins ... of the *whole world*," not only believers.

### *6.3.5 Problems of the position of Christ died only for the elect*

If Christ died only for the elect, how can an offer of Salvation be made to all persons without some sort of insincerity, artificiality, or dishonesty being involved in the process? Is it not improper to offer salvation to everyone if in fact Christ did not die to save everyone? How can God authorize His servants to offer pardon to the non-elect if Christ did not purchase it for them? This is a problem that does not plague those who hold to General Redemption, for it is most reasonable to proclaim the Gospel to all if Christ died for all.

Those who hold to limited atonement cannot say to any sinner with true conviction, "Christ died *for you*." After all, he or she may be one of the non-elect. The preaching of the Gospel (the "good news") cannot be personalized (i.e., Christ died "*for you*"). Rather, those who hold to this view believe the gospel must be presented to people in very general terms, such as, "God loves sinners," or "Christ died for sinners."

### *6.3.6 Putting the "limited" and "unlimited" verses together*

How do we put the "limited" and "unlimited" verses together so that, taken as a whole, all the verses are interpreted in a harmonious way without contradicting each other? With Lewis Sperry Chafer, Robert Lightner, Norman Douty, and others, I believe that seemingly restrictive references can be logically fit into an unlimited scenario much more easily than universal references made to fit into a limited atonement scenario.

The problem that both groups face is the need to harmonize passages that refer to limited redemption with passages that refer to unlimited redemption. To the unlimited redemptionist the limited redemption passages present no real difficulty. He believes that they merely emphasize one aspect of a larger truth. Christ did die for the elect, but He also died for the sins of the whole world. However, the limited redemptionist is not able to deal with the unlimited redemption passages as easily.

The two sets of passages--one seemingly in support of limited atonement, the other in support of unlimited atonement--are reconcilable. While it is true that the benefits of Christ's death are referred to as belonging to God's "sheep," His "people," and the like, it would have to be shown that Christ died *only* for them in order for limited atonement to be true. No one denies that Christ died for God's "sheep" and His "people." It is only denied that Christ died *exclusively* for them. Certainly if Christ died for the whole of humanity, there is no logical problem in saying that he died for a specific *part* of the whole.

*Robert Lightner* (*Robert Lightner*, **For Whom Did Christ Die?" Walvoord: A Tribute** , Donald K. Campbell, Chicago: Moody Press, 1982, p. 166) offers this excellent closing summary:

> The task of harmonizing those various Scriptures poses a far greater problem for those who hold to a limited atonement than it does to those who hold to an unlimited position. Those who hold to an unlimited atonement recognize that some Scriptures emphasize the fact that Christ died for the elect, for the church, and for individual believers. However, they point out that when those verses single out a specific group they do not do so to the exclusion of any who are outside that group since dozens of other passages include them. The "limited" passages are just emphasizing one aspect of a larger truth. In contrast, those who hold to a limited atonement have a far more difficult time explaining away the "unlimited" passages.

### 6.4 My Conclusion - Christ Died for All Men

We have examined at both sides all the Scriptural evidences regarding the extent of the atonement. I conclude that, when we consider all the scriptural evidence collectively, the only possible correct view is "Christ died for all men (i.e. unlimited atonement). It is the only position that makes complete sense of all the "limited" *and* "unlimited" verses taken as a whole.

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# Chapter Five - Sanctification and Perseverance

## 1. THE BELIEVER'S UNION WITH CHRIST

The regenerated soul is brought into a vital union with Christ. The results of this union with Christ are the imputation of our sins to Him and of his righteousness to us, and all the forensic benefits involved in them. We are now concerned with the believer's vital union with Christ.

### 1.1 The Nature of This Union

The Scriptures represent the union of the believer with Christ in various ways. There are the analogies drawn from earthly relationships:

1. the union of a building and its foundation (Ephesians 2:20-22; Colossians 2:7; 1 Peter 2:4f);
2. the union between husband and wife (Romans 7:4; Ephesians 5:31f; Revelation 19:7-9);
3. the union between the vine and the branches (John 15:1-6);
4. the union between the head and the body (1 Corinthians 6:15, 19; 12:12; Ephesians 1:22f; 4:15f);
5. the union between Adam and his descendants (Romans 5:12, 21; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 49); and
6. the union between the shepherd and the sheep (John 10:1-18; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25).

#### *1.1.1 The scriptural representations*

There are also the many direct statements of this fact:

1. the believer is "in Christ" (John 14:20; Romans 6:11; 8:1, 10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:13; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27; 2:11f; 1 John 2:6; 4:13; cf. 2 John 9);
2. both Jesus and the Father dwell in the believer (John 14:23);
3. the believer is partaking of Christ (John 6:53, 56f; 1 Corinthians 10:16f);
4. of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4);
5. as being one spirit with the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:17); and
6. God's seed remains in him (1 John 3:9).

#### *1.1.2 The negative side*

To understand what this union is not, certain concepts must be discarded. First, this union is not the mystical union of the pantheist. Scripture knows of no union between God or Christ and the unregenerated. Nor is it a mere moral union, a union of love and sympathy, as between friends. Jonathan's soul was knit with the soul of David (1 Samuel 18:1), but the believer's union with Christ transcends all such union of interests and purpose. Nor yet is it a union of essence by which the human personality is destroyed or absorbed into Christ or God. This view was held by some of the mystics, but the Scriptures represent the relationship between Christ and the believer as an "I" and "you" relationship, even in the case of those farthest advanced in the Christian life (Philippians 3:7-14). Nor finally, is it a physical and material union, which some claim to procure by participating in the ordinances of the church. The ordinances, according to Scripture, do not secure this union, for they are represented as presupposing the union is already in existence.

### *1.1.3 The positive side*

This union is:

1. a spiritual union (1 Corinthians 6:17; cf. 12:13; Romans 8:9f; Ephesians 3:16f). The Holy Spirit is the author of this union.
2. a vital union (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3f). The life of Christ is the life of the believer.
3. a complete union (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 5:30; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:15). Each part of the body is both a means and an end.
4. an inscrutable union (Ephesians 5:32; Colossians 1:27). That Gentiles should be accepted and incorporated into the body is a mystery.
5. indissoluble (John 10:28; Romans 8:35, 37). Christ gives us eternal life, we shall never perish, no one shall snatch us out of His hand.

## 1.2 The Method of This Union

How is this union between Christ and the Christian established? This union originated in the purpose and plan of God (Ephesians 1:4; John 17:2). It begins in Christians when we are made alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:5; Romans 6:5). And in 1 Corinthians 12:13 we are told that we have been baptized into one body by the Holy Spirit.

## 1.3 The Consequences of This Union

Union with Christ means:

1. eternal security (John 10:28-30; Romans 8:38f);
2. fruitfulness (John 15:5; Galatians 5:22f; cf. Romans 6:22; 7:4; Ephesians 5:9);
3. endowment for service (1 Corinthians 12:4-30); and
4. fellowship with Christ (Ephesians 1:8f).

## 2. THE BELIEVER'S ADOPTION

### 2.1 The Definition of Adoption

As the Greek word indicates, adoption (read Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5) is literally "placing as a son." Regeneration has to do with our change in nature; justification, with our change in standing; sanctification, with our change in character; adoption, with our change in position. According to Paul, the chief advantages of sonship are deliverance from the law (Galatians 4:3-5) and the possession of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption and sonship (Galatians 4:6; cf. Romans 8:15f).

### 2.2 The Time of Adoption

Adoption has a threefold time-relationship:

1. In the councils of God it was an act in eternity past (Ephesians 1:5). Before the God ever began with the Hebrew race, yes, before creation, He predestined us to this position.

2. In personal experience it becomes true of the believer at the time of His accepting Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26; 4:6). Before Salvation, the Gentile was a slave and the Jew a minor; through adoption, both have legal standing as sons of God (Galatians 4:1-7).

3. But the full realization of sonship awaits the coming of Christ. It is at that time that the adoption will be fully consummated (Romans 8:23). Then our bodies will be delivered from corruption and mortality and be made like unto His own glorious body (Philippians 3:20f).

### 2.3 The Results of Adoption

Perhaps first among them is deliverance from the law (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:4f). The believer is no longer under guardians and managers, but is free from such bondage. Next may be mentioned the pledge of the inheritance. This is the Holy Spirit

Himself (Galatians 4:6f; cf. Ephesians 1:11-14). The Father starts His sons out with the investiture of the Spirit. It is the initial payment of the full inheritance which he will receive when Christ comes. Then there is the witness of the Spirit, or assurance (Romans 8:15f; Galatians 4:6). If the believer appreciates these high endowments, he will spontaneously enter into fellowship with the Father. That is, he will manifest a filial spirit in relation to the Father (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). This will naturally be followed by a walk in the Spirit, for the believer will be led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14; cf. Galatians 5:18). The result will be greater and greater conformity to the image of God's son (Romans 8:29). And for the future, the believer has the prospect of one day being made manifest as a son (Romans 8:19). These are the glorious results of Salvation.

## 3. THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE BELIEVER

### 3.1 The Definition of Sanctification

Sanctification can be defined as the act of God whereby He sets apart as His own people and produces holiness in their lives.

In the Old Testament, sanctification has the meaning of "being set apart," as seen in Exodus 13:2: "Sanctify to Me every first-born, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me." Leviticus 21:8 adds moral implication to sanctification, where it says of the priest, "You shall consecrate him, therefore, for he offers the bread of your God; he shall be holy to you; for I the Lord, who sanctifies you, am holy." Here it means "set apart from sin."

The New Testament uses the word *sanctify* strictly in the moral sense: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that your abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

#### *3.1.1 Separation to God*

Separation to God presupposes separation from defilement. Hezekiah charged the Levites to sanctify the house of Jehovah by carrying forth the filthiness out of the holy place (2 Chronicles 29:5; 15-19). Christians are sanctified at the time of their conversion (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 10:14). Jeremiah was sanctified before he was born (Jeremiah 1:5), and Paul speaks of having been separated from his mother's womb (Galatians 1:15).

#### *3.1.2 Imputation of Christ as our holiness*

Imputation of Christ as our holiness accompanies, the imputation of Christ as our righteousness. He is made unto us both righteousness and sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30). Paul says believers "have been sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:2). This holiness is obtained by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18). The believer is thus reckoned holy as well as righteous, because

he is clothed with the holiness of Christ. In this sense, all believers are called "saints," irrespective of their spiritual attainments (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2).

### *3.1.3 Purification from moral evil*

Purification from moral evil is another form of separation. The priests were asked to sanctify themselves before drawing near to God (Exodus 19:22), and the believer today is asked to separate himself from the ungodly in general (2 Corinthians 6:17f), from false teachers and doctrines (2 Timothy 2:21; 2 John 9f), and from his own evil nature (Romans 6:11f; Ephesians 4:25-32; Colossians 3:5-9; 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7; 2 Corinthians 7:1). It will be noted that in some passages sanctification is treated as a single act and in others as a continuous process; in some the purification is more of an outward nature, while in others it is essentially inward. In all of these; it is considered as an act of man and not as an act of God. God has already set apart to Himself everyone who believes in Christ; now the believer sets himself apart to God for God's use.

### *3.1.4 Conformation to the image of Christ*

Conformation to the image of Christ is the positive aspect of sanctification. There are several Scriptures that deal with this phase of sanctification. Paul writes, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29);" and "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 Corinthians 3:18; cf. Galatians 5:22f; Philippians 1:6). And John says, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Clearly, this is a process extending throughout life and coming to full fruition only when we shall see the Lord.

## 3.2 Aspects of Sanctification

### *3.2.1 Positional*

The New Testament uses the word sanctification occasionally as though it were something already accomplished. "You were sanctified ... but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Closely related to justification, this means imputed holiness and defines our standing, or position, before God as believers.

### *3.2.2 Practical*

More frequently the New Testament uses the word sanctification as though it were happening or needed to happen. For example, Hebrews 12:14 commands that believers "pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." Referring to the believer's actual behaviour, sanctification is to be a matter of practice. The question is whether sanctification is an event that produces a settled pattern of behaviour, or a process in which the believer works toward an ideal.

### 3.3 Inevitability of Sanctification

Sanctification is a sovereign work of God as well as a responsibility of the believer. Without sanctification, Hebrews 12:14 has clearly stated, no one will reach heaven. Thus, true believers will experience this work of God as a normal part of their Salvation. The paradoxical relationship between the human and the divine is well stated in Philippians 2:12-13: "Work out your Salvation with fear and trembling [human responsibility]; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure [divine sovereignty]."

Several activities of the Holy Spirit are involved in the phrase "for it is God who is at work in you." They are: enabling, fruit-bearing, convicting of sin, illuminating Scripture, and mediating in prayer. They induce us to want to yield to God, and they empower us to obey when we do yield. Yielding is also called "walking in the Spirit" and "setting our minds on the Spirit" (see Romans 8).

### 3.4 The Time of Sanctification

Sanctification is both an act and a process. Let us consider the 3 time elements in sanctification:

1. the initial act of sanctification;
2. the process of sanctification; and
3. complete and final sanctification.

#### *3.4.1 The initial act of sanctification*

This is positional sanctification. The Scriptures teach that the moment a man believes in Christ he is sanctified. This is clear from the fact that believers are called saints in the New Testament irrespective of their spiritual attainments (1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; Hebrews 10:10; Jude 3). Of the Corinthians, Paul explicitly says that they "were sanctified" (1 Corinthians 6:11), though he also declared that they were "still fleshly" (1 Corinthians 3:3). In 2 Corinthians he urged them to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (7:1). In Ephesians he speaks of the "equipping of the saints" (4:12) and exhorts his readers to walk "as is proper among saints" (5:3). In Thessalonians he affirms that his readers are already sanctified (2

Thessalonians 2:13), though he also prays for their sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23f).

### *3.4.2 The process of sanctification*

As a process, sanctification continues throughout life. On the basis of what the believer has done at conversion, he is admonished to do the same actually in his own experience. Because he has "put off" and "put on," he is now to "put off" and "put on" (Colossians 3:8-13). Where the initial surrender has not been adhered to, there is need first of a definite presentation of the life to God before practical holiness is possible (Romans 6:13; 12:1f); but when the believer is wholly dedicated to God, progress in sanctification is assured. Then the Holy Spirit will put to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13), work in him obedience to the Word (1 Peter 1:22), produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22f), and use him in God's service. Then he will "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18), "increase and abound in love" (1 Thessalonians 3:12), cleanse himself "from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1), and be transformed into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:11-16). Paul declared, "I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12).

This does not mean some type of sinless perfection. Jesus commanded, "You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). If this refers to absolute sinlessness and likeness to God, then no Christian has ever yet attained to this precept. It is clear from the context that Jesus is exhorting his followers to be like the Father in displaying love to both good and bad. Paul disclaims being already perfect in one breath and in the next claims to be perfect (Philippians 3:12, 15). It is evident that one is positional perfection and the other experiential perfection. Positionally, he was perfect since the day that he believed in Christ; experientially, he was perfect only to a limited degree. Colossians 1:28; 4:12; and Hebrews 12:23 hold out perfection as a goal to be attained in the end, but not in this life.

Some use 1 John 3:8f in support of sinless perfection. John writes there, "The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning .... 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." Attention to the Greek tenses removes the possibility that this is sinless perfection, for they are all the present tense. Accordingly, the meaning is, he that habitually sins is of the devil; he that is God does not repeatedly sin. If this is not the meaning, then John contradicts himself in this very Epistle, for he tells the believer what to do in case he sins. "My little children, I am writing these things to you 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" (1 John 2:1f). The believer is enjoined not to sin, but if he sins he has a remedy. John further says that if we walk in the light, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). And again, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1:8). Surely, we must conclude that John does not teach sinless perfection.

We must beware of concluding that the defeated, imperfect life is the normal life. If sinless perfection is an unscriptural doctrine, so also is sinful imperfection. The Scriptures demand that we live an overcoming life. The answer to Paul's question, "Are we to continue in sin?" (Romans 6:1), is most emphatically, "May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:2). The apostles warns the Corinthians that those who live in sin shall not "inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:10).

### *3.4.3 Complete and final sanctification*

Complete and final sanctification awaits the sight of Christ. No matter how much progress we may have made in the life of holiness, entire conformity to Christ will only be realized when "the perfect comes" and "the partial will be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:10). We have been saved from the guilt and the penalty of sin, are being saved from the power of sin, and will ultimately be saved from the very presence of sin. Our Salvation from the presence of sin will take place when we shall see the Lord, either at death (Hebrews 12:23) or at His coming (1 Thessalonians 3:13; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Jude 21). There will be no further possibility of sinning after that (Revelation 22:11). The body of the believer will then be glorified (Romans 8:23; Philippians 3:20f) and become a perfect instrument of obedience to God. The prospect of this complete conformation to the image of Christ should impel us to put away now all unholy things from our lives (1 John 3:2f).

## 3.5 Means of Sanctification

There are 2 parties that have to do with man's sanctification:

1. God; and
2. man.

However, it is not God the Father only, but the Triune God that has a part in the work. God the Father sanctifies the believer in that he reckons the holiness of Christ to him (1 Corinthians 1:30), works in him that which is well-pleasing in his sight (Hebrews 13:21), and disciplines him (Hebrews 12:9f; 1 Peter 4:17f; 5:10). Christ sanctifies the believer by laying down His life for him (Hebrews 10:10; 13:12), and by producing holiness in him by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:13; Hebrews 2:11). The Holy Spirit sanctifies the believer in that he frees him from the carnal nature (Romans 8:2), strives against the manifestation of it (Galatians 5:17), puts to death the old nature as the believer yields it to him for crucifixion (Romans 8:13), and produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22f). Thus, there is a definite function of each member of the Trinity in our sanctification.

In himself man can do nothing to achieve sanctification. Even in the believer, God must take the initiative. Paul says, "It is God

who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). But there are definite means that man may employ in his sanctification. Here, as elsewhere, faith in Christ is the first step to take (Acts 26:18). He who believes in Christ is sanctified positionally, for Christ is at that moment made unto him sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30). Next must come the pursuit of holiness. He who does not follow after sanctification shall not see God (2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14). This should lead him to study the Scriptures, for they disclose the state of the heart and point out the remedy for failure (John 17:17, 19; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Timothy 4:5; James 1:25). The divinely instituted ministry also has its part in pointing out the need for holiness and urging the pursuit of it (Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 3:10). The definite surrender of the life to God constitutes the supreme condition of practical sanctification (Romans 6:13, 19-21; 12:1f; 2 Timothy 2:21). Since God must make man holy, if he is ever to be holy, man must yield himself to God that he may accomplish this work in him.

The Holy Spirit does His work in the believer through several means. Sanctification is accomplished primarily as the Holy Spirit employs the truth of the Word of God and the dynamic of prayer (John 17:17; Romans 8:26). Actual change in our lives will come through these two primary means.

However, two secondary means are often necessary, which impress upon us the full meaning and necessity of the truth of God's Word and prayer: discipline and trials. Discipline corrects us (Hebrews 12:4-13), while trials mold character and increase our faith and dependence on God (James 1:2-8). Such things are included as illness, problems of various kinds, persecutions, and suffering some kind of loss. It is not always easy to identify whether some unpleasant experience is a discipline or a trial, but usually we will be convicted of some particular sin if God is disciplining us. Job experienced a trial, for he was unaware of any specific sin. David, however was disciplined for a very specific sin (2 Samuel 12).

### 3.6 Various Views of Sanctification

It will be helpful to conclude this survey of sanctification with a brief description of four of the major viewpoints on sanctification. The basic issue behind them is whether sanctification is an event or a process.

#### *3.6.1 Wesleyan perfectionism*

Wesleyan perfectionism is held to varying degrees by evangelical Methodists, Nazarenes, Wesleyan Methodists, and some Pentecostalists - at least those who subscribe to the views of John Wesley. Perfectionism is the view that sinlessness is possible in this lifetime, that the sin nature can be fully eradicated, and that this event comes after a struggle and a decisive act of faith, what some call the "second blessing" (conversion being the "first blessing"). This is not a process; one is either sanctified or he is not. In this sanctification "perfect love" controls the believer. He can make errors, but he will not commit moral sin. Once

sanctified, however, one can fall back into sin and "lose" his sanctification.

### *3.6.2 Keswick victorious life*

The Keswick point of view is held by the various British Keswick groups and characterizes "victorious life" conferences in Britain and the United States. Like Wesleyan perfectionism, they hold to a "second blessing" whereby, in a decisive act of faith, the believer comes under the full control of the Holy Spirit and fleshly struggle ceases. This dedicatory event is described as "once-for-all" and "letting go and letting God." It is based on a grammatically doubtful interpretation of Romans 6:13 and 12:1 where the words "present yourselves" are erroneously interpreted as a single, life-changing event. This leads to a high plateau of holiness where the Holy Spirit is in complete control (its critics call this "passivism") and personal struggle virtually ceases. However, unlike the Wesleyan perfectionists, the sin nature is not believed to be totally eradicated.

### *3.6.3 Reformed or Calvinistic view*

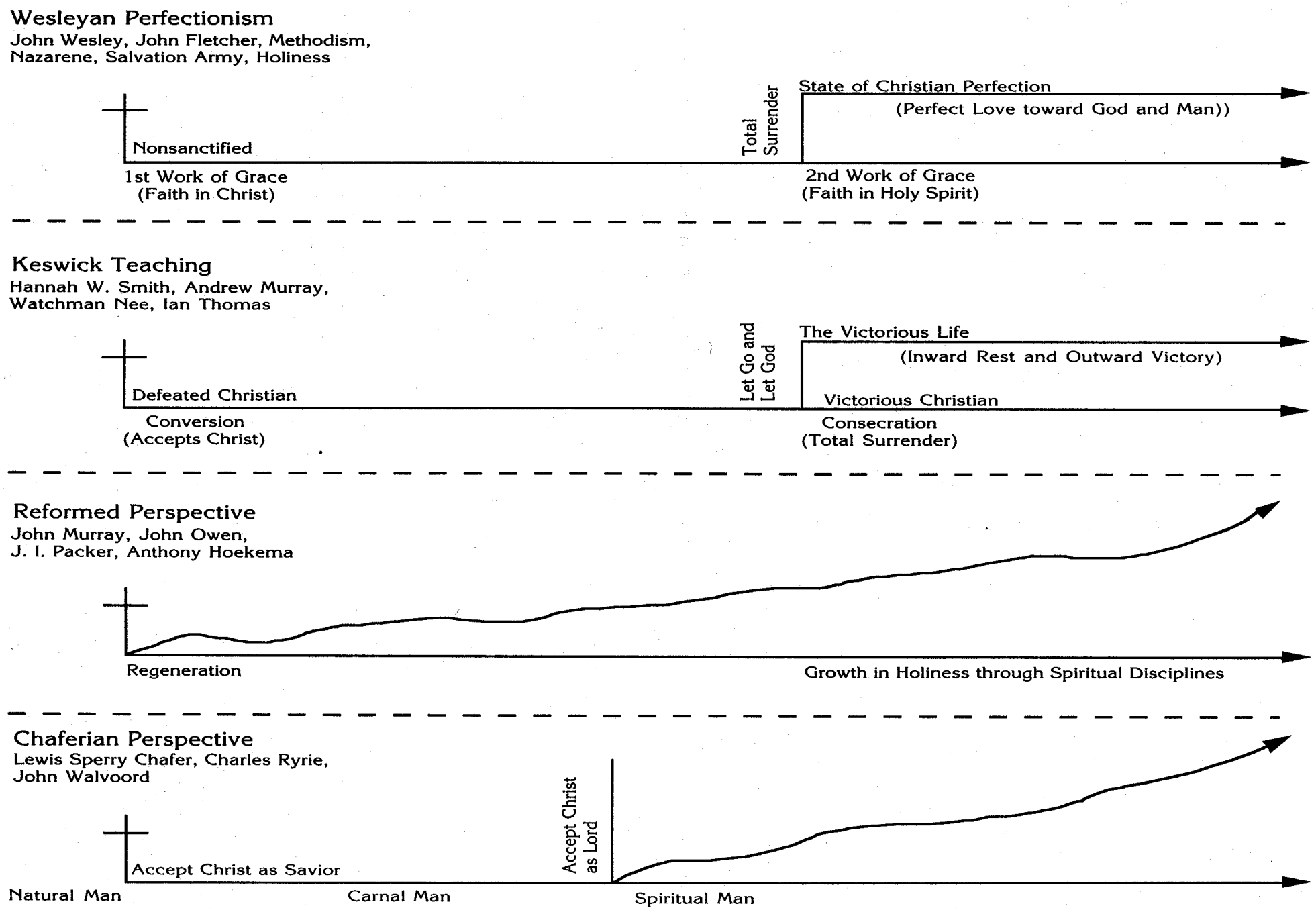
Unlike the Wesleyan and Keswick views, the Reformed view contains the idea that sanctification begins immediately upon conversion and is a gradual process in which God the Holy Spirit sovereignly eradicates the sinful nature. The believer participates and struggles, but ultimately the Holy Spirit brings about sanctification. The sinful nature is never totally eradicated in this life, but the believer becomes more and more holy in his behaviour. This view stresses the sovereignty of God and the inability of depraved believers to do anything apart from the sovereign activity of God.

### *3.6.4 The Chaferian view*

Though ultimately this view can be traced to *J.N. Darby* (founder of the Brethren church) in England, it has become popular and widespread in the United States through the writings of *Lewis Sperry Chafer*, first president of Dallas Theological Seminary, especially in his classic work, **He That Is Spiritual**. More recently it has been developed by *Charles C. Ryrie*, especially in his book, **Balancing the Christian Life**. It is very similar to the Keswick view in regard to sanctification's beginning as a once-for-all dedication to Christ subsequent to conversion, but it also teaches that there is an ongoing struggle between the sin nature and the new nature called "counteraction" by *Ryrie*. Santification is a progressive matter as the believer yields to the Holy Spirit. More stress is placed on the believer's responsibility than in the Reformed view.

Chaferianism also teaches that before dedication (making Christ Lord of my life) a person is "carnal." This condition of indifference to God can last indefinitely, according to some.

The four views of sanctification are illustrated in below diagrams:




## *3.6.5 Conclusion*

I believe there are merits in several of these views, and flaws in all. The following will summarize the view I believe is most biblical (this view is very much like the one held by Thiessen):

1. Sanctification begins with conversion, though it may sometimes be barely perceptible. A second "event" subsequent to conversion is nowhere taught in Scripture. That is, Romans 6:13 and 12:1 do not mean "once-for-all" according to the majority of Greek scholars. Instead it means "decisively present yourselves," and should be repeated daily.

2. Sanctification is an on-going struggle between the Holy Spirit and the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17), not two natures, for the believer's new desire to please God is impotent apart from the enabling of the Holy Spirit (Romans 7). In this process (not event) the believer, himself a "new creation," grows toward greater consistency in holy behaviour. Yet the sinful tendencies remain. He presses toward "perfection" and in that sense is "perfect" (Philippians 3:12, 15).

3. Both the divine work and human responsibility must be equally stressed. The Reformed view neglects the human side, while Chaferianism neglects the divine.

4. "Carnality" (also translated "worldly" and "fleshly") is a temporary state of lapse from godly, obedient behaviour (1 Corinthians 3:1-3), from which true believers will repent (2 Corinthians 7:11). It is not an indefinite or permanent state or even a normal state for the new believer. All believers, including new ones, because they possess the Holy Spirit, exhibit "spiritual" behaviour (1 Corinthians 2:11-16), although it will be inconsistent in the beginning.

## 4. THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE BELIEVER

The Scriptures teach that all who are by faith united to Christ, who have been justified by God's grace and regenerated by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but certainly persevere therein to the end. The doctrine of eternal security is applicable only to those who have had a vital experience of Salvation.

This does not mean that everyone who professes to be saved is eternally saved. This is not equivalent to saying that they shall never backslide or never fall into sin. It merely means that they will never totally fall away from the state of grace into which they have been brought, nor fail to return from their backsliding in the end.

### 4.1 The Misconception

"Security," as most American Christians use the term, is suspiciously akin to the desire for the preservation of the status quo, a hedge against possible catastrophe. The word perseverance is far more satisfactory, for it expresses the idea that effort toward

sanctification is involved.

The word **security** is more of a cultural term than an accurate way to describe the conviction that the true believer will persevere to ultimate Salvation by the power of God and by holy living (Calvinism). Yet it is by the use of this term that the doctrine of the believer's perseverance is most often labeled. It lends itself well to the misconception that such a doctrine amounts to something of an "eternal fire insurance policy" which can be maintained by paying the premium of casual Christian profession of faith without genuine commitment to Christ, a sort of "license to sin."

Arminian Christians are often right in their condemnation of the doctrine as it is sometimes preached and often practiced. Arminians, of course, believe that some believers will lose their faith and hence fail to inherit ultimate Salvation. To them, this life is "probationary." Their conviction is that a guarantee of security in one's Salvation promotes careless complacency (which, if wrongly understood, it indeed may).

Security is too often thought of as a guarantee of ultimate Salvation regardless of the character of a person's life. It is true that no one can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, for justification is unconditional, as Romans 8 assures us. But, at the same time, truly justified people cannot continue in sin.

### 4.2 The Biblical Teaching on Assurance of Salvation

Beyond the question of security is the matter of one's assurance of his Salvation. Though related, these ideas are distinct. One could have assurance of his present Salvation without necessarily believing in unconditional, ultimate Salvation.

Assurance, however, is possible when one realizes the nature of his Salvation by grace - unconditional justification. This itself implies the permanence of Salvation. At the end of his first epistle, John writes, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." In other words, John has instructed his readers (about the nature of Salvation; the ways a person knows he loves God; has fellowship with Him; the problem of sin; Christ's advocacy; etc.) so that they will have assurance of their Salvation, and can determine by practical tests that their faith is genuine.

### 4.3 The Biblical Teaching on the Perseverance of the Believer

All the evidences for the perseverance of believers are classified in connection with the 3 great aspects of Salvation:

1. election;

2. justification; and
3. sanctification.

From the doctrine of election we learn that all who are predestined are ultimately "glorified" (Romans 8:29-30). We know from previous study that justification is unconditional, and this implies that no sin or effort to destroy my faith can succeed (Romans 8:31-39). Lastly, from the doctrine of sanctification we learn that God has begun a "good work" within us, which He will complete (Philippians 1:6).

### 5. THE PROOF OF THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE

The proofs of the doctrine of Perseverance as found in the Scriptures can be classified into 4 aspects:

1. the purpose of God;
2. the mediatorship of Christ;
3. God's ability to keep; and
4. the nature of the change in the believer.

### 5.1 The Purpose of God

The Scripture teaches that God has purposed to save those whom he has justified. Paul declares in answer to the question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?", "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35, 38f).

Paul had expressed God's purpose for the saved, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become confirmed to the image of His son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called, and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Romans 8:29f). That is, in the councils of God there is an unfailing sequence with regard to everyone whom he foreknows. The revelation of this fact led the apostle to express himself with certainty, as we have indicated. Paul further states, "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). Jesus gave utterance of the same, saying, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater then all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27-30). It is one of the precious things about the Christian faith that our continuance in eternal life depends not on our feeble hold on Christ, but on His firm grip on us."

### 5.2 The Mediatorship of Christ

This is a continued and effective mediatorship. The Lord Jesus Christ's present ministry avails to keep us saved, as His past work availed to save us in the first place. The author of the Hebrews wrote, "Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). In John 17 Jesus prayed the Father would keep those who believe and that they might enjoy the blessings of eternal fellowhship with him. Surely the prayer of Christ will not go unanswered. Christ presently is at the right hand of God interceding for us (Romans 8:34).

### 5.3 God's Ability to Keep

It is one thing to be willing to keep secure, but another to be able to do so. God is represented as qualifying in both respects. Paul asserts, "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" (Philippians 1:6), and "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 Timothy 1:12). Scripture further speaks of believers as those "who are protected by the power of God through faith for a Salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5; cf. Romans 16:25; Jude 24). Thus, in Scripture the Lord's desire and ability to settle and keep us saved are definitely affirmed.

### 5.4 The Nature of the Change in the Believer

Scripture tells us that the believer has been regenerated, and that in regeneration he becomes a new creature and receives a new life. Paul says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Having believed on the Lord Jesus, we are looked upon by God as if we had been crucified together with him (Romans 6:6), and also as if we had arisen from the dead with him in newness of life. The believer has received not only a new life, but eternal life. Jesus said, "I give eternal life to them" ... "whoever believes may in Him have eternal life" and further,"He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 10:28; 3:14f; cf. v. 16; 3:36).

The nature of the change which occurs in regeneration is a sufficient guarantee that the life imparted shall be permanent. Regeneration is a radical and supernatural change in the inner nature, through which the soul is made spiritually alive, and the new life which is implanted is immortal. And since it is a change in the inner nature, it is in a sphere in which man does not have control. No creature (including men, angels, Satan) is at liberty to change the fundamental principles of its nature, for that is the prerogative of God as Creator. The born-again Christian can no more lose his sonship to the heavenly Father than an earthly son can lose his sonship to an earthly father.

## 6. OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE

There are several objections to the doctrine of Perseverance which can be noted:

1. it induces laxness in conduct;
2. it induces indolence (not active) in service; and
3. it robs man of his freedom.

### 6.1 Laxness in Conduct

It is argued, if every believer is eternally secure, why then be holy in conduct; why not have a so-called good time in this world? But those who raise this objection show that they do not grasp the true nature of regeneration and the exact nature of the doctrine of perseverance. Regeneration is a change in the inner nature, and the new life is eternal life. This is the true view of regeneration. Furthermore, the doctrine of eternal security does not imply that a man can do wrong and go unpunished. It does state, however, that the man who is born again will seek to live a new life. John writes, "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" (1 John 3:9). This means that he does not habitually sin; and it is certainly true that the experience of the new birth is here represented as resulting in an overcoming life. If a man habitually lives in sin, we conclude that he has never been saved (cf. Romans 6:1f; 2 Timothy 2:19; 2 Peter 1:10f; 1 John 2:3f, 29; 3:14; 5:4).

### 6.2 Indolence (Not Active) in Service

Assurance of a right relation with God brings with it a joy and praise that seeks expression in devoted service. Whereas the soul that is never sure of its security is timid and halfhearted, the believer who has the confidence that he is eternally secure in God's keeping is impelled to do something for others. In service as in morality, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). This is not an exhortation, but a statement of fact. All these verbs are in the present tense; his sheep habitually hear his voice, he continually knows them, and they habitually follow him. Not by a man's professions, but by his fruits do we know him (Matthew 7:16).

### 6.3 Robs Man of His Freedom

It is said that the teaching of eternal security makes man an automation, that he no longer is conceived of as having the power to choose. But such a view reveals an erroneous conception of freedom. Freedom is not necessarily the ability to choose between right and wrong, but the ability to choose the right. God is perfectly free, and He is unable to choose or to do wrong.

The new life in the believer impels him to choose the right and reject the wrong. The doctrine of perseverance does not rob a man of his freedom; it rather recognizes that a saved man has a freedom to do what he ought to do that an unsaved man does not possess.

## 7. SCRIPTURES WHICH APPEAR TO TEACH THE LOSS OF SALVATION

There are passages which appear to teach that a true believe may loss his eternal Salvation. We should investigate the correct interpretation of these passages carefully.

### 7.1 Scriptures Appear to Teach the Contrary

It is said that the Scriptures show that certain men were saved and yet perished in the end. Judas Iscariot in the New Testament is the favorite example. But this merely emphasizes that one must be careful judging the outward appearance. The rocky soil in the parable of the sower brought forth shoots quickly, but the plant endured only for a season. When persecution and tribulation arose, it withered quickly (Mark 4:16f). The same thing is true of those sown among the thorns; there seemed to be real life there, but the cares of the age, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choked the word (Mark 4:18f).

Jesus declared that not everyone who said, "Lord, Lord," would enter into the kingdom, not even if he could boast of having prophesied in his name, of having cast out demons in his name, or of having done many mighty works in his name. Such are the people who only seem to have the gift of God (Luke 8:18). Only he who had had a personal acquaintance with him would enter the kingdom (Matthew 7:21-23).

John uses the argument of continuance with the people of God as a proof of regeneration, and failure to continue as a proof that the ones separating themselves are not of them. "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19; cf. John 6:66f; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

Surely, Judas Iscariot was never saved. Jesus said in connection with the washing of the disciples' fee, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean" (John 13:10f). The bath made the disciples clean; they were all clean, except Judas; therefore, it is clear that Judas had not had the bath. He was unregenerated. Christ chose and tolerated in his company one who was unsaved. There is no doubt that local churches tolerated professing Christians (church goers but not true believers) to join their gatherings and activities.

### 7.2 Scriptures Appear to Contain Many Warnings to the Saved

It is urged that the Scriptures contain many warnings and exhortations to the saved. Can it really be that those who are eternally secure need yet to be warned? What is the force of these warnings? Outstanding among these Scriptures are Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-31. It seems that the people mentioned in these verses were being enticed to turn back to Judaism. They were losing their faith and confidence in the promises of the gospel and were looking back to what they had forsaken. It is a dangerous thing for a person to become actively involved in Christian things and with Christian people without actually turning from darkness to light and from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ (i.e. without becoming a true believer). If such an unregenerated person should turn away, his chances of returning are very remote (cf. 2 Peter 2:20-22).

Another Scripture which is brought up in this connection is Matthew 24:13, which says, "But the one who endures to the end, it is he who shall be saved." To this we simply reply that that has nothing to do with the main argument. If a man is saved, he will continue; if he is not saved, he will not continue. If he continues to the end, he will ultimately be saved. In other words, this Scripture indicates the reward of enduring; it does not raise the question as to whether a truly saved man will continue to the end.

The last one to be mentioned is John 15:1-6, especially v. 6, which speaks of casting forth the branches that do not bear fruit, and of their being cast into the fire. Can this be done to a true believer? The answer is that in these verses the Lord is trying to teach one main lesson, and one should not press the other analogies of the vine and the branches. He is merely teaching that every true branch is bearing some fruit; if a branch is not bearing some fruit, it is evident that there is no life union between it and the vine. That is, the person thus represented is unsaved (i.e. he is not a true believer). Of course, such a branch is cast forth. It was brought into union with Christ, but the union did not become vital; therefore, it will experience separation and the judgment in the end.

### 7.3 Conclusion

I conclude that true believers will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but certainly persevere therein to the end. In other words, true believers will never lose their eternal Salvation. On other hand, false Christians (or professing Christians) have no eternal Salvation.

## 8. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. **Survey of Theology II**, Lesson 4, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.

2. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapters XXXI to XXXIII, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.

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# Chapter Six - The Creation of Man

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE ORIGIN OF THE HUMAN RACE

Every person is confronted with the question as to the origin of the human race. As he looks back into human history, he observes that the men now existing seem to have sprung from other men by the process of natural generation for thousands of years. In analyzing the origin of man, the biblicist is confronted with the basic issue:

1. Did God create man immediately or mediately?
2. Was man formed directly by the hand of God or did he evolve through natural processes?
3. The Christian must acknowledge God's involvement, but was it direct or indirect?

There are numerous theories which are trying to explain the origin of the human race:

1. Biblical creationists hold that man is a direct and immediate creation of God.

2. Classical evolutionists teach that man evolved from a lower form.

3. Some evolutionists suggest that the human body developed through a long evolutionary process, but that God broke into the process and directly created the soul, bringing man into being.

4. Others suggest that Adam was one among many contemporaries and that God conferred his image on Adam's collaterals as well as on Adam; thus Adam's federal headship extended to his contemporaries as well as to his offspring.

As can be seen, seeking to harmonize secular science with the biblical record can take several forms. The arguments for evolution need to be stated and answered, then a biblical solution can be stated.

## 2. SOME OPPOSITIONS TO BIBLICAL CREATIONISM

Strictly speaking, evolution has been an atheistic theory which thoroughly disregards the biblical record of creation. However, there have been a few attempts to try to unite the Genesis account with the theory of evolution.

### 2.1 The Theory of Evolution

The theory of evolution is defined as a brief consideration of organic evolution involves the theory that billions of years ago, lifeless matter, acted upon by natural forces, gave origin to one or more minute living forms. Since then, these small forms have evolved into all living and extinct plants and animals, including mankind.

*Darwin* taught that over hundreds of thousands of generations, slight variations from the preceding generation continued to multiply into the formation of new varieties of life forms (*Charles Darwin,*

**Origin of the Species**, 1859, p.141). The process was also the survival of the fittest (*Herbert Spencer*, 1820-1903), which meant that only those life forms who had characteristics to compete more successfully could survive in the struggle with the environment. If not, they tended to die off. Therefore, the lower and simpler life forms gradually became more advanced and complex, until finally we reach mankind, the peak at this point of biological development. He is the most able to cope with the environment of today, but no guarantee is offered that higher life forms will not develop.

There are, however, 7 basic assumptions that are often not mentioned during discussions of evolution. Many evolutionists ignore the first 6 assumptions and consider only the 7th. The 7 assumptions are:

1. Non-living things gave rise to living material, i.e. that spontaneous generation occurred.
2. Spontaneous generation occurred only once.
3. Viruses, bacteria, plants and animals are all inter-related.
4. The protozoa gave rise to the metazoa.
5. The various invertebrate phyla are inter-related.
6. The invertebrates gave rise to the vertebrates.
7. The vertebrates and fish gave rise to the amphibia, the amphibia to the reptiles, and the reptiles to the birds and mammals. Sometimes this is expressed in other words, i.e., that the modern amphibia and reptiles had a common ancestral stock and so on.

The 7 assumptions by their nature are not capable of experimental verification. They assume that a certain series of events has occurred in the past.

### 2.2 Theistic Evolution

There are evangelicals who will hold to a kind of evolution, but upon a theistic basis:

1. they do not believe that matter is eternal, but was created by God; and
2. life was initiated by God, then at certain points the personal Creator guided the mechanism of the evolutionary process.

Theistic evolution allegorizes the Genesis account as poetic truth that is to be taken in an unscientific way. Adherents to this theory explain that, though Genesis tells us that God created everything, it does not tell us *how* He did it; namely, through the evolutionary process. This view has the attractiveness of accepting the predominant scientific theory. But it fails to offer a good exegetical reason for saying that Genesis 1 to 11 is poetic, or allegorical, while 12 to 50 is historical, even though both sections are of the same narrative style.

### 2.3 Threshold Evolution

Threshold evolutionists hold that man was made out of the dust by a special, *ab extra*, divine act, with a body which is structurally similar to the higher Vertebrata, and soul formed after the image and likeness of God, is also a direct and immediate creation of God (*Carnell*, **An Introduction to Christian Apologetics**, p. 238).

### 2.4 Progressive Creationism

Progressive creationism usually interprets the "days" of Genesis 1 as ages. God intervened, directly creating certain things at the beginning of each "day-age" (threshold evolution), and allowed them to evolve from that point (micro-evolution). This theory, therefore, rejects the idea of evolution between created "kinds" (macro-evolution), or evolution from molecule to man (organic evolution). It holds an attraction for those who are impressed by the false evidence for the earth's great age (over several billion years, it is said). But the frequent occurrence of "evening and morning" in Genesis 1, implying a literal 24 hour day, presents a major interpretive problem for this theory.

### 2.5 Pre-Adamic Creatures (The Gap Theory)

Evolutionists point to fossil human-like beings as evidence of evolution. Some explain this fossil evidence by saying that a race of creatures existed *before* Adam was created. Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, the theory goes, there was a gap of time during which a great catastrophe destroyed the world. These creatures, created in 1:1, became extinct or were destroyed during the gap between 1:1 and 1:2.

This time span is usually considered to be quite large (millions of years) and is also reputed to encompass the so-called "geologic ages." Proponents of the gap theory also postulate that a cataclysmic judgment was pronounced upon the earth during this period as the result of the fall of Lucifer (Satan) and that the ensuing verses of Genesis chapter 1 describe a re-creation or reforming of the earth from a chaotic state and not an initial creative effort on the part of God.

The gap theory is not of recent origin but can be traced back to the early 19th century when the new discipline of geology was breaking upon the scientific scene. Theologians were in no intellectual position to argue, from a scientific basis, the claims of the geologists that the processes responsible for the formation of the surface features of the earth were occurring at almost imperceptibly slow rates as they had always done in the past (the principle of uniformity). Rather than accept the accusation that the Biblical record was no longer valid in the light of "scientific" claims, they chose to accommodate the Scriptural presentation to these new geological theories. A place had to be found for the vast ages of the past, well beyond the accounts of the first man and his environment as recorded in the Bible, and the most accommodating place was between the two aforementioned verses of Genesis.

Creation *as we know it* began with Genesis 1:2. Though this view is not evolutionary in nature, its "gap" creates a problem with Romans 5:12 which teaches that death (and consequently extinction) entered the world with Adam, not before. Added to this are the claims of 1 Corinthians 15:21,22 that by "man came death" and "as in Adam all die." It is easily seen from these Scriptures that death on the earth did not precede Adam's sin, but resulted from it. To insist that *anything* died prior to the judgment passed upon Adam is to be in contradiction with these passages in Romans and Corinthians.

## 3. ARGUMENTS FOR THE EVOLUTIONARY HYPOTHESIS

### 3.1 Comparative Anatomy

There are marked similarities between the anatomy of man and that of the higher vertebrata. This, it is suggested, points to the evolution of man from animal. However, if man and animals partake of the same food, same air, and have the same environment as other creatures, should not the lungs, digestive tract, skin, eyes, and so forth, be similar? Further, similarity in anatomy suggests a common Creator (i.e. the God), not one creature springing from another. Two symphonies by one composer might be expected to have some marked similarities.

### 3.2 Vestigial Organs

These are organs, like the the pituitary gland, the thymus gland, the pineal gland, the tonsils, the appendix, and the coccyx, or tailbone, which, according to the evolutionist, were useful to our supposedly more primitive ancestors but now become functionally useless. Against this view, we note that with an increase in knowledge, science is beginning to learn more about and recognize the usefulness of these allegedly useless organs. After a century of medical research, we now know that all of these structures have an important function in man, and, in fact, without many of them, we cannot live. The pituitary, thymus, and pineal glands are vital to our existence. The tonsils and the appendix are now known to be, among other things, important disease-fighting organs. The tailbone serves to anchor certain pelvic muscles. You cannot sit comfortably without it, and it protects the end of the spinal column. In a scientific journal, not long ago, an evolutionist published an article in which he declared that supposed vestigial organs offer no support for evolution. Just because we do not as yet understand fully the use of these various organs, we should not question the wisdom of the Creator who put them there.

### 3.3 Embryology

The evolutionists argue that the human fetus develops through various stages which are parallel to the alleged evolutionary process, from a one-celled organism to an adult species. But a close study of the human fetus reveals that there are too many dissimilarities to supposed parallels in the worm, fish, tail, and hair stages. Further, developments are often the reverse of what is alleged. The earthworm has circulation, but no heart, and it is therefore advanced that circulation must have come before the heart. However, in the human fetus, the heart develops first, then the circulation. The so-called gill slits were at one time assumed to be rudimentary gills, but have more recently been found to be simply a groove between two parallel blood vessels (*Davidheiser*, **Evolution and Christian Faith**, pp. 240-254).

Furthermore, in the human embryo, the tongue develops before the teeth, the heart before the blood vessels, and the brain before the nerve cords. This is the opposite order that would be expected if the embryo were repeating the supposed evolutionary process. Just recently, an instrument has been developed called a **fetoscope**, which can be inserted into the mother's uterus to observe and photograph the embryo as it develops. Using this instrument, scientists discovered that at every stage of its development, the **human embryo is totally human**. God has programmed the embryo of each creature to start out as a single cell, and to develop into a new-born creature completely prepared to survive and thrive in the world into which it is born.

### 3.4 Bio-chemistry

Living organisms are all similar in their bio-chemical makeup. This is to be expected because the various life systems all depends on the same or similar acids, proteins, etc. Again, similarity in bio-chemistry suggests a common Creator (i.e. the God).

### 3.5 Paleontology

The study of fossils is used to defend evolution. Evidence for various kinds of life is found in the various rock strata, from the pre-cambrian period on. The evolutionist seeks to find evidence of continuity between, for example, man and beast, fish and fowl, and reptile and fish. However, in the study of fossils there is as much evidence for discontinuity as for continuity. There has been found no link between man and monkey. The Bible says that there is a flesh of man and a flesh of beast (1 Corinthians 15:39). The evolutionist cannot provide the link and the Bible does not allow for such a link.

### 3.6 Genetics

New forms of plants and animals have supposedly been seen to arise suddenly in nature, suggesting the emergent evolution, or sudden changes whereby new life forms have appeared. This is the study of heredity and variations among related organisms. Why are no two fingerprints the same? Does this not suggest change occurring in the human species? And is this not an argument for evolution?

We need to mention briefly the research work with the DNA count of chromosomes in cells.

In the "**Impact**" article 92, page 2, *Dr. John W. Oller, Jr.*, stated that "even as early as 1963 and 1964, *Hinegardner and Engelberg* published arguments in Science, showing **the extreme implausibility of the claim that the genetic basis of life had evolved in a step-by-step fashion**. The difficulty was that the minutest sort of changes in ... the nucleic acids and the words of the protein language in the genetic code would be lethal (i.e. poisonous) to all living things. Because of the apparent universality of the code, very minute changes in the code would have devastating effects to all living organisms. This may be why *F.H.C. Crick* (who shared the **Nobel Prize** with *J.D. Watson* for work on the structure of DNA, the genetic code), commented ... there are far too many who are willing to offer untestable, unscientific claims about how the code came to be."

DNA research is one of the latest arguments demonstrating the impossibility that any new life forms could be established by chance. The laws of *Mendel* still govern the variations and possibilities afforded by genes and chromosomes within each life form. It bears repeating that in no way does DNA research demonstrate the possibility of going from one life form to a higher one in any sudden change.

It is readily acknowledged that mutations do take place, but they will not turn a monkey into a man. Further, some types of changes tend to make the organism less well suited for its environment, thereby threatening its very survival. As we know that some diseases are caused by mutation of genes. Finally, after generations of testing with the fruit fly, there have been no transmutations. There has not been, nor can there be, any crossing over of the "kinds" of Genesis 1. Man is a special species, he did not come from the beast.

## 4. BIBLICAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE IMMEDIATE CREATION OF MAN

### 4.1 The Literal Teaching of Scripture

Although atheistic evolutionists disbelieve the teaching of the Bible, theistic evolutionists are in danger of impugning the character of God when they endeavor to explain the story of creation symbolically. The Scriptures taken literally give a reasonable explanation for the origin of man. Even if evolution could prove its doctrine of the survival of the fittest, it cannot account for the arrival of the first. In the Bible we are told that God "created" man (Genesis 1:27; 5:1; Deuteronomy 4:32; Psalm 104:30; Isaiah 45:12; 1 Corinthians 11:9) and that he "made" and "fashioned" or "formed" him out of the dust of the ground (Genesis 1:26; 2:22; 6:6f; Psalm 100:3; 103:14; 1 Timothy 2:13). As to his body, man was made of the dust of the ground; as to his immaterial nature, he was made of the inbreathing of God. Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4; and Ecclesiastes 12:7 include both ideas in one statement. This conception of the origin of man taken literally from Scripture gives man a dignity of being and a position of responsibility that no other theory does, and lays the foundations for a sane system of ethics and redemption.

### 4.2 Adam and Eve Were Created Male and Female

If Adam and Eve were subhuman before God breathed his image into them, they would have already been male and female, but God made them male and female (Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 19:4).

### 4.3 Eve Was Made Directly by God

Eve came from the side of Adam (Genesis 2:21f; 1 Corinthians 11:8). The language of Genesis 2 will not allow any other interpretation, and if Eve was formed directly by God, it is only reasonable that Adam was formed by God as well.

### 4.4 Man Comes From and Goes to Dust

If the dust of Genesis 2:7 has reference to man evolving from the beast, then the returning to dust of Genesis 3:19 would mean a returning to beast. This is, of course, ludicrous.

### 4.5 Man Became A Living Soul

The phrase "living soul" (Genesis 2:7) is the same as that translated "living creature" (Genesis 1:21). When man was made, he became alive, not before. He was not already a living creature who became a living creature.

### 4.6 The Bible Distinguishes Between Animal Flesh and Human Flesh

Paul does not allow for the mixing of beast, fish, foul, or human flesh; they are to be distinguished (1 Corinthians 15:39).

## 5. THE CREATION OF MAN

## 5.1 An Explanation of Biblical Creationism

A literal interpretation of the creation account in the first chapters of Genesis leads to the conclusion that man came into existence as a direct, immediate, act of God. This biblical view is opposed to the theory of evolution.

Notice carefully what the Bible states in Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7 and 18-23:

1. each of the "kinds" of creatures, including man, was created as such, not as the product of mutating into the present state;

2. man was created distinct from the animals by being made in the "image of God";

3. man was formed out of inanimate and lifeless components ("dust of the ground"), and made a "living being" at the time of creation, not generated by previous forms of life; and

4. Adam was created as a fully developed, rational creature, with the "appearance of age," and no reference is made to any growth from infancy to childhood to adulthood (Genesis 2:8, 15-17).

## 5.2 The Superiority of Biblical Creationism

### *5.2.1 It gives a better basis for man's dignity and worth*

Man is not the product of chance (materialistic evolution), but a special work of God. He is related to God by virtue of the fact that he is created in "the image of God." This provides worth and dignity to man, because man is made like God in some basic way. Further, he has a capacity to know and communicate with God; he is a creature with design and purpose.

### *5.2.2 It is supported and assumed by the rest of Scripture*

To deny the historical reality of Adam is to undermine the credibility of the rest of Scripture. For example, in Romans 5:12-21 we read that sin entered the world through "one man" (Adam), creating the need for "one man" (Jesus Christ) to provide Salvation. It appears that the apostle Paul believed Adam to have been a historical character. If we do not believe Adam to be a literal, historical character, we render Paul's entire discussion of redemption meaningless.

Some might say that all we need to accept is the fact of sin, not the literal circumstances of its origin, and the plan of biblical redemption will remain intact. The problem is, if you allow for allegory or myth in one part of the Bible, what reason is there to assume the other portions are to be taken literally, such as the character of Jesus? His acts? His death?

## 5.3 Summary

Biblical creationists call attention to several facts to argue the superiority of their view:

1. the earth's apparent age can be explained either by the forces of the Noahic Flood, or by the "appearance of age" theory - as Adam was created fully adult with the appearance of age, so the earth was created with the appearance of age - so that the earth is relatively young;

2. it is more consistent with the rest of Scripture to interpret "day" and "dust" literally;

3. a literal interpretation leaves the basic facts of Adam, the Fall, and the genealogies of Genesis (which imply a younger earth) intact; and

4. weaknesses in evolutionary theory are being gradually acknowledged by many scientists as honest attempts are made to face new finds.

## 6. THE UNITY OF MAN

### 6.1 The Teaching of Scripture

The Scripture clearly teach that the whole human race is descended from a single pair (Genesis 1:27f; 2:7, 22; 3:20; 9:19). All are children of a common parent and have a common nature. Paul takes this truth for granted in his doctrine of the unity of mankind in the first transgression and of the provision of Salvation for those in Christ (Romans 5:12, 19; 1 Corinthians 15:21f; Hebrews 2:16). This truth also constitutes the ground of man's responsibility toward his fellow man (Genesis 4:9; Acts 17:26).

In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let Us make man," and in v. 27 we read, "Male and female He created them." *Shedd* says, "This implies that the idea of man is incomplete, if either the male or the female be considered by itself, in isolation from the other. The two together constitute the human species. A solitary male or female individual would not be the species man, nor include it, nor propagate it." (*Shedd*, **Dogmatic Theology**, II, p. 4) In harmony with this we have the statement in Genesis 2:21-23 that God did not make Eve out of the dust of the ground, but out of a bone taken out of Adam, and did not breathe into Eve's nostrils. Apparently her immaterial nature as well as her physical nature was taken out of Adam (1 Corinthians 11:8).

### 6.2 The Testimony of History And Science

The teaching of Scripture is proved by history and science in the following ways:

1. **The argument from history**. The history of nations and tribes in both hemispheres points to a common origin and ancestry. This is generally accepted to be somewhere in the fertile crescent region.

2. **The argument from lanuage**. Secular scholars in the science of linguistics are split over the origin of language; some favor monogenesis, others polygenesis. With increased study, the trend is toward monogenesis. There is evidence for uniformity of language with regard to phonology, grammatical structure, and vocabulary. This would mitigate against a plurality of origins, "while the case for a single beginning seems fairly strong." (*Swadesh*, **The Origin and Diversification of Language**, p.

215). *Swadesh* was not writing from a biblical perspective but he builds a strong case for a common origin of language in Western Asia. *Roucek* writes, "Scholars speculate that most languages originated in one universal parent language." (*Roucek*, **The Study of Foreign Languages**, p. 7) With this the biblical accounts of the migration of the families of the three sons of Noah (Genesis 10) and of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11) agree.

3. **The argument from physiology**. Inter-racial marriages produce offspring, blood can be transfused from one race to another, organs can be transplated, the body temperature, pulse rate, and blood pressure are within the same limits, and there is liability to the same diseases. Paul told the Athenians, "He [God] made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:39).

4. **The argument from psychology**. Man shares common mental and moral characteristics. The soul is the most important part of the constitutional nature of man, and psychology clearly reveals the fact that the souls of all men, to whatever tribes or nations they may belong, are essentially the same. They have in common the same animal appetites, instincts, and passions, the same tendencies and capacities, and above all the same higher qualities, the mental and moral characteristics that belong exclusively to man (*Berkhof*, **Systematic Theology**, p. 189).

We have the so-called "Chaldean Genesis" with its account of creation, the traditions of the fall in Eastern countries, of longevity, of the flood, and of the tower of Babel. These are but a few of the things known by many races in different parts of the world, and they have a definite value in proving the unity of the source from which the traditions emanated. All these arguments help to confirm our conclusion as to the unity of the human race.

## 7. THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN

Man as created by God, is obviously composed of a body and an unseen part variously referred to as "mind," "spirit," and "soul." Genesis says that when "the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" that "man became a living being" (lit., "soul").

### 7.1 Man's Psychological Constitution

All theologians agreed that man has both a material and an immaterial nature. His material nature is his body; his immaterial nature is his soul and spirit. Theologians differ as to the parts of man's unseen being (i.e. the immaterial nature). The question arises, Is man a twofold or a threefold being? Are soul and spirit one and the same, or are we to distinguish between them? Those who believe that soul and spirit are one and the same are called dichotomists; those who hold that they are not the same are called trichotomists. The Western church generally held to dichotomy, while the Eastern church generally held to trichotomy. There are several major views:

1. Man is a twofold being (dichotomy);
2. Man is a threefold being (trichotomy);
3. Man is an absolute unity (monism); and

4. Man is a conditional unity.

### *7.1.1 Man is a twofold being (dichotomy)*

The dichotomous theory holds that man is essentially two parts:

1. body; and
2. soul.

The term "spirit" is interchangeable for "soul" in Scripture, although the dichotomist admits there is a minor distinction: spirit relates man to God, and soul relates him to the animal, physical world. (For more information, please read *Strong*, **Systematic Theology**, p. 486). This theory is supported by a number of facts:

1. God breathed into man but one principle, the living soul (Genesis 2:7). In Job 27:3 "life" and "spirit" seem to be used interchangeably (cf. 33:18).

2. The terms "soul" and "spirit" seem to be used interchangeably in some references (Genesis 41:8; Psalm 42:6; Matthew 20:28; 27:50; John 12:27; 13:21; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 6:9).

3. "Spirit" as well as "soul" is ascribed to animal creation (Ecclesiastes 3:21; Revelation 16:3). Though the soul or spirit in beasts is irrational and mortal, in man it is rational and immortal.

4. "Soul" is ascribed to the Lord (Isaiah 42:1; Hebrews 10:38).

5. The highest place in religion is ascribed to the soul (Mark 12:30; Luke 1:46; Hebrews 6:19; James 1:21).

6. Body and soul (or spirit) are spoken of as constituting the whole of man (Matthew 10:28; 1 Corinthians 5:3; 3 John 2), and to lose the soul is to lose all (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36f).

7. Consciousness testifies that there are two elements in man's being. We can distinguish a material part and an immaterial part, but the consciousness of no one can discriminate between soul and spirit.

### *7.1.2 Man is a threefold being (trichotomy)*

The trichotomous view holds that man is essentially a three-part being (see 1 Thessalonians 5:23):

1. body;
2. soul; and
3. spirit.

The distinction between soul and spirit is much greater, they say. The body is the material part of our constitution, the soul is the principle of animal life, and the spirit is the principle of our rational life.

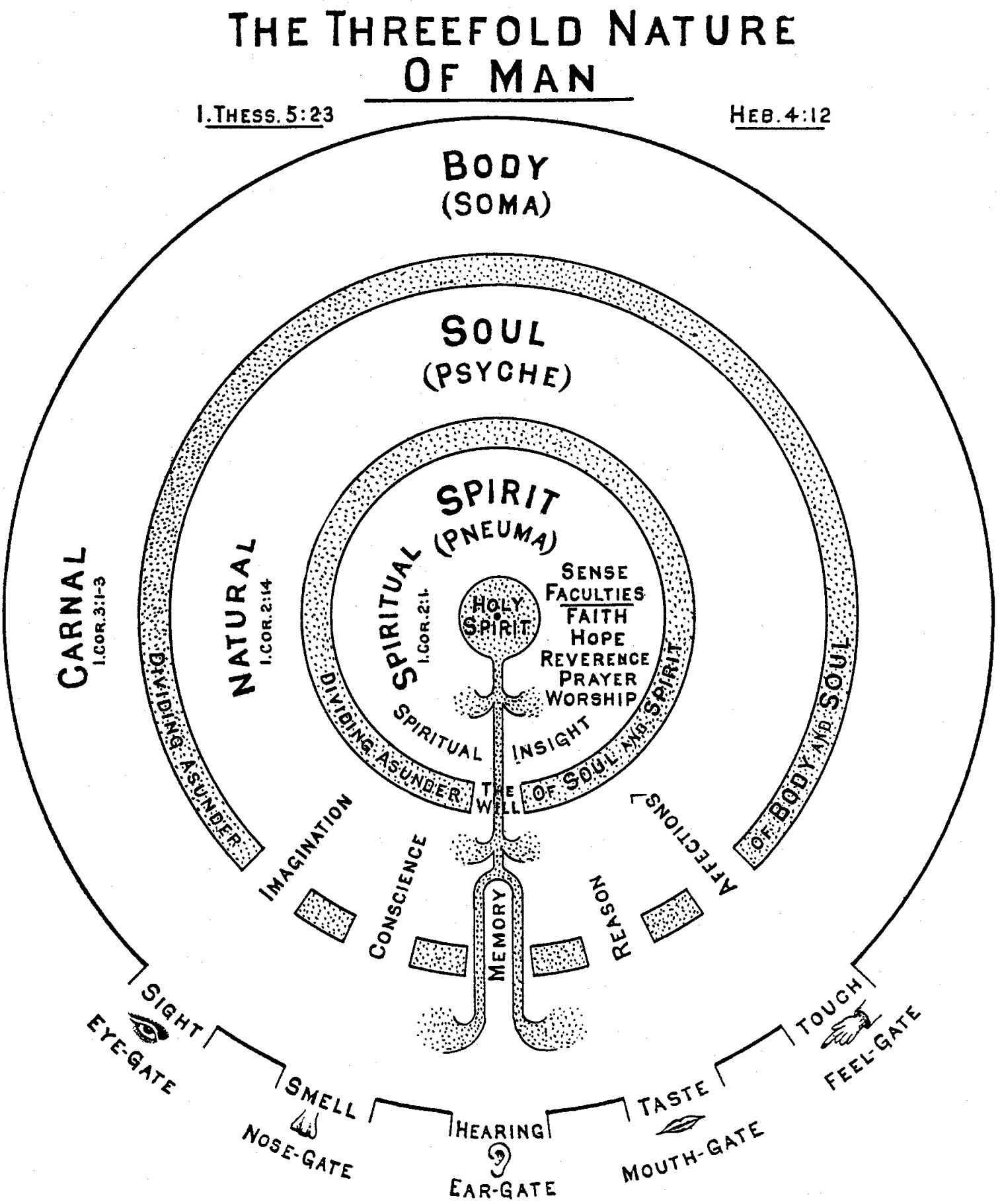
Some add to this last statement "and immortal life." (Note: This is not the essential part of the theory.) Those who take this extreme view hold that at death the body returns to the earth, the soul ceases to exist, and the spirit alone remains to be reunited with the body at the resurrection. The trichotomous theory rests on the following considerations:

1. Genesis 2:7 does not absolutely declare that God made a twofold being. The Hebrew text is in the plural, "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [lives]; and man became a living being." We note, however, that it is not said that man became spirit and soul.

2. Paul seems to think of body, soul, and spirit as three distinct parts of man's nature (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The same thing seems to be indicated in Hebrews 4:12, where the Word is said to pierce "as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow."

3. A threefold organization of man's nature may be implied in the classification of men as "natural," "carnal," and "spiritual," in 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:4. Though Scripture seems to point to trichotomy, is it not possible that they merely intend to include the whole man? Jesus said to the young man, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30), but no one would build a fourfold division of human nature on this statement. Hebrews 4:12 does not speak of the separation of the soul from the spirit, but of the separation itself extending to that point. The Word pierces to the dividing of the soul itself and the spirit itself. The soul and the spirit are laid open. In reference 1 Thessalonians 5:27, *Hiebert* states, "Students of Scripture are not agreed as to whether the distinction between spirit and soul ... is substantial or functional. Trichotomists hold to the former, dichotomists to the latter." (*Hiebert*, **The Thessalonian Epistles**, p. 253)

The threefold nature of man is illustrated in below diagram:




### *7.1.3 Man is an absolute unity (monism)*

The monistic view is the concept that man's material and immaterial parts cannot be separated - a reaction against the two previous views - that to be human is to have a body as well as a mind, spirit, or soul. They appeal to the fact that Hebrew has no word for "body," and that separation of the material from the immaterial parts of man is really a Greek concept, not biblical. The two are distinct but not separable; thus, man cannot live again without biblical resurrection.

### *7.1.4 Man is a conditional unity*

The view that man is a conditional unity is similar to monism but with one notable exception: though man is made by God to be a body-soul unity and will always exist in that way normally, 2 Corinthians 5 teaches that during the intermediate state (the time between death and resurrection) his spirit or soul will separate from his body and go to be with Christ, a condition less than satisfying but better there than this world. Thus, Paul refers to be "clothed" [through rapture] and avoid a disembodied state to wait for the resurrection.

## 7.2 Summary

Which of these views is correct? So far as trichotomy and dichotomy are concerned, there appears to be a distinction between soul and spirit, but the very fact that they may be used interchangeably argues that **they may be two aspects of the same thing**. The Word of God, according to Hebrews 4:12, separates man in its penetration to the point of the division of soul from spirit, but never says the two can be separated. First Thessalonians 5:23 may merely be Paul's way of talking of the whole man, similar to Jesus' speaking of man in a fourfold way (Mark 12:30).

It is probable that we are to think of man's immaterial nature as composed of a lower and a higher power. To the soul would belong man's imagination, memory, understanding; to the spirit, his powers of reason, conscience, and free will. This variation from the traditional trichotomous view makes it possible to conserve the arguments for the dichotomous view, and yet explain how some Christians are "carnal" and others "spiritual." It also coincides with the teaching that the present body is a natural or soul body and that the resurrection body will be a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44). In other words, man's immaterial nature is looked upon as one nature, but as composed of two parts. Sometimes the parts are sharply distinguished; at other times, by metonymy, they are used for the whole being.

So far as man's unity is concerned, the necessity of a bodily resurrection points to the fact of man's essential bodily existence as God made him, but the separation of body and spirit during the intermediate state seems to serve as an exception to unconditional unity (monism), so that the idea of **conditional unity** best fits the biblical data.

## 8. MAN'S MORAL CONSTITUTION

Man is unique among the animate creatures, because he has a moral sensibility. It is what distinguishes him from the animal kingdom. Since only man is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26), his moral sensibility must be part of the "image of God." We can look at this sensibility as the sum of two

components:

1. conscience; and
2. will.

### 8.1 Conscience

Conscience, according to Romans 2:15, is a "witness" within each man of the same Law God carved into stone for Moses and his people. It is the "Law written in their hearts." Here, Paul is establishing individual responsibility. God's standard is not only found in the Old Testament Law, but, by virtue of conscience, all men are held accountable to that righteous standard, whether or not they've ever read a Bible. It is the inward conviction of right and wrong that lies within every human being.

Paul says that men are aware of this moral truth, that they sense conscience within them. Some obey its dictates and are "a law to themselves," but others "suppress" it. Thus, they are fully responsible to God for their rebellion, and cannot plead ignorance (Romans 1:18-20). Two questions are often asked concerning conscience:

1. Is conscience indestructible?
2. Is it infallible?

With regard to the first, Scripture teaches that conscience may be defiled (1 Corinthians 8:7; Titus 1:15; cf. Hebrews 9:14; 10:22) and seared (1 Timothy 4:2), but nowhere does it intimate that conscience can be destroyed. Hardened sinners are often aroused by the accusing, condemning testimony of conscience so that they experience great agonies of remorse. Further, the accusing conscience will probably be the chief torment of lost souls in hell.

With regard to the second question, conscience judges according to the standard given to it. If the moral standard accepted by the intellect is imperfect, the decisions of conscience, though relatively just, may be wholly unjust. Saul, before his conversion, was a conscientious wrongdoer (Acts 24:16). The standard by which conscience judges is the intuitive knowledge of the existence of God and moral qualities with which God has endowed man. But since this knowledge has become perverted through sin, it does not form a sound basis of judgment. Conscience also judges according to the social standards which we have accepted. The only true standard for conscience is the Word of God as interpretated by the Holy Spirit (Romans 9:1). When it judges according to other standards, its decisions are not infallible; but when it judges according to the divinely inspired Scriptures, its verdict is absolutely infallible.

### 8.2 Will

Will, the other component, is simply the real ability to make moral choices; it is the obedience or disobedience itself. According to Revelation 20:11-13, obedience to the inward law of God is something for which the lost will someday be examined, (though this will not amount to justification for it still falls short of faith in Christ).

Man's will is free in the sense that man can choose to do anything in keeping with his nature. Man can will to walk, but not to fly. Man's will is not free in that he is limited to his nature. This is likewise true in the moral realm. Adam could will to sin or not to sin. After the fall, man's ability to sin became inability not to sin. Man now may desire to change (Romans 7:18), but he is unable by merely willing to change his moral state. His evil course of action will be certain (Romans 3:10-18) though not necessitated.

Man remains responsible for all effects of will and voluntary acts. The Spirit of God works through the will of man to turn him to God, so that man wills to do God's will (John 7:17; Philippians 2:13). Man's will being brought into harmony with God's will is clearly expressed in John 1:12f: "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 flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

## 9. THE ORIGIN OF THE SOUL

For the sake of simplicity, the term "soul" in this connection denotes man's entire immaterial nature, both soul and spirit. Three distinct theories have been held with regard to the origin of the soul:

1. pre-existence;
2. creationism; and
3. traducianism.

### 9.1 The Theory of Pre-existence

According to this theory, souls have existed in a previous state and enter the human body at some point in the early development of the body. We know that Plato, Philo, and Origen held this view. Plato taught it to explain man's possession of ideas which he had not derived from sense; Philo, to account for the soul's imprisonment in the body; and Origen, to justify the disparity of conditions in which men enter the world. They suppose that it can be accounted for only on the ground of a personal act of self-determination in a previous state of being.

But the theory has no warrant in Scripture. It contradicts Paul's teaching that all sin and death are the result of Adam's sin (Romans 5:14-19). This theory holds that it is the result of sin in a previous existence, but we have no recollection of such a pre-existence. Surely, if we were personal entities in such an existence, we ought to be able to recall something about it; if we were not, it is inconceivable how we could commit sin and bring woe upon ourselves in the present existence.

### 9.2 The Creation Theory

According to this view, the soul is an immediate creation of God. It enters the body at an early stage of the development of the body, probably at conception. The body alone is propagated from past generations. This view preserves the spiritual nature of the soul. It retains the biblical distinction between body and soul by not having immortal soul spring from natural body. It also answers the question of how Christ did not inherit a sinful soul from his mother. Certain passages of Scripture that speak of God as the creator of the soul and the spirit (Numbers 16:22; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Isaiah 57:16; Zechariah 12:1;

Hebrews 12:9) are cited in support of this view. Most of the Roman Catholic and Reformed theologians have held this view. The Lutheran theologians have held the traducian theory. However, this theory has the following weaknesses:

1. The references that speak of God as the creator of the soul imply mediate creation. God is with equal clearness represented as also being the creator of the body (Psalm 139:13f; Jeremiah 1:5); yet we do not interpret this as meaning immediate creation, but mediate. God is present in all natural generation, but mediately rather than immediately.

2. Scripture speaks of Levi being "in the loins of his father" (Hebrews 7:10). This would suggest traducianism.

3. Men often resemble their ancestors in spirit as well as in body. The creation theory cannot account for the fact that children resemble their parents in intellectual and spiritual as well as in physical respects. Physiology properly views soul not as something added from without, but as the animating principle of the body from the beginning and as having a determining influence upon its whole development. It seems clear that the life germ carries mentality and personality. Evidence points to the conclusion that normal character qualities are inherited as well as the abnormal.

4. This theory does not account for the tendency of all men to sin. God must either have created each soul in a condition of sinfulness, or the very contact of the soul with the body must have corrupted it. In the first instance, God is the direct author of sin; in the second, the indirect.

### 9.3 The Traducian Theory

The term **traducian** simply means "to pass on." This theory holds that the entire human race was immediately created once for all in Adam, with respect to the soul as well as the body, and that both are propagated from him by natural generation. *Tertullian* seems to have originated this view. The Lutheran theologians generally have held the traducian view. The traducian theory seems best to accord with Scripture, which, teaches that man is a species, and the idea of a species implies the propagation of the entire individual out of it (*Shedd,* **Dogmatic Theology**, II, p. 19). This theory is supported by the Scripture in the following ways:

1. In Genesis 1:26, 27, the man and the woman together are denominated 'man.' In Genesis 5:2 God called the two "man," that is, he treated them as a species.

2. In Romans 7:1 the term "person [man]" seems to be used of both husband and wife.

3. Jesus was called the "son of man," although only the woman had a part in his human origin.

4. In Matthew 12:35 and 1 Corinthians 15:21 the term "man" likewise means both sexes.

5. Furthermore, the likeness to himself in which Adam begat a son (Genesis 5:3) can hardly be restricted to the body. It includes the soul.

6. "In sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5), can only mean that David inherited a depraved soul from his mother.

7. In Genesis 46:26 we read of the persons who, according to the Hebrew term, came out of Jacob's loins.

8. Acts 17:26 teaches that God "made from one, every nation." This most naturally means that they are descended from one pair and have one common human nature as to their whole constitution.

9. Genesis 2:1-3 teaches that the work of creation was completed on the sixth day. This could not be the case if God daily, hourly, and momentarily created souls.

10. It is evident that God made Eve entirely out of Adam, there is no evidence that He created a soul for her.

Further, this theory seems best to accord with theology. Our participation in Adam's sin is best explained by this theory. Sin came into the world by a self-determined act and is chargeable upon every individual man. This requires that the posterity of Adam and Eve should, in some way, partake of it. They could not partake of it as individuals, and hence they must partake of it as a race. To say that they partook of it in the person of their representative, Adam, raises more questions than it answers. We then ask, On what ground was Adam chosen as our representative? Why did not God choose an angel to represent us? We also ask, How can God condemn man for a sin which he committed in such an indirect way (Romans 5:18)? But if God chose Adam and Eve because they were the race, then their sin was the sin of the race. Then we sinned in Adam in the same way as Levi paid tithes in Abraham (Hebrews 7:9f). In addition, the transmission of a sinful nature is best explained by the traducian theory. Numerous Scriptures intimate that we have derived our sinful nature by natural generation (Job 14:4; 15:14; Psalm 51:5; 58:3; John 3:6; Ephesians 2:3).

### 9.4 Objections to Traducianism

The following objections have been raised against the theory of traducianism:

1. It is maintained that on the traducian theory Christ must have taken into union with himself the sinful nature of Mary. To this we reply that his human nature was perfectly sanctified in and by his conception by the Holy Spirit; or better, the human nature which he took from Mary was sanctified before he took it into union with himself (Luke 1:35; John 14:30; Romans 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 1 Peter 1:19; 2:22). It was delivered from both the condemnation and corruption of sin.

2. It is held that traducianism implies a division of substance, and that all division implies extended material substance. To this we reply that this is true of divisibility by man, but not by God. He can divide and distribute a primary substance that is not visible by a method wholly different from that by which man divides a material substance. We have an example of this even in the propagation of the body. In this instance we have the derivation of physical life from specific physical life, and this

is division of life. The same thing is true in the transmission of the soul of animals.

3. It is objected that if the first sin of Adam and Eve was imputed to man because of the natural headship of our first parents, then all their sinful acts ought to be imputed to their posterity as well. However, the sinful acts of the two after the fall differed from the act in the first instance. It was only the first prohibition that was of a probationary nature; their subsequent acts were of a different nature. The first sin was not a transgression of a moral law, but the subsequent sins were such transgression. The creationist says Adam ceased to represent the race after the first sin, and the traducianist says that Adam ceased to be the race-unity after that sin.

### 9.5 Conclusion

The theory of traducianism is the best one to explain the origin of human soul as it is the best to accord with the Scripture and theology.

## 10. THE ORIGINAL CHARACTER OF MAN

Scripture represents man's original condition by the phrase, "in the image and likeness of God" (Genesis 1:26f; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9). There does not seem to be any signficant difference between the Hebrew words for "image" and "likeness," and we need not try to find any difference. But we do need to ask of what that image and likeness consisted.

### 10.1 It Was Not A Physical Likeness

God is spirit and does not have parts like a man. Some represent God as a great human, but they are wrong in their views. Psalm 17:15 says, "I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake." But this does not suggest corporeity; rather, the context suggests likeness in righteousness (cf. 1 John 3:2f). The "form of the Lord" was seen by Moses (Numbers 12:8), but the Lord's face could not be seen (Exodus 33:20).

Before the fall, though man did not have a physical likeness to God since God is incorporeal, he did have a likeness insofar as Adam was perfect in health, had no inherited or disease germs in him, and was not subject to death.

God seems originally to have restricted man to a vegetarian diet (Genesis 1:29), but later He permitted the eating of meat (Genesis 9:3). It is interesting to note that in permitting the use of meat, He laid down no rules as to clean and unclean animals, though they were distinuguished (Genesis 7:2). That was a later law, governing the conduct of one people and that only for a time (Leviticus 11; Mark 7:19; Acts 10:15; Romans 14:1-12; Colossians 2:16).

### 10.2 It Was A Mental Likeness

God is a Spirit, the human soul is a spirit. The essential attributes of a spirit are reason, conscience and will. A spirit is a rational, moral and therefore also a free agent. In making man after His own image, therefore, God endowed him with those attributes which belong to His own nature as a spirit. Man is

thereby distinguished from all other inhabitants of this world, and raised immeasurably above them. He belongs to the same order of being as God Himself, and is therefore capable of communion with his Maker. This conformity of nature between man and God is also the necessary condition of our capacity to know God, and therefore the foundation of our religious nature. If we were not like God, we could not know Him. We should be as the beasts which perish (*Hodge*, **Systematic Theology**, II, p. 96, 97).

This statement is confirmed by Scripture in the following ways:

1. In sanctification man is "being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Colossians 3:10). Of course, this renewal begins in regeneration, but it is continued in sanctification.

2. Man's endowment with great intellectual faculties is implied in the command to cultivate the garden and keep it (Genesis 2:15), the command to exercise dominion over the earth and all the creatures of the earth (Genesis 1:26, 28), and in the statement that he gave names to all the animals on the earth (Genesis 2:19f).

3. This likeness to God is inalienable, and since it constitutes man's capacity for redemption, it gives value to the life even of the unregenerated (Genesis 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9).

How different is this conception of the original condition of man from that of the evolutionist, who thinks of the first man as only a shade above the beast - not only ignorant, but with practically no mental ability whatever.

### 10.3 It Was A Moral Likeness

Man had a moral likeness to God is clear from the Scripture. If in regeneration the new man "in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Ephesians 4:24), it is undoubtedly correct to infer that originally man had both righteousness and holiness. In Genesis 1:31, "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." The "all" includes man and would not be true if man had been morally imperfect. Only on this ground was it possible for man to have communion with God, who cannot look upon wickedness (Habakkuk 1:13). Ecclesiastes 7:29 confirms this view.

What is meant by original righteousness and holiness? Holiness is more than innocence. It is not sufficient to say that man was created in a state of innocence. Man was made not only negatively innocent, but positively holy. Man's regenerate condition is a restoration of his primitive state; and his righteousness as regenerate is described as "true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). This is positive character, and not mere innocency (*Shedd*, **Dogmatic Theology**, II, p. 96). This original holiness may be defined as a tendency of man's affections and will, though accompanied by the power of evil choice, in the direction of the spiritual knowledge of God and of divine things generally. It is distinguished from the perfected holiness of the saints, as instinctive affections and childlike innocence differ from the holiness which has developed and been confirmed by temptation.

### 10.4 It Was A Social Likeness

God's social nature is grounded in His affections. As God has a social nature, so He has endowed man with a social nature. Consequently, man seeks companionship. In the first place, man found this fellowship with God himself. Man "heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8). This implies that man communed with his maker. God had made man for himself, and man found supreme satisfaction in communion with his Lord.

But God also provided human fellowship. He created woman, for, He said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). To make this a very intimate fellowship, he made the woman out of a bone taken from the man. Adam recognized that Eve was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, and so he called her "woman." And because of this intimate relation between the two, "a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

It is evident that man was made with a social nature, even as God had a social nature. Human love and social interests spring directly from this element in man's nature.

## 11. MAN IS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

What, precisely, is the "image of God"? History is filled with such answers as man's bodily form (since "image" usually means a physical representation of something which itself is partially physical throughout the Old Testament), man's spirit, man as both body and spirit, man as related to God and his fellow man, rational and moral personality, and sonship.

Not much help comes from the precise quotation in Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness." The words, image and likeness are virtually synonymous, but when they appear together, as they do here, Hebrew scholars believe they may mean that man is a representation of God who is like God in certain respects. The most important views of what the image of God is are as follows:

1. the image is an inner quality;
2. the image is a God-man relationship;
3. the image is dominion; and
4. the image is man the representative of God.

### 11.1 The Image, As An Inner Quality

This view has been held by most theologians through the centuries and may be the prevailing view of most modern evangelicals. According to it, man is like God in the sense of his psychological make-up, reason, some spiritual quality, personality, or moral awareness, or a combination of these.

### 11.2 The Image, As A God-Man Relationship

Man, according to this view, has the ability to relate to God, and this relationship is strongest when faith is present. Since God created man as male and female, and the image resides in both, the ability to relate

includes human relationships as well.

### 11.3 The Image, As Dominion

After man was created (Genesis 1:27, 28), God commanded him to have dominion over the earth. This may be the definition of image, then. Man is thus like God in that he has dominion over the earth and all its creatures.

### 11.4 The Image, As Man the Representative of God

Man throughout Scripture is commanded to be holy and thus represent God. Jesus did this perfectly, and thus is the outstanding representative of God. Salvation is a renewal of man into God's image (Colossians 3:10).

### 11.5 Conclusion

The first, the view that man is the image because of one or all of the inner qualities, is probably the closest to the heart of the matter. This is because of the fact that although all of the views listed above have their merits and are true of man, all of them are actually true because man has those inner qualities which make them possible. For example, man is capable of relationships because he has personality and moral consciousness. Man has dominion because he has a mind and can thus master his environment.

## 12. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

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2. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapters XV to XVI, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.

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# Chapter Seven - The Fall and Present Conditions of Man

## 1. THE BACKGROUND OF THE FALL OF MAN

As has been shown, Adam is the father of the whole human race. We all descended from him through natural generation. It is on the basis of this that all men have been born with inherited sinful nature or a tendency to sin, for Adam had already sinned when his first son was conceived. It now remains to be seen how Adam became a sinner, and what God's relation was to Adam's first sin. The background of the fall and some of the problems connected with it come to our attention.

Before one can understand the fall of man, two other subjects:

1. the law of God;
2. the nature of sin; and
3. the essential meaning of sin.

must be considered. We need to know about the law of God in order to understand the transgression of it, which was sin; and we need to know about the nature of sin in order to understand its origin in Adam and Eve.

### 1.1 The Law of God

Law is an expression of will enforced by power; it implies a lawgiver, a subject, an expression of will, and power enforcing that will. Let's consider the following aspects of the law of God:

1. the meaning of the law of God;
2. the purpose of the law of God; and
3. the believer's relation to the law of God.

#### *1.1.1 The meaning of the law of God*

The law of God is the expression of His will enforced by His power. It has two forms:

1. elemental law; and
2. positive enactment.

#### *1.1.1.1 Elemental law*

Elemental law is law inwrought into elements, substances, and forces of rational and irrational creatures. It is of two types:

1. natural or physical; and
2. moral.

Natural law relates to the material universe. The physical order has only a relative constancy; God sometimes supplements it by miracles. Moral law relates to the constitution of rational and free beings. This law is an expression of God's moral nature and intimates that complete conformity to that holy nature is the normal condition of man (Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:16). The law of God is not:

1. something arbitrary since it springs from His nature;
2. temporary devised to meet an exigency;
3. partial addressed to one part of man's being, but both body and soul;
4. limited to consciousness of it, but exists whether we recognize it or not; and
5. confined to any locality or class of people, but includes all moral creatures.

#### *1.1.1.2 Positive enactment*

Positive enactment is the expression of God's will in published ordinances. These consists of His definitely moral precepts, such as the Decalogue or known as the Ten Commandments of Moses (Exodus 20:1-7). Some ordinances are temporary. Some ordinances are rooted in God's essential nature, and they are eternal (Matthew 22:37-40; 1 John 5:21). Others are founded upon the permanent relations of men to each other in their present state of existence (Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14). Others have their foundation in certain temporal relations of men (Ephesians 6:1) or conditions of society (Ephesians 6:5).

### *1.1.2 The purpose of the law of God*

Negatively, the law was not given as a means whereby man might be saved. Paul observes, "If a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law" (Galatians 3:21). It could not make alive because it was weak "through the flesh" (Romans 8:3). The Scriptures that promise life for keeping the law (Leviticus 18:5; Nehemiah 9:29; Ezekiel 18:5-9; Matthew 19:17; Romans 7:10; 10:5; Galatians 3:12) speak ideally and hypothetically, as if man had no carnal nature and so were able to do God's whole will. Since, however, man is hopelessly enslaved to self, he cannot keep God's law (Romans 8:7), and, consequently, neither life nor righteousness is possible by the law.

Positively, it was given to intensify man's knowledge of sin, to reveal the holiness of God, and to lead the sinner to Christ. Man knows that he is a sinner by the testimony of conscience, but by the published law of God he has an intensified "knowldge of sin" (Romans 3:19f; 7:7). Sin now takes on the form of transgression (Romans 5:13; 7:13). Paul says, "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law" (Romans 7:7). He does not mean that he had not known sin in any sense, but that he had not known it as exceedingly sinful. The law was also given to reveal the holiness of God (Romans 7:12). The ceremonial law sets forth visibly the holiness of God. And, finally, the law was given to lead men to Christ. Christ was the end of the law for righteousness (Romans 10:4), but he is also its aim. Paul calls the law "our tutor to lead us to Christ" (Galatians 3:24). The law serves to prepare those under it for the reception of Christ. This is did by revealing God's holiness and man's sinfulness, and by pointing to the cross of Christ, through its offerings, priesthood, and tabernacle, as the only way of Salvation and access to God.

### *1.1.3 The believer's relation to the law of God*

There seems to be a distinct difference in the believer's relation to the law during the present age as compared with the past. The Scriptures teach that in the death of Christ the believer is delivered not only from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13), that is, the penalty imposed upon him by the law, but from the law itself (Romans 7:4; Ephesians 2:14f; Colossians 2:14). It was at Calvary that Christ became the end of the law for righteousness (Romans 10:4). That this includes the moral law as well as the ceremonial law is evident from 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. As a result, we are told that the believer is not "under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14; 7:6; Galatians 4:30; 5:18), and he is exhorted, "Keeping standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

The believer has been made free from the law, but liberty does not mean license. We are not "without the law of God but under the law of Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:21; cf. Galatians 6:2). Freedom from law should result in love (Galatians 5:13; cf. 1 Peter 2:16). The believer is to keep his eyes on Christ as his example and teacher, and by the Holy Spirit to fulfill his law (Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:18). This does not mean that the precepts of the Decalogue which are grounded in the character of God have no authority today. Careful investigation reveals that every commandment of the Decalogue, except the fourth, is reaffirmed in the New Testament. They are repeated for our instruction as to what the will of the Lord is, but not as precepts that we are to endeavor to keep in order to become righteous. This would be useless, for, Paul says, "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight" (Romans 3:20). By him we have been delivered from the carnal nature (Romans 8:2), by him we are to keep putting to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13), and by him we shall produce the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22f; cf. Ephesians 5:9).

## 1.2 The Nature of Sin

Some theologians understand sin as:

1. "lack of conformity to the moral law of God" (*Berkhof*, **Systematic Theolgoy**, p. 233) or
2. "anything in the creature which is contrary to the holy character of the Creator." (*Buswell*, **A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion**, I, p. 264)

Both of these are correct, for moral law is a reflection of God's character. Sin is transgression of law is clear in Scripture (Romans 7:7-13; Galatians 3:10, 12; James 2:8-12; 1 John 3:4), and that it relates to God's character is also evident. When Isaiah saw God in his holiness, he recognized his own sinfulness (Isaiah 6:1-6; cf. Job 42:5f; Luke 5:8; Revelation 1:17). God is holy and we are to conform to his holiness; anything short of this is sin (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15f). In the definition of sin several ideas are involved.

1. Sin is a specific type of evil;
2. Sin is a violation of the law of God;
3. Sin is a principle or nature as well as an act;
4. Sin includes pollution as well as guilt; and
5. Sin is essentially selfishness.

### *1.2.1 Sin is a specific type of evil*

Sin is a moral evil. Since man is a rational creature, he knows that when he does what he ought not to do, or omit to do what he ought to do, or is what he ought not to be, or is not what he ought to be, he is chargeable with sin. The evil of the mentally incompetent cannot be considered sin.

### *1.2.2 Sin is a violation of the law of God*

Since we are moral and rational creatures, we are subject to the law of right. The law of God is summarized in the words of Jesus (Matthew 22:37-40):

1. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment.
2. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Both the Old and New Testaments use various terms for sin and sinning. Some of these are:

1. sin (Genesis 18:20; Romans 3:23);
2. disobedience (Romans 5:19);
3. iniquity (Leviticus 26:40);
4. lawlessness (Titus 2:14);
5. transgression (Exodus 23:21; 1 Timothy 2:14);
6. trespass (Ephesians 2:1);
7. ignorance (Hebrews 9:7);
8. godlessness (1 Peter 4:18);
9. wickedness (Proverbs 11:31);
10. unbelief (Romans 11:20);
11. unrighteousness (1 John 1:9);
12. unjustness (Deuteronomy 25:16); and
13. unholiness (1 Timothy 1:9).

Several specific clarifications concerning the relation between the law and sin must be noted:

1. Failure to do what the law enjoins is as much sin as doing what it forbids. There are sins of omission as well as of commission (James 4:17; cf. Romans 14:23).

2. Fail in one point is to be guilty of the whole (Galatians 3:10; James 2:10). One needs to break but one of God's commandments to be guilty in his sight.

3. Ignorance of a law does not excuse a man (Luke 12:47f). Ignorance of the law lessens the penalty as to degree, but not as to duration.

4. Man's inability to fulfill the law is due to his own part in the sin of Adam, and is not an original condition. Since the law of God expresses the holiness of God as the only standard for the creature, ability to obey cannot be the measure of obligation or the rest of sin.

5. The feeling of guilt is not necessary to the fact of sin. Man's moral standard may be so low and his conscience may have been so often sinned against, that he has practically no sense of sin left. This, however, does not remove the fact of sin.

### *1.2.3 Sin is a principle or nature as well as an act*

Acts of sin spring from a principle or nature that is sinful. A corrupt tree can only bring forth evil fruit (Matthew 7:17f; 15:19; 5:21f, 27f; cf. James 1:14f). Scripture distinguishes between **sin** and **sins**, the one the nature, the other the expression of that nature. Sin is present in everyone as a nature before it expresses itself in deeds. Paul wrote, "Sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died" (Romans 7:8f). Paul also represented sin as reigning in the unsaved (Romans 6:12-14). John said, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). The opinion of mankind in general concurs with this view. Outward acts are condemned only when they are regarded as originating in evil dispositions. Criminal law is more concerned about the motive (i.e. the intention) than about the act in the crime.

### *1.2.4 Sin includes pollution as well as guilt*

The Bible testifies to sin's pollution. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint" (Isaiah 1:5); "the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9); "the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil" (Luke 6:45); "the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (Ephesians 4:22). These and other Scriptures form the basis for the teaching that we need to be cleansed:

1. "wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:2);
2. "purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7);
3. "you are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3);
4. "that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:26); and
5. "and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

This pollution shows itself in a:

1. darkened understanding (Romans 1:31; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:18);
2. evil and futile imaginations (Genesis 6:5; Romans 1:21);
3. degrading passions (Romans 1:26f);
4. unwholesome speech (Ephesians 4:29);
5. defiled mind and conscience (Titus 1:15); and
6. enslaved and perverted will (Romans 7:18f).

These are symptoms of which the corrupt nature is the source. This lack of ability to please God is also spoken of as "death" (Ephesians 2:1; cf. v. 5; Colossians 2:13); that is, they are totally destitute of spiritual life. That man is totally depraved does not

mean that every man:

1. is as thoroughly corrupt as he can become;
2. has no conscience or innate ability to distinguish between good and evil;
3. unregenerate man can have no admirable virtues of character such as kindness;
4. is unable to see and appreciate virtue in others;
5. indulges in every form of sinfulness.

It does mean that every person is born depraved, that depravity extends to every part of man, that unregenerate man has no spiritual good which would commend him to God, and that he is completely unable of his own strength to change his situation.

### *1.2.5 Sin is essentially selfishness*

Scripture teaches that sin is essentially selfishness "Each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). There is, we grant, a proper love of self. It constitutes the basis of self-respect, self-preservation, self-improvement, and of a proper regard for others. None of these is inherently sinful. What we do mean is such an exaggerated love of self as puts self-interests ahead of God's interests.

All the forms of sin can be traced to selfishness as their source. Thus man's natural appetites, his sensuality, selfish ambitions, and selfish affections are rooted in his selfishness. Even an idolatrous affection for others may be due to the feeling that they are in some sense a part of ourselves, and so regard for them may be only an indirect love of self. Jesus exemplified true unselfishness. He said, "I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30). Paul represents people in the last days as being "lovers of self" (2 Timothy 3:2). These and other Scriptures represent selfishness as the essence of sin, the principle from which all else springs.

## 1.3 The Essential Meaning of Sin

The biblical words for sin mean variously and mainly:

1. transgression;
2. missing the mark;
3. lack of integrity;
4. deviation from the appointed path;
5. revolt;

6. departure from law;
7. unfaithfulness; and
8. perversion of nature.

in both the Old and New Testaments. Some of these ideas are derivative or secondary, others are basic.

But the sin in the Garden cuts through the complexity of sin and reveals its basic nature as a deliberate revolt against the will of God and an attempt to live independent of God. Note especially the words, "you will be like God" and, "the tree was desirable to make one wise." This proud revolt is the basic tendency of man and is the root of all forms of sin.

## 2. PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH THE FALL

### 2.1 The Original State of Man

It is clear from the account in Genesis that man was created without sin (Genesis 1:31), and that by his own choice sin and death entered the world (Romans 5:12). Since holiness is necessary for man to fellowship with God (Hebrews 12:10, 14), and Adam had fellowship with God (Genesis 2), it follows that Adam had a form of "holiness."

Holiness as applied to God means that God is not able to sin, while Adam was obviously able to sin. Since the Bible does not explicitly state what kind of holiness Adam had, any attempt to do so is speculation. Some theologians use the term innocent to describe Adam's condition, but this might not be strong enough in light of Genesis 1:31, where God declares Adam, his creation, to be "very good."

There are some difficulties connected with the account of man's fall. We shall consider the three principal ones:

1. How Could A Holy Being Fall?
2. How Could A Just God Justly Permit Man to Be Tempted?
3. How Could So Great A Penalty Be Attached to Disobedience to So Slight A Command?

### 2.2 How Could A Holy Being Fall?

Several things can be noted:

1. Adam and Eve were created morally free, sinless beings, with the ability to sin or not to sin.

2. The temptation to our first parents was different from that of Satan in that their temptation came from without; Satan tempted them to sin.

3. Adam made a personal decision to disobey God, and he was held responsible for his sin (1 Timothy 2:14).

4. How an unholy impulse arose in the soul of a holy, sinless being is beyond our understanding. The only satisfactory explanation is that man fell by a free act of revolt against God. Satan acted on man's God-given desire for beauty, knowledge and food (Genesis 3:6). These desires are inherently good and not evil, when they are used properly (1 Timothy 4:4f; cf. 1 John 2:16). Satan called for the misuse of these drives against the direct command of God not to eat of the tree. Man freely chose to disobey God and to obey the deception of the evil one.The God-given desire for beauty, knowledge and food became an instrument Satan used in causing man to rebel.

5. Underlying all of this was the ambition to extend his relative sovereignty to become equal with God and not submit to the absolute sovereignty of God.

In an effort to explain adequately how Adam, though "holy," could sin, I offer the following theory. Assuming "sin" means desire to disobey God, and "good" means desire to please God, we know that fallen man has an inclination of will toward sin. Regenerated man, on the other hand, is described as having an inclination to do good, though the "flesh" often influences him to sin. Since righteousness is a product of Salvation, we reason that Adam was essentially "neutral" in his inclination, with neither an inclination toward good or evil (see *Thiessen*, Chapter XVII, Part II).

### 2.3 How Could A Just God Justly Permit Man to Be Tempted?

We reply that we see in this permission not so much an act of justice as one of benevolence, and this for several reasons:

1. **The need for probation**. God endowed man with the power of choice which enabled him to choose contrary to the known will of God, and the possession of this power seems to be the necessary condition of probation and moral development. Man was not made an automatic robot who would live for the glory of God without any choice in the matter. His inclination was toward God, but since he had the power of contrary choice, he could be confirmed in this inclination only by deliberate choice in the presence of the possibility of choosing the opposite. A period of probation was essential in order to test their loyalty to God by obedience or disobedience to His command. Probation was necessary even though God foreknew it would result in the fall, and it revealed his benevolence in the promise of redemption immediately after the fall.

2. **The need for a tempter**. Satan fell without any external temptation. He sinned deliberately, spurred on by undue ambition,

and, as a result, has become what he is. Had man fallen without a tempter, he would have originated his own sin and would have himself become a Satan. This only reveals God's benevolence in leaving a possibility for man's redemption.

3. **The possibility of resisting temptation**. In the temptation itself there was no power to make man sin. He had as much power to choose to obey God as to choose to disobey Him. The mere possibility of sinning alone has never made any man commit sin. No doubt, deliberate resistance would have caused Satan to flee then as well as now (James 4:7). It is this possibility that shows God's benevolence. By resisting temptation, man's holy nature could have been confirmed in holy character; it could have been confirmed in virtue.

### 2.4 How Could So Great A Penalty Be Attached to Disobedience to So Slight A Command?

It does not necessarily require some great act to prove or to disprove one's loyalty to another. A slight command involving a very small and simple act is the best test of the spirit of obedience. By means of the forbidden tree, God taught Adam that he had the right to make demands of him and expect to be obeyed. Man's obedience was to be tested in the matter of property, which was an outward and sensible sign of a right state of heart toward God. The command was significant from God's point of view is disclosed by the severity of the penalty announced for its disobedience. How else was Adam to interpret the declaration that if he disobeyed he would surely die? God made clear that it was an issue of life and death. Disobedience would be considered a deadly sin. It was a choice between life and death, between God and self.

## 3. THE ORIGIN OF SIN IN THE PERSONAL ACT OF ADAM

The most significant lesson to be learned about the Fall of man, beyond the fact that sin entered the world through man and not God, is that it enables us to perceive the nature of sin.

Scripture declares that man fell into sin through Adam's transgression. We ask, how did this happen and what were the immediate consequences for our first parents? Sin is a fact; but how did it originate among men? There are various views as to this subject. The false views must be evaluated, then the true position presented:

1. sin is eternal (false view);
2. sin originates in man's finiteness (false view);
3. sin originates in sensuousness (false view); and
4. sin originated in the free act of Adam (correct view).

### 3.1 Sin Is Eternal

Cosmic dualism holds that there are two self-existent and eternal principles:

1. good; and
2. evil.

Persian speculation conceived of these two principles under the figures of light and darkness. Matter was considered inherently evil. According to this view, sin has always existed. The good and the evil have been in conflict with each other for all eternity, and they will continue to be in conflict. They limit each other and neither is ever finally triumphant over the other. This theory has the following weaknesses:

1. It makes God a finite and dependent being. There cannot be two infinite things in the same category, and God cannot be both sovereign and limited by a thing which He neither created nor could prevent.

2. This view also destroys the conception of sin as a moral evil. If sin is an inseparable part of our nature, it cannot be moral evil.

3. And then it directly destroys human responsibility. If sin is necessary from the very constitution of man, man cannot be charged with responsibility for being sinful.

### 3.2 Sin Originates in Man's Finiteness

*Leibniz* and *Spinoza* held that sin originated in our finiteness. God as the absolute substance is supremely good; but if other things than God are to exist, there must be in them a minimun of evil. That is, God Himself could not create anything without limitations. This is seen in man's physical limitations; it is to be expected also in his moral nature. Some writers maintain that moral evil is the necessary background and condition of moral good. We could not know moral good if there were not also moral evil. It is an element in human education and a means to progress. But this theory has the following weaknesses:

1. It ignores the distinction between the physical and the moral. While man was created with physical limitations, it does not necessarily follow that he has created with moral limitations.

2. Man was physically responsible only up to his ability to perform; he had no moral limitations and so was able to obey God perfectly. In other words, his sin did not originate in an imperfect moral nature.

3. And again, moral evil is not necessary to the existence of moral good. *Strong* says, "What is necessary to goodness is not

the actuality of evil, but only the possibility of evil." (*Strong*, **Systematic Theology**, p. 565)

### 3.3 Sin Originates in Sensuousness

*Schleiermacher* held that sin had its source in our sensuous nature, which would, therefore, itself be evil. More recent writers trace moral evil to man's inheritance from an animal ancestry. But this theory has the following weaknesses:

1. But the senses are not in themselves sources of sin, though they frequently become the instruments of the carnal nature in the commission of sin.

2. Furthermore, this doctrine leads to various absurd practices, as, for instance, asceticism, in which the power of sense is to be weakened.

3. Instead of explaining the origin of sin, this theory really denies its existence; for if sin arises from the original constitution of human nature, we may regard it as a misfortune, but cannot consider it as guilt.

4. And finally, the Scriptures teach that sin was not the original condition of man, but that it arose from man's deliberate, unconstrained choice.

### 3.4 Sin Originated in the Free Act of Adam

If sin is not eternal nor due to man's finiteness or sensuousness, how did it originate? The Scriptures teach that through one sin of one man, sin came into the world, and with it all the universal consequences of sin (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21f). This one man was Adam and this one sin was the partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:13f).

## 4. THE FALL OF MAN

### 4.1 The Prohibition

Having created man a free moral agent, God placed him immediately under the test of a prohibition: do not eat the fruit of one tree in the Garden - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - lest you die (Genesis 2:16-17).

Remember that Adam and Eve had no corrupted moral nature at that point. Thus, the choice they made was unbiased by a disposition to sin, or more "free" than the choices you and I make today.

### 4.2 The account of the Fall Is Literal Historical Facts

That the account of the fall in Genesis 3:1-7 is historical is evident from the fact that it is related as history and is regarded by later Bible writers as historical. The names Adam and Eve are not symbolic. The garden, the rivers, the trees, and the animals are manifestly literal historical facts. Christ and the apostles treat the account as historical (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9). Furthermore, the serpent is neither a figurative designation of Satan, nor is it Satan in the form of a serpent. The real serpent was the agent in Satan's hand. This is evident from the description of this reptile in Genesis 3:1 and the curse pronounced upon it in Genesis 3:14.

### 4.3 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil Served to Test of Man's Obedience to the God's Will

The test consisted in the prohibition to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It seems as if there may have been a life-preserving quality in the fruit of the tree of life, for when God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden, he did this "lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" (Genesis 3:22).

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil had in it a mysterious quality which would effect the twofold result indicated by its name (read Genesis 3:7). It is also probable that this tree served the purpose of a test, for the partaking of it did not give Adam the ability to tell what was good and what was evil. He still had to consult the Word of God for that. Adam knew cognitively that it was wrong to disobey and good to obey, but he did not have this knowledge experientially. The tree of knowledge was itself good, and its fruit was good, for God made it; it was not the tree but the disobedience which had death in it. He forbade the partaking of one tree, not because it was bad, but because He wanted to make a simple test of man's obedience to His will.

### 4.4 Why the Prohibition?

Why did God make such a prohibition to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? This is the same type of question as Why did God permit evil? and the only reason the Bible suggests is that all that has resulted has been for the glory of God (Ephesians 1:9-12).

### 4.5 God Cannot Be Blamed for Man's Apostasy

There is nothing in this prohibition that suggests that God sought man's downfall. It is a fair and simple requirement of the creator. God created man without a sinful nature, placed him in an ideal environment, provided for all his temporal needs, endowed him with strong mental powers, gave him work to engage his hands and his mind, provided a life-partner for him,

warned him of the consequences of disobedience, and entered into personal fellowship with him. Surely, God cannot be blamed for man's apostasy.

## 5. THE TEMPTATION

### 5.1 The Tempter

The serpent who tempts Eve is later identified as Satan himself (Revelation 12:9). The serpent was the agent in Satan's hand. Many Bible students believe that Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 describe how Satan himself experienced a "fall" in his aspirations as an "anointed cherub" to be like God (Ezekiel 28:14).

### 5.2 Satan's Temptation

Satan's temptation may be summed up as appealing to man in this way:

1. it made man desire to have what God had forbidden;
2. to know what God had not revealed; and
3. to be what God had not intended for him to be.

Satan first sought to instill doubt of God's goodness in Eve's mind. He said, "Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1).

When she replied that He had permitted them to eat of all the trees but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Satan denied the truthfulness of God's declaration that disobedience would result in death. "You surely shall 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" (Genesis 3:4f).

Eve apparently began to believe both these things, and then speedily took the remaining steps that led to the overt act of sin. We read that "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" (Genesis 3:6). That is, through "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" (1 John 2:16), she fell.

### 5.3 Summary of the Satan's Tactic

In the deception of Eve several tactics by the serpent are significant to the every nature of temptation:

1. the truthfulness of the Word of God is questioned (Genesis 3:1);
2. the Word of God is flatly denied (Genesis 3:4); and
3. the goodness of God is questioned - He is portrayed as though He were withholding something good (Genesis 3:5).

In addition, the temptation touches upon three aspects of human need, Eve saw that:

1. "the tree was good for food," satisfying physical need;
2. "it was a delight to the eyes," satisfying materials need; and
3. "the tree was desirable to make one wise," satisfying the need for direction and authority (compare the threefold temptation of Jesus in Luke 4 for parallels).

### 5.4 Eve Fell by Deception; Adam Fell by Affection

The progress leading toward the first sin seems to be something like this:

1. Eve distrusted the goodness of God;
2. she believed the lie of Satan;
3. she yielded to her physical appetite;
4. she submitted to an inordinate desire for the beautiful; and
5. she coveted wisdom that was not intended for her.

**The woman fell by deception**; **the man by affection** (Genesis 3:13, 17; 1 Timothy 2:14). It is to be noted that **Adam, not Eve, is regarded as the one through whom sin was introduced into the race** (Romans 5:12, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:22). Christ, the second Adam, met similar temptations, but he came forth victoriously out of them all (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).

**Adam sinned because of his love for Eve and in the full light of the warning of God**. But this does not trace sin to its roots. The first sin was the desire in the heart, the choosing of self-interests rather than God's interests. **The overt act merely expressed the sin that had already been committed in the heart** (cf. Matthew 5:21f; 27f).

To summarize, Paul infoms us in 1 Timothy 2:14 that only Eve was "deceived": Adam evidently disobeyed God with greater awareness of what he was doing. This is why the Fall is officially attributed to Adam in such places as Romans 5.

## 6. THE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF ADAM'S SIN

The first sin had an effect on our first parents' relation to God, on their nature, on their bodies, and on their environment.

### 6.1 Its Effect on their Relation to God

Before the fall, God and Adam were in fellowship with each other; after the fall, that fellowship was broken. Our first parents now had the sense of God's displeasure with them; and they were guilty. So instead of seeking His fellowship, they now tried to flee from Him. Their guilty consciences did not permit them any rest, so they tried to shift the responsibility. Adam said that Eve, the woman whom God had given to him, had led him into sin (Genesis 3:12); Eve, in turn, accused the serpent (Genesis 3:13). Both were guilty, but both tried to shift the responsibility of their sin to others.

### 6.2 Its Effect on their Nature

When Adam and Eve came from the hand of the Creator, they had no sinful nature. Now they had a sense of shame, degradation, and pollution. They were naked and could not appear before God in their fallen condition. It was this sense of unfitness that led them to make for themselves aprons of fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). They were not only ashamed to appear before God in their new condition, but also to appear before one another. They were morally ruined. God had said to Adam regarding the forbidden tree, "In the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). This death is first of all spiritual, a separation of the soul from God. It implies not only the inability to do anything well-pleasing to God, but also the possession of a corrupt nature. Thus, "through one man sin entered into the world" (Romans 5:12).

That sin entered the world through Adam means that sin commenced its course in the race and man began to commit sin, that human nature became corrupt, and that man became guilty. Man was constituted a sinner (Romans 5:19). Actual transgression proceeds from man's sinful nature.

### 6.3 Its Effect on their Bodies

When God said that for disobedience man would "surely die" (Genesis 2:17), he included the body. Immediately after the trespass, God said to Adam, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). The words of Paul, "As in Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22), have reference primarily to physical death. Paul's subject is the physical resurrection, and he sets it over against the fact of physical death. When he wrote that "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (Romans 5:12), he included the following full concept of death:

1. physical;
2. spiritual; and

3. eternal.

Further, because the resurrection of the body is a part of redemption (Romans 8:23), we can infer that the death of the body is a consequence of Adam's sin. Yet those who reject the doctrine of the inherited sinful nature from Adam (also known as "original sin") hold that death is a natural evil, flowing from man's original constitution. However, the Scriptures teach that physical death is part of the penalty of sin (Genesis 3:19; Job 5:18f; 14:1-4; Romans 5:12; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:21f., 56; 2 Corinthians 5:1f, 4; 2 Timothy 1:10).

Physical illness is also due to sin. The Hebrew of Genesis 2:17 may be translated, "dying you shall die." From the moment that man ate of the forbidden tree he became a dying creature. Corruption was introduced on that very occasion. The pains which both man and woman should suffer grew out of that one apostasy. The fact that man did not die instantaneously was due to God's gracious purpose of redemption (Genesis 3:15). The mental as well as the physical powers were weakened and began to decay. This is not to say that every sickness is a direct result of a personal act of sin (Job 1, 2; John 9:3; 2 Corinthians 12:7), but that ultimately and finally, physical and mental sickness are a result of Adam's sin. This element of the penalty of sin alone undermines the theory of evolution. Man has not developed greater strength of body and mind, but has degenerated from a primitive perfect condition to the present enfeebled and imperfect condition.

### 6.4 Its Effect on their Environment

We read that the serpent was cursed "more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field" (Genesis 3:14). It is evident that animal creation has suffered as a result of Adam's sin. In the future age this curse will be removed, and the wild beasts will lie down together with the domestic animals (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25; Hosea 2:18). God said, "Cursed is the ground because of you ... " (Read Genesis 3:17-19). Even inanimate nature is represented as suffering the curse of man's sin. In view of this, Scripture tells us elsewhere that the time is coming when "the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now" (Romans 8:21f). Isaiah 35 speaks of the restoration of nature to its original condition and beauty. Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and forced to make their way in this fallen world. At first they were in the most beautiful and perfect environment; now they were obliged to get along in an imperfect and almost hostile one. Their environment was decidedly changed because of sin.

## 7. THE RESULTS OF THE FALL

### 7.1 Death

The immediate result of the Fall was "death," both spiritual (separation from fellowship with God) and physical (physical decline or aging process - a merciful withholding of physical death in order to give Adam and all his descendants time to repent).

### 7.2 Condemnation

Condemnation is another spiritual aspect of the Fall. The idea is found in Romans 5:12ff. This affected the whole human race through Adam, our representattive (his position is sometimes called "federal headship"). Into the state of condemnation all human beings are born. In Romans 5:12-14 Paul proves that all men have been affected judicially by Adam's sin (or condemned) by pointing to the fact that death existed before the law was given, when guilt would normally have been "imputed." Thus, sin must have been "imputed" or charged to the human race by virtue of what Adam did, not at the time of our personal or individual sins. In other words, I was under condemnation when I was conceived (Psalm 51:5). Please read in conjuction with the following section 9 of this chapter for further discussion.

### 7.3 Separation From God

To dramatize this broken relationship between Himself and man, God drove Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22-24). This separation from God is common to us all until by faith in Jesus Christ we are reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

## 8. THE UNIVERSALITY OF SIN

Sin is a universal problem. History testifies to this fact in its account of priesthoods and sacrifices among the cultures of the world. Any every man knows not only that he has come short of moral perfection, but also that every other man has done so as well. Christian experience uniformly testifies to the presence of sin in the heart of man, and the lack of such a consciousness in an unsaved person must be interpreted as a hardened condition.

### 8.1 The Scriptures Teach the Universality of Sin

Certainly the Scriptures teach the universality of sin:

1. "There is no man that does not sin" (1 Kings 8:46);
2. "In Thy sight no man living is righteous" (Psalm 143:2);
3. "There is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20);
4. "There is none righteous, ... There is none who does good" (Romans 3:10, 12);

5. "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8);
6. Read also (Proverbs 20:9; Luke 11:13; Romans 3:19, 23; Galatians 3:22; James 3:2); and
7. The universality of sin is shown also by the fact that condemnation rests upon all who have not accepted Christ (John 3:18, 36; 1 John 5:12, 19).

Because of this, atonement, regeneration, and repentance are universal needs (John 3:3, 5, 16; 6:50; 12:47; Acts 4:12; 17:30).

### 8.2 The Scriptures Refer the Sinful Acts to their Corrupt Nature

This universal sinfulness is not limited to acts of sin; it includes also the possession of a sinful nature. The Scriptures refer the sinful acts and inclinations to their source, the corrupt nature. "There is no good tree which produces bad fruit .... The evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil" (Luke 6:43-45); "How can you, being evil, speak what is good?" (Matthew 12:34). All men are declared to be by nature "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3); and death, the penalty of sin, is visited even upon those who have not personally and consciously sinned (Romans 5:12-14). It is concluded that the possession of a carnal nature is characteristic among men universally.

## 9. THE IMPUTATION OF SIN

The Scriptures teach that the sin of Adam was imputed to every member of the human race. Romans 5:19 reads, "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." It is because of Adam's sin that we come into the world with a depraved nature and under God's condemnation (Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:3).

How can we be responsible for a depraved nature which we did not personally and consciously originate? How can God justly charge to our account the sin of Adam? There are various theories of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity.

### 9.1 The Pelagian Theory

*Pelagius* was a British monk who was born about AD 370. He propounded his doctrines at Rome in the year 409, but they were condemned by the Council of Carthage in 418. This theory holds that Adam's sin affected only himself; that every human soul is immediately created by God, and created innocent; free from depraved tendencies; and that the only effect of Adam's sin on his posterity is that of a bad example. Men can be saved by the law as well as by the Gospel. "Death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12), means that all incurred eternal death by sinning after the example of Adam. According to this view, man is well until he personally sins.

To this we reply that the theory has never been recognized as Scriptural. On the contrary, the Scriptures represent every human being as having inherited a sinful nature (Job 14:4, 15:14; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:3); that men universally become guilty of acts of sin as soon as they come to moral consciousness (Psalm 58:3; Isaiah 48:8); that no man can be saved by works (Psalm 143:2; Acts 13:39; Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16); and that Scripture represents man's state of apostasy as the direct result of Adam's sin (Romans 5:15-19).

### 9.2 The Federal Theory

This view holds that Adam is the federal head of the human race. The federal or representative headship is the specific ground of the imputation of Adam's sin. When Adam sinned, he acted as a representative of the human race. God imputed the guilt of the first sin to all those whom Adam represented, the entire human race. As sin was imputed to us because of Adam's disobedience, so righteousness can be imputed to us because of Christ's obedience (Romans 5:19).

Several objections have been raised against this view. Can man be responsible for violating a covenant in which he had no part in ratifying? Can one be considered guilty of another's sin?

### 9.3 The Theory of Mediate Imputation

This theory recognizes that all men are born physically and morally depraved, and that this native depravity is the source of all actual sin, and is itself sin. The physical depravity has descended by natural propagation from Adam, and the soul is immediately created by God, but it becomes actively corrupt as soon as it is united to the body. This native depravity is the only thing which God imputes to man, but merely as the consequence, and not the penalty, of Adam's transgression. This theory makes depravity the cause of imputation, rather than imputation the cause of depravity. Romans 5:12 means that all sinned by having a sinful nature.

Several things must be said against this view. Scriptures teaches that the reason we are depraved is that we are partakers of Adam's sin. Depravity is a penal consequence of sin. Further, this view destroys the parallelism between Adam and Christ. Adam's sin was imputed to us, as is Christ's righteousness. It makes Salvation a subjective justification rather than the imputed righteousness of Christ. This position also does away with the representative idea that one can be justly punished for the sin of another.

### 9.4 The Realistic Theory

On this view the human race was naturally and substantially in Adam when Adam sinned. In this first sin, man became corrupt

and guilty, and this state was transmitted to Adam's descendants. There was an impersonal and unconscious participation by all of Adam's progeny in this first sinful act. Thus, because man was numerically one, the common, unindividualized nature committed the first sin. All men are co-sinners with Adam. In this way sin can be justly imputed and man can be justly condemned because he participated in the sin.

Though this view comes closer to the biblical doctrine of imputation than the previous views, there are still some problems which can be raised. Can man be considered guilty for a sin which was not of conscious self-determination? And can a man act before he exists?

### 9.5 The Corporate Personality Theory

This view stresses the close association of the individual with the group to which he is attached. Any single individual can act as a representative of the group. There are Old Testament examples of this type of representation and association. A family could be destroyed because of the sin of one member (cf. Achan, Joshua 7:24-26). The child could dishonor the parent's name, and the name could be cast off (1 Samuel 24:21).

There are some problems with this view. It faces the same problems of arbitrary imputation as does the representative or federal theory, and of involuntary or unconscious co-sinning as does the realistic theory.

### 9.6 The Arminian Theory (The Best One)

Arminius (AD 1560 - 1609) was a professor in Holland. The Arminian theory is held by the Greek Church, the Methodist body, and other Arminian bodies. According to this theory:

1. Man is sick. As the outcome of Adam's transgression, men are by nature destitute of original righteousness and, without divine aid, utterly unable to attain it.

2. Since this inability is physical and intellectual, not voluntary, God, as a matter of justice, bestows upon each individual at the dawn of consciousness a special influence of the Holy Spirit, sufficient to counteract the effect of their inherited depravity and to make obedience possible, if they will cooperate with the Spirit. This they are able to do.

3. The evil tendency in man may be called sin, but it does not involve guilt or punishment. Although I was under condemnation when I was conceived (Psalm 51:5), we are not guilty unless we have actually peformed any sinful acts in a conscious state. Certainly, mankind is not accounted guilty of Adam's sin. Only when men consciously and voluntarily

appropriate these evil tendencies does God impute them to them as sin.

4. "Death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12), means that all suffer the consequences of Adam's sin and that all personally consent to their inborn sinfulness by acts of transgression.

The so-called New School theory is much like the Arminian theory. It, too, holds that men are responsible only for their personal acts; that though all men inherit a constitution which predisposes them to sin, and all men do actually sin as soon as they come to moral consciousness, this inability is not itself sin.

Some Bible scholars criticized this view in the following ways:

1. According to the Scriptures, man sinned in Adam and is, therefore, guilty before he commits personal sin; that man's sinful nature is due to his sin in Adam. We reply that the God is **just** and **fair**. Can man be considered guilty for a sin which was not of conscious self-determination? Although all men sinned in Adam, the God will not consider a man is guilty unless the man has actually performed sinful acts in a conscious state.

2. God is not under obligation to bestow special influence of His Holy Spirit upon man, enabling him to co-operate in his Salvation. We reply that the God is **love**. We admit that the God is not under obligation to do anything to save sinful men. However, it is by the **grace** of God to bestow special influence of His Spirit upon man instead of any obligation. The God love sinners and He wants to save every human beings.

In my opinions, this theory is the best to explain the imputation of sin due to the following reasons:

1. It shows that the judgement of the God is just and fair. The God will not consider a man is guilty unless the man has actually performed sinful acts in a conscious state.

2. It shows the grace and love of God by bestowing special influence of His Holy Spirit upon man.

3. It helps to explain the situations of the babies, children and unsound mind people. As these people are unconscious of their wrongful acts, the God will not punish them. These people can definitely have eternal Salvation even though they haven't accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour in a conscious state. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)

4. It has no contradiction to the teachings of the Bible.

## 10. DEPRAVITY

### 10.1 Definition of Depravity

A common term used to describe the effect of sin on mankind's moral being is "depravity." Man's want of original righteousness of holy affections toward God, and the corruption of his moral nature and his bias toward evil is called depravity. Depravity is also called, especially by those of Calvinistic persuasion, "total" depravity; that is, man has been totally affected in his spiritual and moral being by sin so that he will not do what truly pleases God. Its existence is witnessed to by both Scripture and human experience. The teaching of Scripture that all men must be born again shows the universality of its existence.

### 10.2 The Extent of Depravity

The Scripture speak of human nature as wholly depraved. However, the doctrine of "total depravity" is easily misunderstood and misinterpreted. It is important to know what it does mean. From the negative standpoint, it does not mean that every sinner is:

1. devoid of all qualities pleasing to men; that he commits, or is prone to, every form of sin; or
2. as bitterly opposed to God as it is possible for him to be.

Jesus recognized the existence of pleasing qualities in some individuals (Mark 10:21); He said that the Scribes and Pharisees did some things God demanded (Matthew 23:23); Paul asserted that some Gentiles "do instinctively the things of the Law" (Romans 2:14). From the positive standpoint, it does mean that every sinner is:

1. totally destitute of that love to God which is the fundamental requirement of the law (Deuteronomy 6:4f; Matthew 22:37);
2. supremely given to a preference of himself to God (2 Timothy 3:2-4);
3. that he has an aversion to God which on occasion becomes active enmity to him (Romans 8:7);
4. that his every faculty is disordered and corrupted (Ephesians 4:18);
5. that he has no thought, feeling, or deed of which God can fully approve (Romans 7:18); and
6. that he has entered upon a line of constant progress in depravity from which he can in no wise turn away in his own strength (Romans 7:18).

Depravity has infected the whole man:

1. mind;
2. emotions; and

3. will.

Depravity has produced a total spiritual inability in the sinner in the sense that he cannot by his own volition change his character and life so as to make them conformable to the law of God, nor change his fundamental preference of self and sin to supreme love for God, yet he has a certain amount of freedom left. He can, for instance:

1. choose not to sin against the Holy Spirit;
2. decide to commit the lesser sin rather than the greater;
3. resist certain forms of temptation altogether;
4. do certain outwardly good acts, though with improper and unspiritual motives, and
5. even seek God from entirely selfish motives.

However, he cannot of his free will:

1. regenerate himself;
2. repent; and
3. exercise saving faith (John 1:12f).

But the grace and Spirit of God are ready to enable him to repent and believe unto Salvation.

**10.3 Progressive Decline**

Romans 1-3 probably most completely describes the effects sin has had on mankind. Sin had, from the beginning, a progressive effect on the human race. Romans 1:21-32 charts the course of sin as man departs from his knowledge of God and declines in stages:

1. Man's decline begins first with a failure to honour or worship God (Romans 1:21). This creates a vacuum which is filled with various forms of man-made religion (Romans 1:22-23).

2. Having reached the low end of a scale of idolatry ("crawling creatures"), man is "given over" by God - He removes certain restraints - to immorality (Romans 1:24-25).

3. If man chooses to continue his rebellion, God gives him over to perversion or homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27).

4. Finally, God gives man over the third time to a "depraved" mind. This word depraved means "useless" and implies an inability to make moral judgments and decisions.

Romans 1:29-31 contains a catalog of vices that describes man at his potential worst.

### 10.4 Potential for Corruption

Although man has a potential for corruption, he is not always as bad as his potential. Paul states in Romans 2:14-15 that men can do virtuous things ("things of the Law"). Apparently, the condition described in Romans 1:29-32 is either limited to some or represents a stage in history that has been to some extent improved. I believe Romans 1:21-32 is a moral history from Adam to Noah (Genesis 6), when "the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and ... every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5).

### 10.5 Rebellious Attitude Toward God

Although all men are not as morally bad as they could be, the potential is present in every one of us. Apart from the gracious work of God, however, some startling things are said by Paul about unregenerate man's basic attitude toward God:

1. man tends to "suppress truth" (Romans 1:18). He prevents it from having its effect by twisting it, perverting it, or ignoring it. This is true of both pagan moralist (Romans 2:1-16) and religious Jew (Romans 2:17-29).

2. man has no righteousness, but instead strays from the law of God, whether written on his conscience (Romans 2:15), or part of the Holy Scriptures (Romans 2:17).

3. man does not seek, if left to his own inclinations, to know God (Romans 3:11). Men may be religious, but their religion is a willful substitute for the truth about God. Men may be devoted to religious, but they are not "sincere," for they deliberately, at some point in their lives, turn away from the truth they have, whatever it may be (Romans 1:19-20).

What does this add up to? It simply means that God must do a work of grace in a person's life before he will seek for God. Jesus expressed it this way: "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). When we see anyone genuinely seeking the truth, we see one in whom God is working, breaking down the barriers and hardness of heart that would ordinarily keep that one indifferent to Jesus Christ.

## 11. GUILT

Depravity and guilt come upon man simultaneously as a result of the fall. In a discussion of guilt, its meaning and the degrees of guilt must be considered.

### 11.1 The Meaning of Guilt

Guilt means the desert of punishment, or obligation to satisfy God. But guilt is incurred only through self-chosen transgression on the part of the individual person.

### 11.2 The Degrees of Guilt

The Scriptures recognize different degrees of guilt growing out of different kinds of sin. The prinicple is recognized in the Old Testament in a variety of sacrifices required for different transgressions under the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 4-7). It is also indicated in the variety of judgments in the New Testament (Luke 12:47f; John 19:11; Romans 2:6; Hebrews 2:2f; 10:28f). There are at least four sets of contrasting sins:

1. **Sin of nature, and personal transgression**. There is a great guilt when the sinful nature causes man to commit acts of personal transgression. The words of Christ, "the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14), speak of the relative innocence of childhood, while His words to the Scribes and Pharisees, "fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers" (Matthew 23:32), refer to personal transgression added to inherited depravity.

2. **Sin of ignorance, and sins of knowledge**. Here guilt is determined according to the amount of information the individual possesses. The greater the degree of knowledge, the greater the guilt (Matthew 10:15; Luke 12:47f; 23:34; Romans 1:32; 2:12; 1 Timothy 1:13-16).

3. **Sins of weakness, and sins of presumption**. The amount of the strength of will involved here indicates the degree of guilt. The Psalmist prayed to be kept from presumptuous sins (Psalm 19:13), and Isaiah speaks of those who "drag iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as if with cart ropes" (Isaiah 5:18). These are they who knowingly and determinately indulge in sin. On the other hand, Peter in his denial of Christ illustrates the sin of infirmity. He was overcome in spite of his determination to stand (Luke 22:31-34, 54-62). It is interesting to note that there was no sacrifice for willful sinning (Numbers 15:30; cf. Hebrews 10:26).

4. **Sins of incomplete, and sins of complete hardheartedness**. The degree to which the soul has hardened itself and become unreceptive to multiplied offers of the grace of God here determines the degree of guilt. A soul may turn from the love of the truth and become completely insensitive to the Spirit's promptings (1 Timothy 4:2; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26; 2 Peter 2:20-

22; 1 John 2:19; 5:16f).

## 12. PENALTY

While it is true that to a certain extent the natural consequences of sin are a part of the penalty of sin, we must remember that the full penalty is of a different nature. Depravity and guilt, as consequences of sin, rest upon mankind now, but penalty in its fullness awaits a future day.

### 12.1 The Meaning of Penalty

Penalty is that pain or loss which is directly inflicted by the lawgiver in vindication of his justice, which has been outraged by the violation of law. This implies and includes the natural consequences of sin, but these by no means exhaust that penalty. Penalty is not essentially intended to bring about the reformation of the offender. There is a difference between discipline and punishment.

Discipline proceeds from love and is intended to be corrective (Jeremiah 10:24; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; 1 Timothy 1:20; Hebrews 12:6); but punishment proceeds from justice and so is not intended to reform the offender (Ezekiel 28:22; 36:21f; Revelation 16:5; 19:2).

Punishment inflicted by law is not discipline nor remedy, but just retribution. It is not a means, but an end. A murderer is not corrected by being put to death; he is receiving a just retribution for his deed. Capital punishment is a divine mandate (Genesis 9:5f).

### 12.2 The Character of Penalty

According to the Scriptures, the penalty of sin is death. It is a threefold death: physical, spiritual and eternal.

1. **Physical death**. Physical death is the separation of soul and body. This is the most natural meaning of Genesis 2:17; 3:19; Numbers 16:29; 27:3. The prayer of Moses (Psalm 90:7-11) and the prayer of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:17f) recognize the penal character of death. The same thing is true in the New Testament (John 8:44; Romans 4:24f; 5:12-17; 6:9f; 8:3, 10f; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 4:6). For the Christian, however, death is no longer a penalty, since Christ has endured death as the penalty of sin (Psalm 17:15; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13f). For him the body sleeps, awaiting the glories of the resurrection, and the soul, absent from the body, enters consciously into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

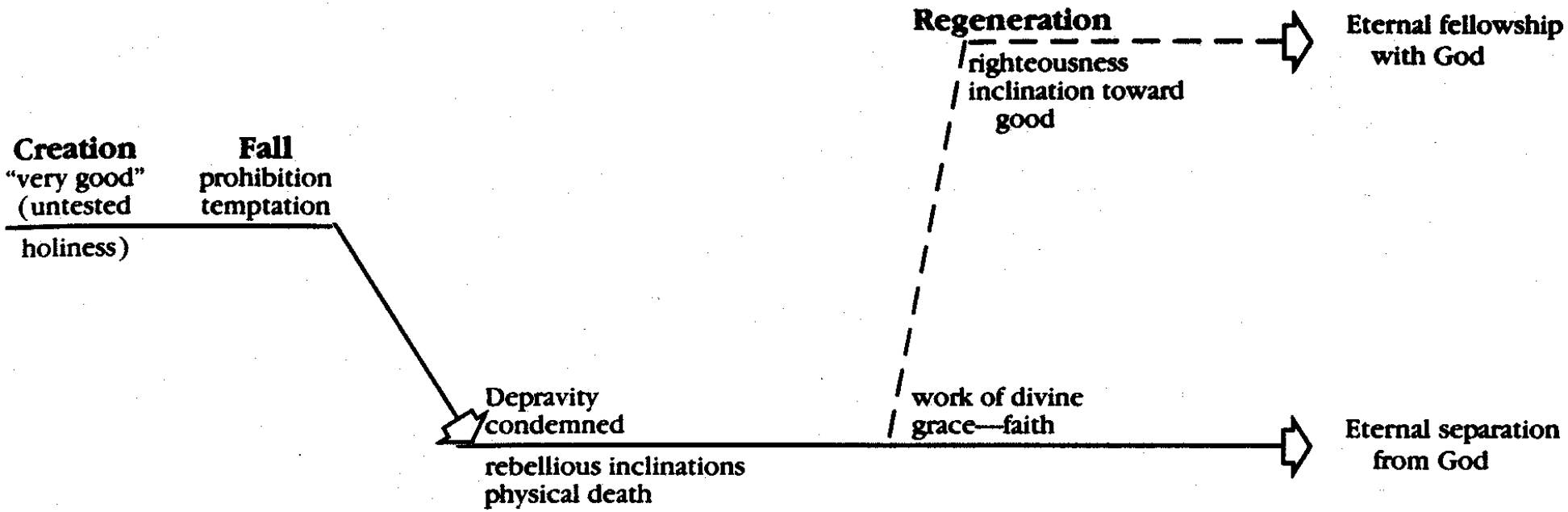
2. **Spiritual death**. Spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. The penalty proclaimed in Eden which has fallen upon the race is primarily this death of the soul (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:21; Ephesians 2:1, 5). By it man lost the presence and favour of God as well as the knowledge of and desire for God. Because of this, he needs to be made alive from death (Luke 15:32; John 5:24; 8:51; Ephesians 2:5).

3. **Eternal death**. Eternal death is simply the culmination and completion of spiritual death. It is the eternal separation of the soul from God, together with the accompanying remorse and outward punishment (Matthew 10:28; 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Hebrews 10:31; Revelation 14:11). This matter will be examined more fully in our study of future things (Eschatology). Please read chapters 8 to 10 of this course for further information.

## 13. SUMMARY

What we have learned so far may be summarized in the following ways and illustrated in the below chart:

1. Man was created in a state of untested holiness with no inclination toward sin.
2. He was tempted, and freely and deliberately chose to disobey God.
3. This corrupted his whole moral being, brought him into condemnation, and introduced physical death into the world.
4. The only remedy is a work of God's grace by which man believes the Gospel, is regenerated and justified and set upon a pathway of growing righteous behaviour.




I view his condition in Salvation as superior to his original creation, in spite of lingering tendencies to rebel, because, through regeneration, he has a basic inclination to do good (Romans 7:15-24).

## 14. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. **Survey of Theology II**, Lesson 6, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
2. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapters XVII to XX, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.

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# Chapter Eight - Death, Hell and Resurrection

## 1. PERSONAL ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology is usually divided into two major categories:

1. personal eschatology (the topic of this chapter); and
2. general eschatology (the topic of the next two chapters).

Personal eschatology relates to the individual from the time of physical death until he receives his resurrection body. General eschatology covers the sweep of future events from the return of Jesus Christ on to the creation of the new heavens and new earth.

Among evangelical believers there is little disagreement on personal eschatology, because the Scriptures are quite clear on the subject. Various opinions and viewpoints enter in when we discuss the broader end-time events, because a major question arises as to how these biblical passages are to be interpreted - literally or figuratively. My approach in this study is to assume a literal interpretation.

## 2. THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF DEATH

### 2.1 The Origin of Death (Genesis 1:17; 3:19; Romans 5:12)

Adam's violation of the prohibition to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil incurred physical death ("return to dust"). Apparently spiritual death also occurred, because Adam and Eve lost their former relationship to God (shame, Genesis 3:8-10, 21; separation, Genesis 3:22-24). The curse placed upon the "ground" implies that death entered the natural realm also at this time (Genesis 3:17-18).

### 2.2 The Uses of the Word "Death"

Basically "death" is a separation of one kind or another. The Bible speaks of it in three ways:

1. physical death;
2. present spiritual death; and

3. ultimate spiritual death (eternal death).

### *2.2.1 Physical death*

Physical death is a separation of the soul / spirit from the body (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Acts 7:59; James 2:26). This, perhaps, is the most common use of the word. There is a severance of the natural relationship between soul and body. The body decays in the grave and returns to dust (Genesis 3:19), and the soul continues on.

Physical death bears a relationship to sin because Adam was not subject to physical death until after the fall. Physical death is a result of man's spiritual death (Romans 5:21; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:56). It is a judgment (Romans 1:32; 5:16) and a curse. Christ has delivered the believer from the power of death. Scripture records that Christ partook of flesh and blood "that through death He might render powerless him who has the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Hebrews 2:14f).

Though death is a common enemy, through Christ the believer needs no longer to fear it. Death for the believer is entrance into the presence of Christ. He is absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Death to the believer is "to depart and be with Christ" (Philippians 1:23). The sting of death has been removed (1 Corinthians 15:55-57) and the Christian falls asleep in Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:14). In stark contrast to the believer, the unbeliever has no such comforting hope. He faces condemnation and eternal judgment away from the presence of the Lord (John 3:36; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:10).

### *2.2.2 Present spiritual death*

Present spiritual death is the separation of unregenerate man from God. This condition is "by nature" (Ephesians 2:3) from birth (Isaiah 59:2; Ephesians 2:1). Physical birth gives biological life, but only regeneration brings spiritual life: the ability to know and fellowship with God. Spiritual death is finally conquered, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, at the believer's resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:54f; Revelation 20:14).

### *2.2.3 Ultimate spiritual death*

Ultimate spiritual death (also known as eternal death) is the final separation from God of those who die in an unregenerated state. This death is imposed as the "second death" following the judgment at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15). But the destiny of the unregenerated man is fixed at the time of his physical death when he enters a place called "hades,"

there to stay until the second resurrection (Revelation 20:13).

### 3. THE FOUR FALSE VIEWS OF THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

Physical death relates to the physical body; the soul is immortal and as such does not die. The soul is immortal, even after physical death, is confirmed by Scripture. In answer to the Sadducees' question concerning the resurrection, Jesus responded by quoting what God had said to Moses in Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Matthew 22:32). He further commented, "God is not the God of the dead but of the living" (v. 32), the point being that if God was the God of Abraham in Moses' day, then Moses was yet alive. The story of Lazarus and the rich man also indicates the immortality of the soul (Luke 16:19-31), as does the mention of souls under the altar (Revelation 6:9f).

But what happens to the soul after death, but before the resurrection? The false views must be evaluated, then the true position presented:

1. Purgatory;
2. Soul-sleep;
3. Annihilationism; and
4. Conditional immortality.

### 3.1 Purgatory

In Roman Catholic theology, souls which are completely pure at death are allowed to enter heaven, to enter into presence of God, the beatific vision. Those souls which are not perfectly pure and are in need of cleansing go to a place for purging. This place, called "purgatory," is for the purging away of the guilt of venial sins. It is not a place of probation, but a place of purging or cleansing. Believers there suffer in that they are for a time losing out on the joys of heaven and their souls are being afflicted. Several Scriptures are used in support of this doctrine (Zechariah 9:11; Matthew 12:32; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

Against this position are the facts that there is no solid Scriptural support for it and that Christ fully paid our penalty. We cannot add anything to the merits of Christ (Hebrews 1:3). Granted, there are temporal punishments for sin in this life, but Scripture nowhere teaches explicitly or implicitly that these sufferings continue after death. The primary support for purgatory is found in the non-canonical book of 2 Maccabees 12:42-45.

### 3.2 Soul-sleep

Those who hold this view maintain that after death the soul lapses into a state of sleep or unconscious repose. This is argued in several ways. Scriptural often represents death as sleep (Matthew 9:24; John 11:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). Further, some references seem to teach that the dead are unconscious (Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5f, 10; Isaiah 38:18).

But in answer to these objections, first, sleep is used of a believer. It is a euphemistic expression taken from the similarity in appearance between a dead body and a sleeping person (cf. James 2:26). Further, the Scriptural evidence is that believers who die enjoy a conscious communion with Christ. The verses which suggest the unconscious condition of the soul are viewed from the perspective of the living. From the point of view of the living, the dead have gone to sleep.

### 3.3 Annihilationism

This teaching relates primarily to the unsaved. According to this doctrine, there is no conscious existence at all for the wicked after dead. Most who hold this position teach that at death the unsaved individual simply ceases to exist. Biblical terms such as death, destruction, and perish are interpreted to mean "deprived of existence" or "reduced to non-existence" (John 3:16; 8:51; Romans 9:22). But, in answer to this view, we say that God does not annihilate what He has created. Life is the opposite of death; if death is merely cessation of being, then life is just prolonged existence. But eternal life is a quality of life, not merely quantity. Further, death and destruction is punishment; it is hard to see how annihilation could be termed punishment. Scripture is clear that the unsaved will continue to exist forever (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 25:46; Romans 2:5-10; Revelation 14:11). Again, there are degrees of punishment, and annihilationism does not allow for this (Luke 12:47f; Romans 2:12; Revelation 20:12).

### 3.4 Conditional Immortality

According to this doctrine, the soul is not created or born with immortality, but receives it upon confession of faith in Christ. It comes as a gift of God. The one who dies without Christ simply ceases to exist because he has not received the gift of immortality. Those who hold this position argue that God alone has immortality (1 Timothy 6:16), and he gives it to those who respond to his call. They further teach that Scripture nowhere speaks of the immortality of the soul. But we answer that this doctrine confuses immortality with eternal life. The eternal life received at Salvation is more than eternal existence; it is rather a quality of life, a richness of life in the presence of Christ. It is true that God alone has inherent immortality; nevertheless, man did receive derived immortality at creation. He is born as an immortal being.

We conclude that at death the believer enters into the presence of Christ. He remains with the Lord in a state of conscious blessedness until the time of the resurrection, at which time he will receive his body of glory. The unbeliever enters into a state of conscious torment until the resurrection, at which time he will be cast into the Lake of Fire. The doctrines of purgatory, soul-sleep, annihilationism and conditional immortality cannot be considered biblical doctrines.

## 4. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The concept of death, both for believers and unbelievers, is much less clear in the Old Testament. When any attempt is made to describe the post-death condition, the word "**sheol**" is most often used. In places this word seems to mean "the grave," and a few Old Testament experts are convinced that "grave" is *always* the best translation. Some Old Testament texts, however, could give the expanded meaning of a place one's spirit goes at death, a place beyond the grave itself. The Jews, up to the time of Christ, thought of it as a place divided into two parts (see Luke 16:19-31):

1. one part for the just; and
2. another part, a place of torment, for the unjust.

### 4.1 Both Just and Unjust Go to "Sheol" (Genesis 37:35)

The Old Testament teaches that there is a life after death. There is no Old Testament distinction between the place believers and unbelievers go. The common destiny seems to be "**sheol**." The wicked go there (Psalm 9:17; 31:17; 49:14; Isaiah 5:14). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram are said to have gone down alive into sheol (Numbers 16:33). But the righteous also go there (1 Samuel 25:1; 28:3, 11, 13-15; Job 14:13; 17:16; Psalm 6:5; 16:10; 88:3). Jacob looked forward to going to his son Joseph in sheol (Genesis 37:35; cf. 42:38; 44:29). Hezekiah looked upon death as an entering "the gates of sheol" (Isaiah 38:10).

### 4.2 The Just Will Not Remain Forever in "Sheol" (Psalm 16:10)

David writes, "Thou wilt not abandon my soul to *sheol*." The wicked, however, are "appointed for *sheol*," while "the upright shall rule over them in the morning" ("morning" is probably figurative for resurrection).

### 4.3 Conscious Existence After Death

Isaiah 14:9-11, 15-17 definitely teaches that it is a conscious existence after death. And that which is hinted at in the Old Testament is clearly taught in the New Testament. Jesus taught it in Matthew 22:31f and in the story of the rich man and

Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

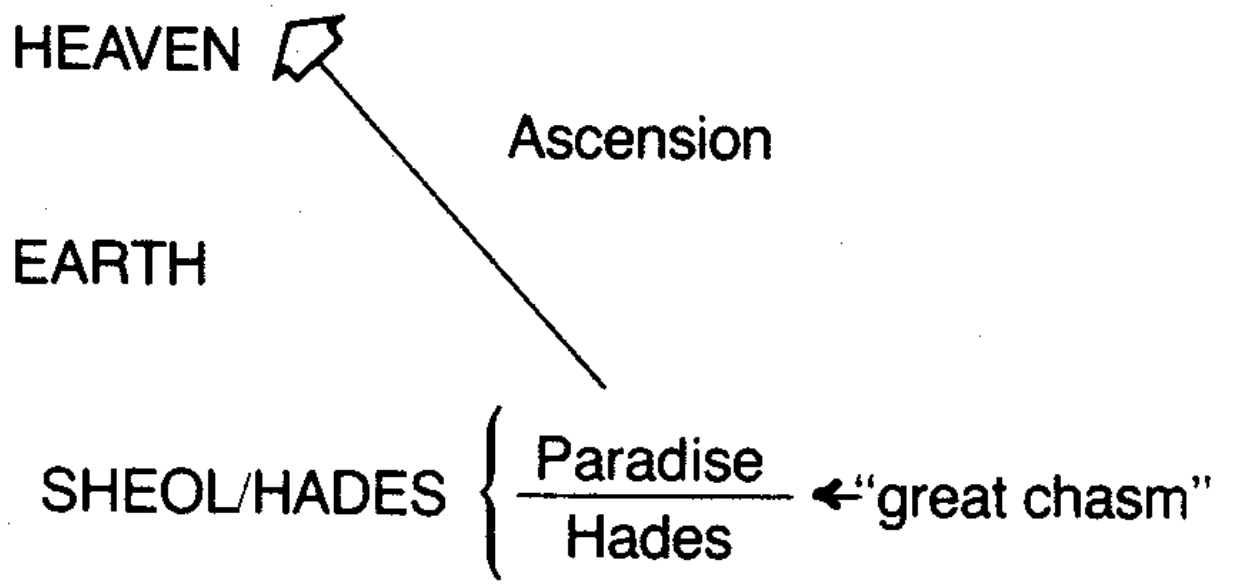
### 4.4 The Place Where Believers Are Sent After Death Is Described As "Abraham's Bosom" Or "Paradise" (Luke 16:19-31)

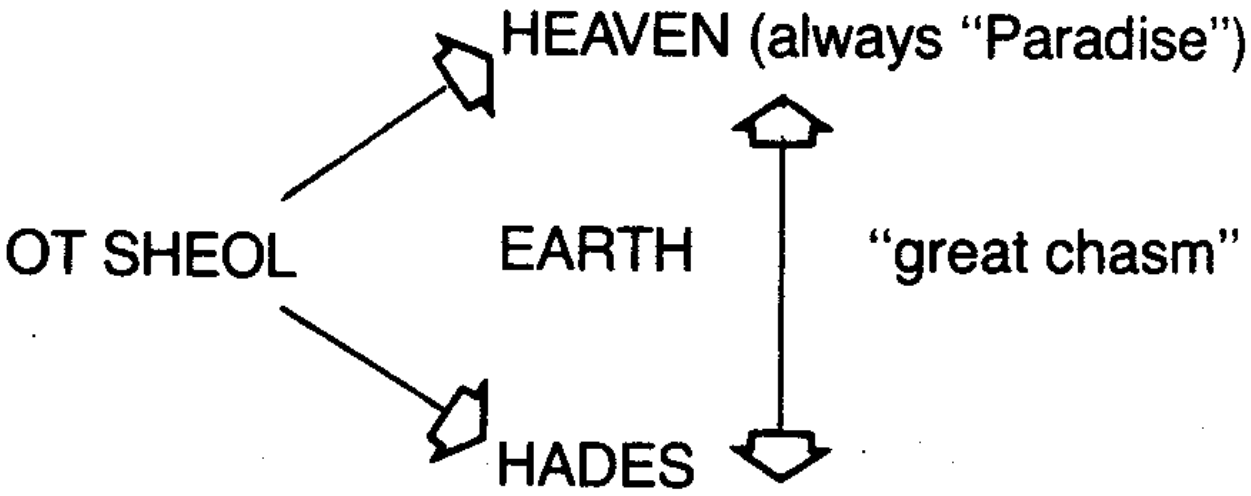
In the story of Lazarus and the rich man, Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom, comforted; the rich man was in agony (Luke 16:19-31). From this we gather that the unsaved individual is also in a temporary state undergoing conscious torment, while awaiting the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). Jesus' story of Lazarus and the rich man in this chapter of Luke has been called a parable, but this author at least is inclined to think of it as a true story. If so, it represents an advance over Old Testament teaching on "sheol" and reveals the details of death before Christ Himself was resurrected.

Two views prevail as to how to relate this picture to the New Testament, which teaches that paradise is in heaven and hades elsewhere. Paradise is a word of Persian origin signifying "a royal park or garden." Crucial to the interpretation is the meaning of the words, "a great chasm fixed" (Luke 16:26). The two views are as follows:

1. One view sees the two as "compartments" of sheol, both located in the same general place. When Jesus ascended to heaven, paradise was moved to heaven. I prefer this view.

2. The other view is that the "great chasm fixed" is simply a description of the distance that always existed between hades and paradise (which has always been in heaven), a fact not revealed in the Old Testament.




Both views recognize the fact that the Hebrew term "sheol" is translated into "hades" in the Greek Old Testament.

In the case of the Old Testament saint, the debated question is where did his soul (spirit or immaterial nature) go at the time of death? Was he taken immediately into the presence of the Lord, or did he go to the saved compartment of sheol/hades

from where he was taken into heaven when Christ descended into hades between His death and resurrection?

### *4.4.1 After the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paradise was moved to Heaven*

According to *Harry Buis*, the two-compartment theory was a development of the inter-testamental period. "The main development of the doctrine of eternal punishment in this period comes from the fact that sheol is now divided into two compartments (*Harry Buis*, **The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment**, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957, p.18):

1. one for the good, called paradise; and
2. the other for the evil, called gehenna.

Before the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, both the wicked and the righteous are represented as going down to hades. The rich man, we are told, went to hades, and he and Lazarus were within speaking distance of each other in that region "a great chasm fixed" (Luke 16:19-31). Jesus Himself went down to hades (Acts 2:27, 31). Christ now has the keys of death and hades (Revelation 1:18), and some day both of these will deliver up the dead in them (Revelation 20:13f).

After the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ there seems to have come a change. From that time on, believers are represented as going into the presence of Christ at death. It is possible that when Christ arose, He took with Him not only a first-fruit of men whom He raised bodily (Matthew 27:52f), but also the souls of all the righteous in hades (Ephesians 4:8-9; Psalm 68:18; 1 Peter 3:18-19). Now all believers go into Christ's presence at death, while unbelievers continue to go to hades, as in Old Testament times (*Herman A. Hoyt*, **The End Times**, Moody, 1969, p.45).

Several passages are cited in favor of this viewpoint:

1. Paul wrote that Christ descended in to the lower parts of the earth. Some understand this to mean that our Lord descended into hades between His death and resurrection to take those in the "saved compartment" of hades into heaven (Ephesians 4:8-9).

2. In the account of the rich man and Lazarus which supposedly shows that both men went to hades, the rich man to punishment in one compartment of hades and Lazarus to bliss in the other compartment which is labeled "Abraham's bosom" in the story (Luke 16:19-31).

3. Peter wrote that Christ descended into sheol/hades. While there between His death and resurrection He announced His

victory over sin and removed those in the paradise compartment to heaven (1 Peter 3:18-19).

4. The view helps to explain why "the spirit of a divine being (i.e. Samuel) coming up out of the earth instead of descending down from the heaven (1 Samuel 28:13). Hoping to obtain divine direction in a battle against the Philistines, Saul inquires of the Lord but receives no message. He then makes a trip to Endor, disguised and under the cover of darkness, to seek direction from a woman with a "familiar spirit." Saul asks the woman to call up Samuel from the dead. Samuel immediately appears, which creates a problem concerning the power of the spirit medium. Several facts must be noted. It is obvious that the situation was not in the hands of the spirit medium. She was terrified when she saw Samuel (1 Samuel 28:12), so it is evident that it was not her power that called him from the dead. This leaves two possibilities. (a) It was either a demon spirit impersonating Samuel, or (b) God actually allowed Samuel to appear at this point. The latter suggestion is the better of the two. The text actually states it was Samuel who was speaking (1 Samuel 28:14-15). The fact that Samuel's message of judgment came true would further substantiate this. Thus, as soon as Samuel is called up he speaks directly with Saul. Saul is overcome with exhaustion and falls prostrate on the ground.

### *4.4.2 Old Testament saint at death went immediately to heaven and into the presence of the Lord (Alternative view)*

Some Bible scholars believe that the Old Testament saint at death went immediately to heaven and into the presence of the Lord. Several passages are cited in favor of this viewpoint:

1. The repentant thief was promised he would be in paradise the day of his death (Luke 23:43), and paradise was the presence of the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:4). However, it is possible that the repentant thief may go together with the Lord Jesus down to the paradise portion of the hades (i.e. immediately into the presence of the Lord) and then ascend to the heaven later.

2. At Christ's transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared in His presence talking with Him (Matthew 17:1-3). Are we to understand that this conversation between Christ, Moses, and Elijah took place in the upper compartment of hades where Moses at least would have been until after the death of Christ? Are we to understand then that the transfiguration of Christ took place in paradise-hades? Are we to understand that Elijah was taken at his translation to sheol/hades and not heaven? However, it is possible that God actually allowed Moses to appear at this point (i.e. the situation is similar to call up Samuel from the dead). In case of Elijah, we understand that he went up by a whirlwind to heaven (2 King 2:11), that is to say, he was not a dead man, therefore it should be considered as an exceptional case.

3. Alternative interpretation of Ephesians 4:8-9. The phrase "of the earth" may be an appositional phrase, meaning that Christ descended (at His Incarnation) into the lower parts (of the universe), namely the earth.

4. Alternative interpretation of Luke 16:19-31. Does it teach two compartments in hades? Not really, for Abraham's bosom is not said to be in hades but rather "far away" from it (see Luke 16:23). Abraham's bosom is a figurative phrase for paradise, or the presence of God. It was paradise promised to the repentant thief by the Lord Jesus (Luke 23:43), not a blissful compartment of hades.

5. Alternative interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-19. The verses mean that the preincarnate Christ preached through Noah to those who, because they rejected that preaching, are now spirits in prison.

I would like to draw the attention of my readers to think carefully in this matter and make their own judgment.

## 5. THE DEATH OF BELIEVERS AND THE INTERMEDIATE STATE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (2 Corinthians 5:1-10)

The word hades occurs ten times in the New Testament (Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13f). The hope of the believer is vastly different than the prospect of the unbeliever who is sent to hades (not hell), a place of torment according to Luke 16:19-31. The believer is immediately united with Christ (2 Corinthians 5) in a place known as paradise (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4) and the "third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2, 4).

From 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, we learn the following significant facts about this "intermediate" condition that the believer experiences following physical death and preceding the resurrection of the body:

1. It is a state preferable to our present life;
2. It is a state without a body; and
3. It is a state of conscious joy with the Lord.

### 5.1 It is A State Preferable to Our Present Life (2 Corinthians 5:2-5)

Paul says that we now "groan, being burdened," due undoubtedly to life's stresses and physical maladies and limitations. To be with Christ, he says in Philippians 1:23, "is very much better," and that he "prefer[s] rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

### 5.2 It is A State Without A Body (2 Corinthians 5:3-8)

An "eternal" body will be given to believers at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52), but during the interim (after death but before the time of the resurrection of the body) believers who have died will be in a disembodied state.

### 5.3 It is A State of Conscious Joy with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8-9)

The believer is with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; Luke 23:43). Not only is the believer with the Lord and in heaven, but he is in fellowship with other believers (Hebrews 12:23). Believers are alive, conscious and happy (Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 14:13). A careful study of 2 Corinthians 5:1-9 suggests that the believer prefers to be raptured and translated rather than to die and enter into the intermediate state. He would rather be clothed with the resurrection body than to be unclothed. But the unclothed state is to be preferred over the present physical state, for even if unclothed, the believer is present with the Lord.

To be "at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8) is "pleasing" to Him (2 Corinthians 5:9). It is difficult to think of an unconscious "sleep" as being preferable to life on earth, so it would seem that in our disembodied, incomplete condition, we will be aware of being "with the Lord" and enjoying the experience. This belief is contrary to the concepts of "soul-sleep" and "purgatory."

## 6. THE DEATH OF UNBELIEVERS AND THE INTERMEDIATE STATE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The death of the unbeliever leaves his spirit / soul in hades. Luke 16:23-24 seems to teach that those in hades have some kind of body ("eyes," "tongue"), but these may actually be anthropomorphic expressions (like the "eyes" or "hands" of God) to convey impressions. "Hell" (Greek *gehenna*) is the final and eternal place of suffering, not to be confused with the location of the intermediate state of the lost (Mark 9:47).

## 7. THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF ETERNAL RETRIBUTION

The idea of eternal, conscious punishment is not a pleasant thought, but it is nevertheless taught by the Bible, especially Jesus. I suppose that anyone's difficulty in accepting such a concept stems from an incomplete concept of God.

Not only is God loving and good, but He is wrathful toward men who persist in sin and reject the provision He has lovingly made in Jesus Christ. What we often fail to realize is that the justice of God *must* be satisfied. God's love does not negate His

other attributes, such as his justice and wrath toward sin. The Scriptures clearly told us that the lost will be punished in the "hell." What is the meaning of "hell"?

### 7.1 The Name "Gehenna" (Hell)

Jesus Himself uses the word "**gehenna**" to refer to eternal punishment (Mark 9:47), and associates eternal punishment with "fire" (Matthew 25:41). The name itself was connected with the city dump in the valley of Hinnom outside the city of Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 7:31-34). It was a place always burning with fire, rubbish and dead bodies.

### 7.2 The Name "Lake of Fire"

"Lake of fire" is the term which the apostle John uses in Revelation 19, 20 and 21 for the final destiny of the lost. It is a place where all the dead from hades are resurrected for judgment and finally cast following the judgment of the Great White Throne.

### 7.3 Conclusion

It seems safe to infer that "**gehenna**" (hell) and the lake of fire are one and the same place. It is a place of eternal, conscious suffering, an idea clearly stated in the words of Mark 9:48, "where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (cf. Isaiah 66:24). It is also implied by a comparison of Revelation 19:20 (where the Beast and False Prophet are consigned at the Lord's return before the Millennium) and Revelation 20:10 (where the same two are mentioned as still existing following the Millennium when Satan is also consigned to the lake of fire).

## 8. THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF THE RESURRECTION

From the earliest dawn of history men have been asking the question, "If a man dies, will he live again?" (Job 14:14). There have always been those who have denied the resurrection (Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:8; 1 Corinthians 15:12). It is, therefore, important that we search the Scriptures in order to ascertain just what they do teach on the subject.

### 8.1 The Certainty of the Resurrection

Whether as a matter of hope or of fear and dread, man has generally felt that there is a life after death:

1. the early Egyptians reveal this belief in their care of the dead;

2. the Babylonians in their dread of it as a sad and doleful existence;
3. Socrates held that life continued after death;
4. the American Indians looked for a future hunting ground;
5. Brahmanism, Hinduism, Buddism, Confucianism, and Mohammedanism

all hold that man continues to exist after death. Whence this universal belief? Is this fundamental premonition of human nature a lie? We would like to know whether that existence is conscious and whether there will be a resurrection of the body as well.

### 8.2 Existence After Death

Science, with its belief in the indestructibility of matter and the conservation of energy, cannot say that the Christian belief is unreasonable; and and philosophy, with its recognition of the inequities of life, cannot well avoid postulating a life after death, when the wrongs of this life will be righted. This possibility and necessity is converted into certainty in Scriptures. According to the Scriptures, both the saved and the lost will be resurrected (John 5:29; Daniel 12:2). Several key passages contribute to the overall biblical doctrine of resurrection.

### 8.3 The Old Testament Teaching As to the Bodily Resurrection

The Old Testament records the bodily raising of at least three persons:

1. the widow's son (1 Kings 17:21f);
2. the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4:32-36); and
3. the man who revived when he touched the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13:21).

From this time on, Israel had proof of the possibility of a bodily resurrection. But the belief in such a resurrection goes back further than that. Abraham expected that God would raise Isaac from the dead on Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22:5; Hebrews 11:19). Other Old Testament Scriptures:

1. The Psalmist was confident that he would not be left in ":sheol" (Psalm 16:10; cf. 17:15).
2. Further, we note Isaiah's expectation of a bodily resurrection (Isaiah 26:19).
3. The Lord's promise in Hosea (13:14), and his promise in Daniel (12:1-3, 13).

This teaching begins at the time of Abraham and continues to the time of the return from Babylon. It is clear that the doctrine was taught and believed during that period.

### 8.4 The New Testament Teaching As to the Bodily Resurrection

The New Testament records the raising of five persons:

1. Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:24f);
2. the young man of Nain (Luke 7:14f);
3. Lazarus (John 11:43f);
4. Dorcas (Acts 9:40f); and
5. Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12).

In addition, we read of the raising of many saints after the resurrection of Christ (Matthew 27:52f). As to the teaching of a future resurrection, Christ taught it (John 5:28f; 6:39f, 44, 54; Luke 14:14; 20:35f) and the apostles taught it (Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16; Revelation 20:4-6, 12f). And finally, the resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of our own bodily resurrection (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22; 2 Corinthians 4:14). He "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). There is, therefore, abundant evidence that the New Testament teaches a bodily resurrection.

### 8.5 The Fact of the Bodily Resurrection

In at least four ways the Scriptures indicate that the body is to be raised:

1. In clear statements to that effect (Psalm 16:9f; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28f). Paul writes of the burial and resurrection of the body, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). A natural body is that body which consists of flesh and blood; needs food, air, and rest; and is subject to decay and pain. It is the body which is adapted to existence on this planet. The spiritual body is the body which is adapted to heavenly existence, a powerful, glorious body. It is a body like the resurrected body of our Lord. Paul states, further, that Christ will transform "the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (Philippians 3:21).

2. In the declaration that the body is included in our redemption (Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 19f). When Christ

died for us, he died for the whole man. The full benefits of his atonement are not realized until the body has been made immortal, an event which will take place at the resurrection.

3. In the kind of body with which Christ was raised. He was raised in a physical body (Luke 24:39; John 20:27). To deny the physical resurrection is to deny the physical resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:13).

4. In the literalness of the Lord's return and the judgments. The Lord Jesus Christ will return to judge not disembodied spirits, but embodied men (1 Thessalonians 4:16f; Revelation 20:11-13).

### 8.6 The Nature of the Resurrection Body

In general the resurrection body will sustain a similar relation to the present body as the wheat in the stalk sustains to the wheat in the ground out of which it grew (1 Corinthians 15:37f). An adult has the same body with which he was born, though it has undergone continual change and does not contain the same cells with which it was born. So the resurrection body will be the same body, though its make-up will be changed.

#### *8.6.1 The bodies of believers*

For the **saved** (1 Corinthians 15:35-49). The resurrection body is an entirely different, eternal body adapted to the heavenly sphere. Yet this body has a relationship to the present body, at least in terms of identification. Several Scriptures state that the resurrection body of believers will be like Christ's glorified body (1 Corinthians 15:49; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2). Some details may be mentioned from 1 Corinthians 15:

1. It will be a real body, for it could be touched (John 20:27) and is capable of speaking (Luke 24:17-32).

2. It will not need food for sustenance, though being capable of eating on occasion (Luke 24:30; John 21:12-15).

3. It will not be composed of flesh and blood (1 Corinthians 15:50f). Christ took on him flesh and blood (Hebrews 2:14), but after His resurrection He speaks of His body as composed of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). Thus, He was not pure spirit, and neither shall we be pure spirit at the resurrection.

4. It will neither marry nor is given in marriage (Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35).

5. It will be incorruptible, or imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:42, 53f). It is not subject to sickness, death or decay.

6. It will be a heavenly body (1 Corinthians 15:47-49). In 2 Corinthians 5:1f, Paul speaks of a "building from God" and "our dwelling from heaven." It will be heavenly as contrasted with the present, which is earthly.

7. It will be a glorious body (1 Corinthians 15:43). We may get some idea of what that means by thinking of the transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17:2), and of the description of the glorified Christ in heaven (Revelation 1:13-16).

8. It will not be limited by either ordinary physical matter or natural laws. In that body, Christ could enter a room when the door was shut (John 20:19, 26); vanish from sight while talking with others (Luke 24:30, 31); remain unknown to others until special perception was granted (Luke 24:15, 16, 31; John 20:15, 16); appear at will and to defy gravity for upward movement from the earth to the heaven (Acts 1:9).

9. It will be powerful (1 Corinthians 15:43). It will not become weary, but will be able to perform mighty feats in the service of Christ (Revelation 22:3-5).

10. It will be a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44). It is meant that its life is that of the spirit.

### *8.6.2 The bodies of unbelievers*

For the **unsaved** (Revelation 20:5-15). Though coming back to life after death for the unsaved is called a "resurrection" (John 5:29), it is described as the "second death" (Revelation 20:6). The Scriptures have less to say about the resurrection of the unsaved than about the saved. Scriptures states that:

1. Jesus declared that the hour is coming when all that are in the tombs shall come forth, some unto the resurrection of life and some to the resurrection of judgment (John 5:28f).

2. Paul declared that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and wicked (Acts 24:15). Daniel 12:2 indicated that many who sleep in the dust will awake "to disgrace and everlasting contempt."

3. Unbelievers are given some sort of body in order to "stand" before the Great White Throne and then be "cast" into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:5-15).

Curiosity would indeed pry into the nature of this resurrection body, but the silence of Scripture on this point indicates that

we should be content with such things as have been revealed, and leave the question where Scripture leaves it - unanswered.

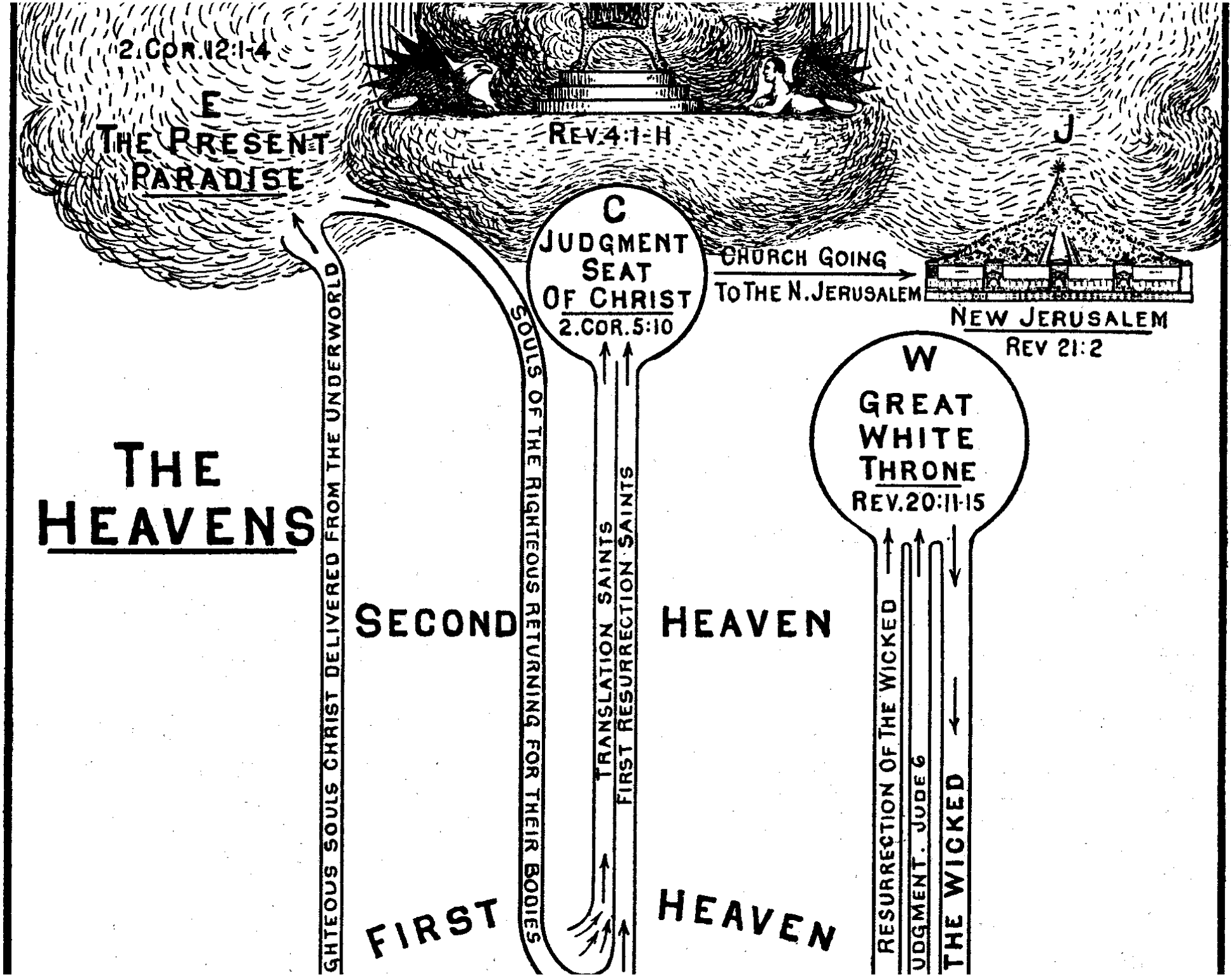
### 8.7 The Resurrection / Translation of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52-54)

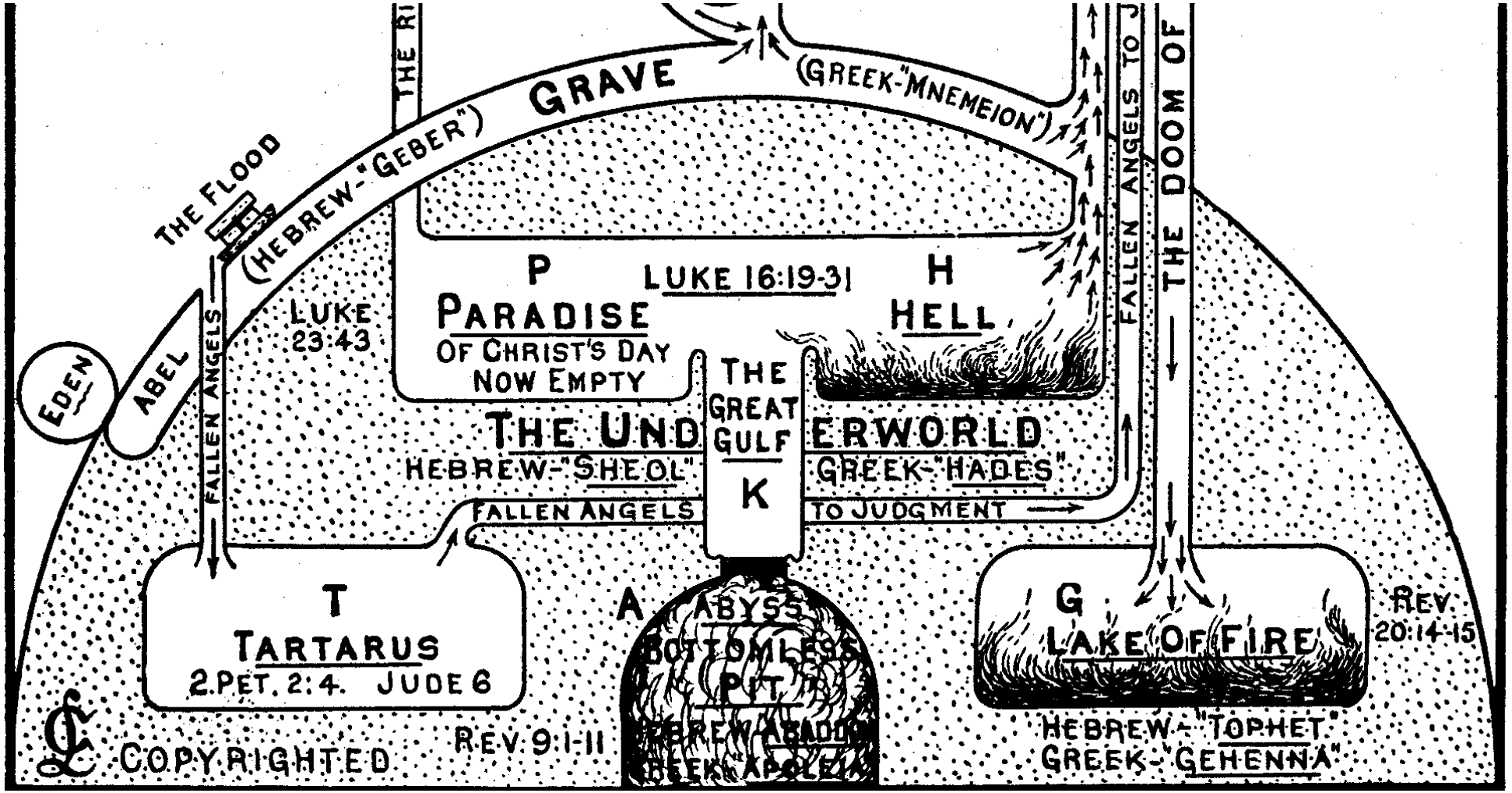
A translation of living believers of this age (called "rapture") takes places at the time of the resurrection of the church, although the raising of the dead in Christ just precedes the translation followed by a meeting in the air. In any case, new, eternal bodies are given to both classes of believers ("all shall be changed," 1 Corinthians 15:51). The Old Testament saints and those tribulation saints killed during the tribulation period will be raised at the moment of Christ's coming to earth (Daniel 12:1f; Revelation 20:4). Thus, the first resurrection will be completed.

### 8.8 The Time-Span Between the Two Resurrections (Revelation 20:4-6)

Revelation 20:4-6, if interpreted literally as a span of time following the return of Christ to earth, uniquely informs us of the fact that a millennium intervenes between the resurrection of the just and that of the unjust. In other words, the second resurrection will take place a thousand years later (Revelation 20:5, 11-13). It seems as if God is as longsuffering as possible with the unsaved dead. They are in torments in the intermediate state (hades), but they are not in the final place of punishment as yet. Thus, the goodness of God puts off the day of final reckoning until after the millennium. But though it tarry, it will surely come. The unsaved might well wish to remain disembodied, but their wishes will have nothing to do with the facts. They too will come forth in their bodies and will suffer the eternal punishment of God in their bodies.

The location of hades, hell and paradise and the time-span between the two resurrections are illustrated in the following picture (*Clarence Larkin*, **The Second Coming of Christ**, Rev. Clarence Larkin Estate, 1918):


2. COR. 12:1-4
E
THE PRESENT PARADISE
REV. 4:1-H
J
C
JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST
2. COR. 5:10
CHURCH GOING TO THE N. JERUSALEM
NEW JERUSALEM
REV 21:2
W
GREAT WHITE THRONE
REV. 20:11-15
THE HEAVENS
SECOND HEAVEN
FIRST HEAVEN
RIGHTEOUS SOULS CHRIST DELIVERED FROM THE UNDERWORLD
SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS RETURNING FOR THEIR BODIES
TRANSLATION SAINTS
FIRST RESURRECTION SAINTS
RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED
JUDGMENT. JUDE 6
THE WICKED




## 9. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SECOND COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The early church was keenly interested in the doctrine of the return of Christ. The apostles had held out the possibility of his returning in their day, and the next generations kept alive the blessed hope as something that was imminent. Not until the third century was there any great exception to this rule, but from the time of Constantine onward, this truth began to be rejected. It is only during the last 100 years or so that this doctrine has been revived in the church. Nowadays, there is a growing and healthy interest in this biblical truth. While devout Christians say, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20), unbelievers and scoffers continue to say, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:4). The unbelief of the scoffer does not reduce the importance of this doctrine; rather, many things indicate its importance.

### 9.1 Its Prominence in the Scriptures

Throughout the Scriptures there is a prominent place given to the second coming of Christ. Though the first and second advents are often so closely merged in the Old Testament prophecies as to make it difficult to bring forward a specific promise that deals with the second coming alone, there are some references that clearly do so (Job 19:25f; Daniel 7:13f; Zechariah 14:4; Malachi 3:1f). The New Testament mentions this doctrine more than three hundred times. Whole chapters are devoted to the subject (Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21; cf. 1 Corinthians 15). Some books are practically given over to this subject (1 and 2 Thessalonians; Revelation). It ranks with other major doctrines in emphasis.

### 9.2 It is a Key to the Scriptures

The recognition of the fundamental character of the doctrine of the Lord's return is a key to the Scriptures. Many biblical doctrines, ordinances, promises, and types cannot be fully understood except in the light of the doctrine of the Lord's return. Consider the following biblical doctrines:

1. Christ is prophet, priest, and king, but no one can properly understand his kingly office apart from the recognition of the truth of his second coming.

2. Salvation is represented as past, present and future, but no adequate view of the future aspect can be held apart from a belief in the Lord's return.

3. John's teaching concerning two resurrections (Revelation 20:4-15) presents a conundrum apart from this doctrine.

4. The Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 89:3f) remains inexplicable to one who rejects the truth of Christ's return.

5. The prophecy concerning the restoration of nature and the animal world (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25; Romans 8:20-22) becomes absurd if interpreted apart from a reference to the second advent.

6. The prediction of the bruising of Satan's head (Genesis 3:15) loses its real point if it is not associated with the return of Christ.

Many types of Scripture lose their most attractive features if they are not viewed in the light of Christ's return:

1. Enoch's ministry and translation is one of these (Genesis 5:22-24; Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14).

2. The story of Noah drops down to the level of mere historical fact if it has no typical meaning, as does the high priest's blessing of the people on the day of atonement (Hebrews 9:28).

The same thing is true of many of the promises of Scripture:

1. The Lord's coming is a key to many of the Psalms (Psalm 2; 22; 45; 72; 89; 110).

2. Peter declares that all the holy prophets speak of the times of restoration and the coming of Christ (Acts 3:19-24).

3. There are many definite promises of his return in the New Testament (Matthew 16:27; John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 10:37; James 5:8; Revelation 1:7; 22:12, 20).

In these, the Christian is challenged to be ready for His return, comforted by the fact of His return, admonished to console the bereaved by the truth of His return, asked to bear oppression in the light of His return, exhorted to retain confidence because shortly He will return, and assured that His return will bring blessings and rewards to all who look for him. Surely, some of the most precious incentives to godliness are lost by rejecting the truth of the Lord's return.

The same thing is true of the ordinances; they lose their full meaning for the one who rejects the truth of the Lord's return:

1. Baptism implies resurrection with Christ to newness of life, and this new life in Christ Jesus will be made manifest when He who is our life shall appear in glory (Colossians 3:1-4).

2. So also the Lord's Supper has a bearing upon the second advent. Paul say, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). And Jesus said, "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29).

### 9.3 It is the Hope of the Church

The Lord's coming is set before us as the great hope of the church. Neither death nor the conversion of the world is the hope of the believer, but according to the Scriptures, the Lord's return is. Paul said, "I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of

the dead!" (Acts 23:6; cf. 26:6-8; Romans 8:23-25; 1 Corinthians15:19; Galatians 5:5) and "Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13). Peter wrote, "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" (1 Peter 1:3; cf. 2 Peter 3:9-13). And John said, "Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2f).

### 9.4 It is the Incentive to Biblical Christianity

The coming of Christ is the great incentive to biblical Christianity. A sincere belief in this doctrine has had much to do with orthodoxy, for those who have entertained this hope most heartily and intelligently have never denied the deity of Christ, nor questioned the authority of the Bible, nor declined from the faith that was once delivered to the saints. But this is not all. The acceptance of this truth also induces self-purification (Matthew 25:6f; 2 Peter 3:11; 1 John 3:3); it inspires watchfulness and perseverance (Matthew 24:44; Mark 13:35f; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 1 John 2:28); it challenges the backslider to return (Romans 13:11f); it constitutes a warning to the ungodly (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10); and it is a stay in adversity and bereavement (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:11; 2 Timothy 2:12; Hebrews 10:35-39; James 5:7). It is clear that the blessed hope was the incentive to apostolic Christianity. The men who had heard Jesus say that he would come again, could not be again seduced by the allurements of this world. They longed for His coming, lived for it, sought to lead others to Him and to the hope of His return.

### 9.5 It Has a Marked Effect on Christian Service

The Scriptures furnish in the promises and prospects of His return the greatest stimulus to service (Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 19:13; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10f). In them is disclosed to us the divine purpose and program of service (Acts 1:8; 15:13-18; Romans 11:22-32). And then, this truth itself constitutes the basis of the most effective appeals for the acceptance of Christ and for the consecration of life to God. Paul certainly so used it (Romans 13:11f; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). Thus, we conclude that the second coming of Christ is a most important doctrine.

## 10. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. **Survey of Theology II**, Lesson 10, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
2. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapters XXXIX and XLIV, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C.

Thiessen.

3. **Systematic Theology**, pp. 668-694, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1941 Edition, by Louis Berkhof.

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# Chapter Nine - Views of the Millennium and Rapture

The doctrines of Millennium and Rapture of Saints are important to the study of Eschatology. Since there are too many different views of these important doctrines, the readers may feel difficult to comprehend these doctrines. This chapter is designed to help the readers to understand the rationale of all the major views. This chapter is divided into two major divisions, they are:

1. views of the millennium; and
2. views of the rapture.

## 1. VIEWS OF THE MILLENNIUM

Sincere believers disagree about what the one thousand years of Revelation 20 is, and one's view of the Millennium tends to govern his view on most other details of eschatology. There are three major views:

1. amillennial;
2. postmillennial; and
3. premillennial.

There are hermeneutical reasons for these and other assumptions that enter into why one takes the position he does. It is the purpose of this section to examine these factors in order to give you a better basis for deciding which view you will take or perhaps a better reason for taking the view to which you already hold.

### 1.1 Definition of Terms

Before proceeding to deal with specific aspects of the last-day events, there is benefit in defining some basic terms:

1. The **rapture / translation of the church** is the catching away of the church from earth to heaven.

2. The **judgment seat of Christ** is the place where Christ judges Christians, immediately after their rapture, on the basis of their conduct as Christians, resulting in a receiving of rewards by some and a sense of loss for others.

3. The **marriage supper of the Lamb** is a term used in Revelation 19:7-10 to refer to the specific occasion, occurring sometime between the rapture and the revelation of Christ, when the church is eternally united to Christ as His bride.

4. The **great tribulation** is a period of seven years, beginning shortly after the rapture, when judgment is meted out upon the world at large for its sinfulness of past ages. At this time the restored nation of Israel is tried by the fire of suffering to bring the Jews to a receptive attitude toward Christ as their Messiah-Deliverer. Because the last half of this period is more severe in the degree of suffering experienced, the term is often used in reference only to the last three-and-a-half years of the total seven while the first half of this period is known as the beginning of the sorrow.

5. The **revelation of Christ** is a term commonly used to designate the return of Christ to the earth at the conclusion of the great tribulation, when He comes with the saints of the church, raptured seven years before, to bring deliverance for Israel which is being oppressed by the Antichrist.

6. The **battle of Armageddon**, a name taken from Revelation 16:16, designates the battle in Israel which brings the great tribulation to a climax, as the Antichrist triumphs over the Jews to seize Israel's homeland for himself. Part of the struggle, probably its beginning, takes place at the historic battle scene of Megiddo, well north of Jerusalem, but descriptive passages show it will end at Jerusalem.

7. The **judgment of Gentiles** is an occasion of judgment, immediately following the time of Christ's deliverance of Israel from the Antichrist, when a determination is made regarding which Gentiles will be permitted to enter the millennial period. The criterion for judgment will be personal righteousness as believers in Christ, evidenced by the attitude of each shown during the great tribulation toward Christ's "brethren," the Jews.

8. The **millennium** is a period of one thousand years, beginning soon after the judgment of Gentiles, when Christ rules in perfect righteousness and continual peace over the state of Israel, in particular, and over all the world, in general, with resurrected saints, now glorified, acting as assistants in this rule. The term **millennium** is from the Latin *mille*, a thousand, and *annus*, a year, means a thousand years. It is not found in Scripture, but the term "a thousand years" occurs 6 times in Revelation 20:2-7. The Greek term **chiliasm** frequently occurs in theological literature and denotes the doctrine that Christ will come and set up an earthly kingdom for a thousand years. The fact of such a kingdom is firmly established in the teaching of the Old Testament, but the book of Revelation gives its duration.

9. The **great white throne judgment** follows the millennium and is the occasion when the unsaved of all ages will receive their sentence of eternal punishment in hell for their sin.

10. The **premillennial view** of last things holds to the existence of a literal, earthly millennium, as just defined, and believes that the rapture of the church precedes it.

11. The **postmillennial view** holds to the existence of a literal millennium, resulting from the spread of the Gospel and the Salvation of a vast number of people, with Christ returning to the earth at its conclusion.

12. The **amillennial view**, denying the existence of a literal millennium, sees the millennial promises as being fulfilled in a spiritual kingdom; some adherents hold that this kingdom is Christ's rule over His church here on earth and others that it is God's rule over the saints in heaven.

13. The **pretribulational view** holds that the rapture of the church will be not only premillennial but pretribulational; that is, it will occur before the beginning of the great tribulation, meaning that the church will not experience this severe period of suffering.

14. The **posttribulational view** agrees with the pretribulational view that the rapture will be premillennial, but holds that it will occur after the great tribulation, meaning that the church will be on earth during this seven-year period.

15. The **midtribulational view** also agrees that the rapture will be premillennial but disagrees in holding that it will occur at the midpoint of the great tribulation, meaning that the church will not experience the last half of this period when suffering will be the most severe.

16. The **pre-wrath view** of the rapture departs from the customary two-fold division of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:27 and suggests that a threefold division (i.e. "beginning of birth pangs," "great tribulation," "day of the Lord") is more valid. The rapture will occur before the "day of the Lord" (Revelation 6:12-17). In this way, believers escape the "wrath" of God as promised in 1 Thessalonians 5.

### 1.2 A Brief History of Principal Views

(References: *George N.H. Peters*, **The Theocratic Kingdom**, 3 Vols, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1952, pp. 494-505; *Leon J. Wood*, **The Bible and Future Events**, Chapter 2, Academie Books, Zondervan Corporation, 1973 Edition, pp. 35-38.)

Various viewpoints regarding last-day events have been held through the centuries of church history. There is value in noting the principal ones. The evidence for a given view is not made stronger because it was held earlier than another, or by more people; but confidence may be gained by the adherent of a view if he knows that other Bible students, through significant periods of history, have held it.

#### *1.2.1 The first two centuries of church history*

There is general agreement among scholars that the view of the early church was premillennial. That is, Christians held that Christ would rule over a literal, earthly kingdom for one thousant years, assisted by raptured saints. No church fathers of the first two centuries are known to have disagreed with this view. The following may be listed as those who favored it:

From the first century:

1. Aristio;
2. John the Presbyter;
3. Clement of Rome;
4. Barnabus;
5. Hermas;
6. Ignatius;
7. Polycarp; and
8. Papias.

From the second century:

1. Pothinus;
2. Justin Martyr;
3. Melito;
4. Hegisippus;
5. Tatian;
6. Irenaeus;
7. Tertullian; and
8. Hippolytus.

*Papias* (AD 80-163), wrote that "there will be a millennium after the resurrection from the dead, when the personal reign of Christ will be established on this earth" (*Papias*, **Fragment VI**). *Papias* was in a position to know early church thinking, for *Irenaeus* says of him that he was one of John's hearers and was intimate with *Polycarp*. He not only stated his own view clearly but added that his view was held also by the following apostles:

1. Andrew;
2. Peter;

3. Philip;
4. Thomas;
5. James;
6. John; and
7. Matthew.

It may be concluded that, in the early church, a common view was that Christ's apostles were themselves premillennial.

*Barnabas*, writing about AD 100, likened world history to the six creative days and the day of rest. After the six days, which he interpreted to be six thousand years, Christ would come again and "destroy the time of wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day" (*Barnabas*, **The Epistle of Barnabas**, Chapter XV). Barnabas continued by saying that the eighth day is the beginning of another world. The apostle Peter admonishes believers not to forget that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8; read also Psalm 90:4).

*Justin Martyr* (AD 110-165), of the second century, wrote, "I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged" (*Justin Martyr*, **Dialogue with Trypho**, Chapter LXXX). He not only set forth his own premillennial position but added that this was the view of all Christians who were **orthodox**.

*Tertullian* (AD 150-225), declared, "We do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem" (*Tertullian*, **Against Marcion**, Book III, Chapter XXV). Further on he writes that after the thousand years are over "there will ensue the destruction of the world and the conflagration of all things at the judgment.

The eminent historian, *Philip Schaff*, observes, "The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism ... It was indeed not the doctrine of the church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers" (*Philip Schaff*, **History of the Christian Church**, II, p. 614).

### *1.2.2 The third century*

In the third century the premillennial view continued to be held by many. *Peters* lists the following among those who did:

1. Cyprian;

2. Commodian;
3. Nepos;
4. Coracion;
5. Victorinus;
6. Methodius; and
7. Lactantius.

At the same time, this century witnessed the rise of opposition to the view. Leaders in this were:

1. Gaius;
2. Clement of Alexandria;
3. Origen; and
4. Dionysius.

This opposition grew out of a new approach in hermeneutics. The allegorical method of interpreting Scripture was made to replace the former literal method; and, since the premillennial position found its basis in literal principles, it soon came into disfavor. In all fairness, it should be added that no true adherent of present-day amillennialism (which also rejects the literal interpretation of millennial passages) accepts the allegorical method then set forth.

### *1.2.3 The fourth century*

It is generally agreed that the fourth century saw the decline of premillennial thinking. Few voices were now being raised in its favour. Instead, theologians came to interpret millennial concepts as symbolic of church-related truths. The beginnings of amillennial thinking can be discerned in this. The following factors may be contributed to this change of view:

1. Several erroneous doctrines arose, such as Gnosticism, Asceticism, and Docetism, which could not be reconciled with the idea of a future earthly kingdom.

2. Judaism, having begun already in the early church, now gained strength, which resulted in greater enmity between Jewish and Gentile Christians. This, in turn, tended toward a denial of the millennium since the millennium had a distinctly Jewish character.

3. Emperor *Constantine* made Christianity the official religion of Rome, which resulted in a loss of expectancy among Christians for the return of Christ since the church was no longer being persecuted. The church saw a new day of peace

dawning. Many Christians believed that this temporal supremacy of Christianity was the actual fulfillment of the millennial promises, an opinion voiced officially by Rome itself.

4. There was a change in biblical interpretation, from the literal hermeneutic to the allegorical method. The predictions of the millennial kingdom were spiritualized.

5. Many began to interpret the binding of Satan and the resurrection and reign of saints (Revelation 20:1-4) as the personal victory of believers over Satan. In that sense, believers are, in this present life, reigning with Christ.

### *1.2.4 The rise of amillennialism*

Though the earliest beginnings of amillennial thinking can be traced back to the third century, *Augustine* (AD 354-430) is properly credited as the first to systematize this non-literal view of the millennium. He was a highly capable theologian, and his thinking came to carry great weight in all doctrinal discussion of the Roman Church after his day. He set forth his view particularly in his well-known volume, **The City of God**, in which he advocated that the visible church was the kingdom of God on earth. He believed that the millennium should be interpreted spiritually as fulfilled in the church. He believed that the binding of Satan occurred during Christ's earthly ministry, that the first resurrection should be identified with the new birth of the believer, and that the millennium, therefore, must coincide with the present church age.

According to the Scriptures, this view is obviously wrong due to the fact that the binding of Satan was not occurred during Christ's earthly ministry. The temptation of Jesus Christ by Satan as recorded in the Gospels showed that Satan was free to carry out his sinful works (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13).

With the Roman Church accepting this viewpoint, it became the dominant position for centuries, though certain groups, outside the mother church and considered heretical at the time, did continue to hold to premillennial tenets. Among these were the *Waldeness*, the *Paulicians*, and the *Albigense* (see *Charles Ryrie*, **The Basis of the Premillennial Faith**, pp. 27-28).

### *1.2.5 The rise of postmillennialism*

The eschatological doctrines were neglected during the Dark Ages, but with the Reformation there was renewed interest. The Reformers, by and large, taught that the church was in some sense the predicted kingdom, but they did revive the doctrine of the Lord's return and the resurrection.

The leaders of the Reformation continued in amillennial thinking, though it should be recognized that they gave little of their

attention to last-day matters. Their man concern was rightly with the area of Salvation, where they had their main differences with the Roman Church. A matter of note is that they called for a return to the literal method of interpretation, and this, quite apart from their intention, really laid the foundation for a return to premillennialism. It was not premillennialism that first brought a change in eschatological thinking, however, but a new view which came to be called postmillennialism.

*Daniel Whitby*, (1638-1726), a liberal Unitarian, is generally considered the originator of the viewpoint. Some of his basic ideas, however, had been presented as early as the twelfth century by *Joachim* of Floris (see *H. Kromminga*, **The Millennium in the Church**, p. 20). *Whitby* saw a wonderful age for the church in the future, climaxed by a man-made millennium. Other liberals followed him, attracted by the suitability of the view to the evident progress of man in society, science and technology. Conservative Bible students were attracted also, for the view returned to the idea of an earthly kingdom, which was felt to be more in keeping with numerous Scripture passages. As a result, both a literal and a conservative type of post-millennialism came into being; the former seeing man making his own millennium by natural progress, and the latter viewing the millennium as the result of an increasing number of people being saved through faith in Christ.

Postmillennialism became widely accepted among leading theologians. It was dealt a severe blow, however, by the two World Wars of this century, which showed that man was not making the progress that had been envisioned.

### *1.2.6 Revival of premillennialism (The seventeenth to twentieth centuries)*

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, along with the rise of postmillennialism came a less noticed return to premillennialism, following the early days of the Reformation. This resulted, as already noted, from the return to literal principles of interpretation. The movement was slow in developing at first, but it gradually gained impetus as men of recognized stature were persuaded in favor of it. Among these were the following:

1. Bengel;
2. Steir;
3. Alford;
4. Lange;
5. Meyer;
6. Ellicott;
7. Fausset;
8. Bonar;
9. Trench;
10. Ryle;

11. Tregelles;
12. Godet;
13. Lightfoot;
14. Watts;
15. Wesley;
16. Darby;
17. Newell;
18. Pentecost;
19. Thiessen;
20. Walvoord;
21. Ryrie; and
22. Baker.

Due to the leadership and influence of such men, the last century has seen the view come to the fore. It may be added that amillennialism has experienced a strong revival also, with the diminishing influence of postmillennialism. At the present time the two leading positions are:

1. premillennialism; and
2. amillennialism.

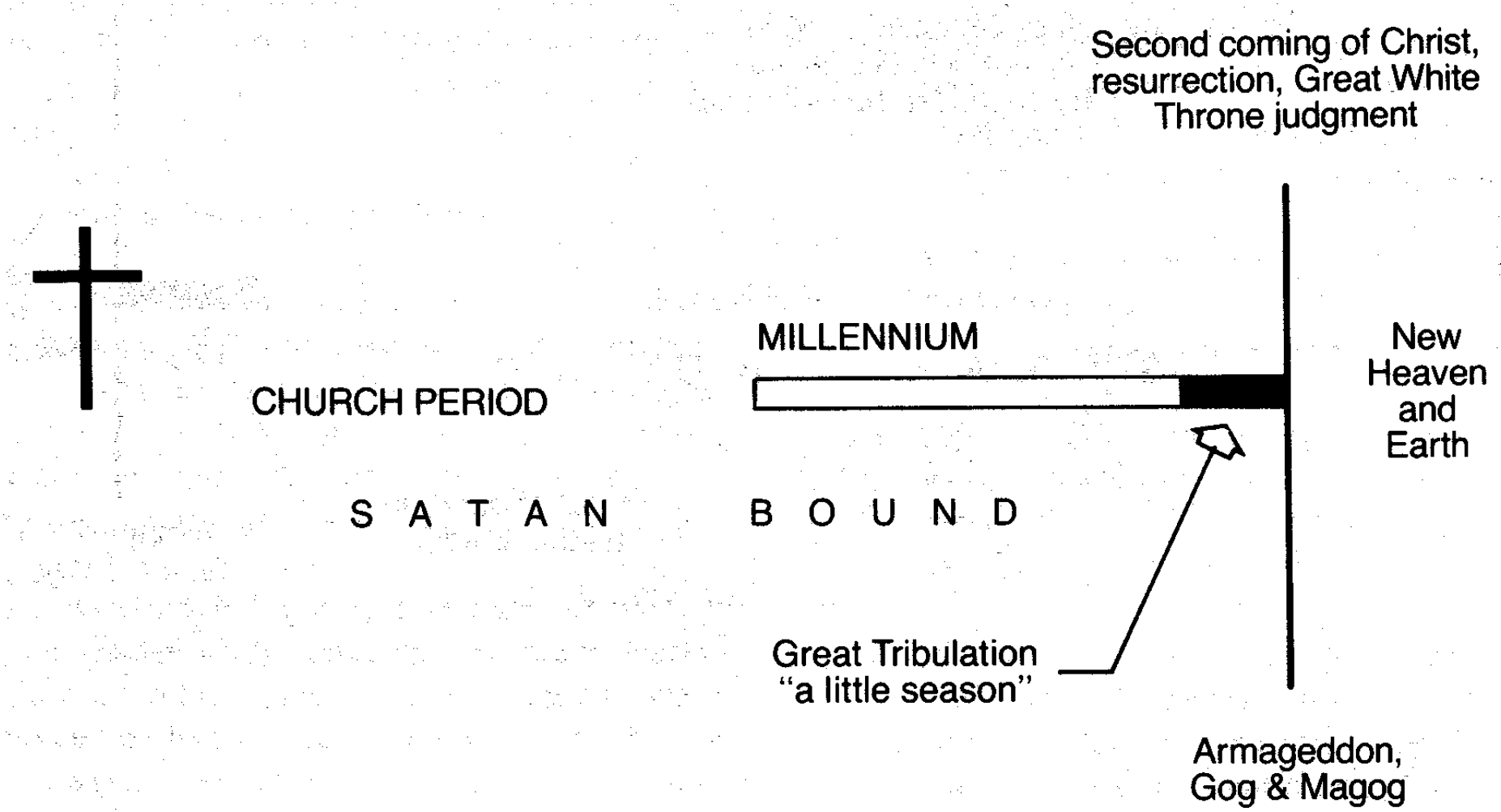
### 1.3 The Major Views of the Millennium

#### *1.3.1 Postmillennialism*

The term **postmillennial** has reference to the time Christ returns to earth ("post," or after the "one thousand years"). Those who hold this view believe in an actual earthly kingdom sometime in the future. However, they believe that the number of years, one thousand, is not to be interpreted literally, but as a long period of time, perhaps longer than a literal one thousand years.

The distinctive feature of the postmillennial view is that the church itself, through world evangelism, will bring about a "millennium" of righteousness as the world is converted to Christ. Along with this is further optimism about the general course of history as Christian principles have an increasing impact on society. Things have their ups and downs, but the world is getting better, they feel. This concept best suited the optimistic times during which it flourished, the latter part of the 19th century. It dominated early liberalism, but a small minority of evangelicals hold it today. Its major decline occurred following World War I, but recently it is being revived by a group of evangelicals who call themselves "reconstructionists" or "theonomists" and who

advocate the reinstatement of Mosaic Law in government through political, social and evangelistic involvement of believers in the power of the Holy Spirit.

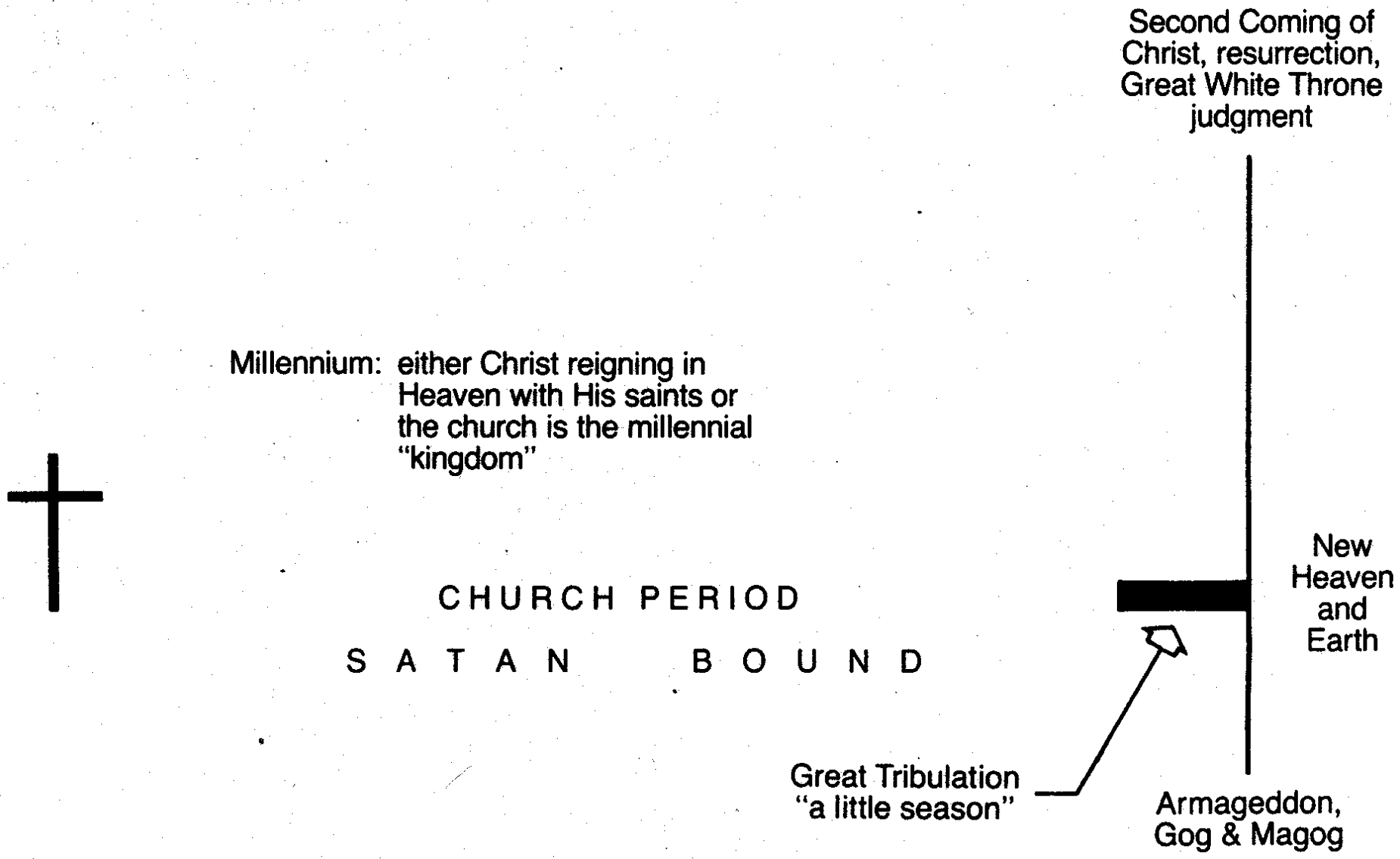



### *1.3.2 Amillennialism*

The term amillennialism means "no millennium," but this is misleading. What is actually taught by those who adhere to the amillennial view is that there will be no earthly millennium. Figurative interpretation of eschatology prevails in this school of thought, so that the one thousand years of Revelation 20 is interpreted figuratively as an indefinite period of time during which a spiritual millennium takes place between the first and second coming of Christ.

Like postmillennialists, amillennialists believe in the return of Christ to earth following this millennium. But they differ in that

they believe this millennium is spiritual in nature and is taking place now. They do not believe that history is going to get ultimately better or that evangelism will ever be totally successful.




### *1.3.3 Premillennialism*

The term premillennial pertains to the belief that Christ will return before the one thousand years of Revelation 20, as implied in Revelation 19 (if it is to be interpreted as chronologically preceding Chapter 20).

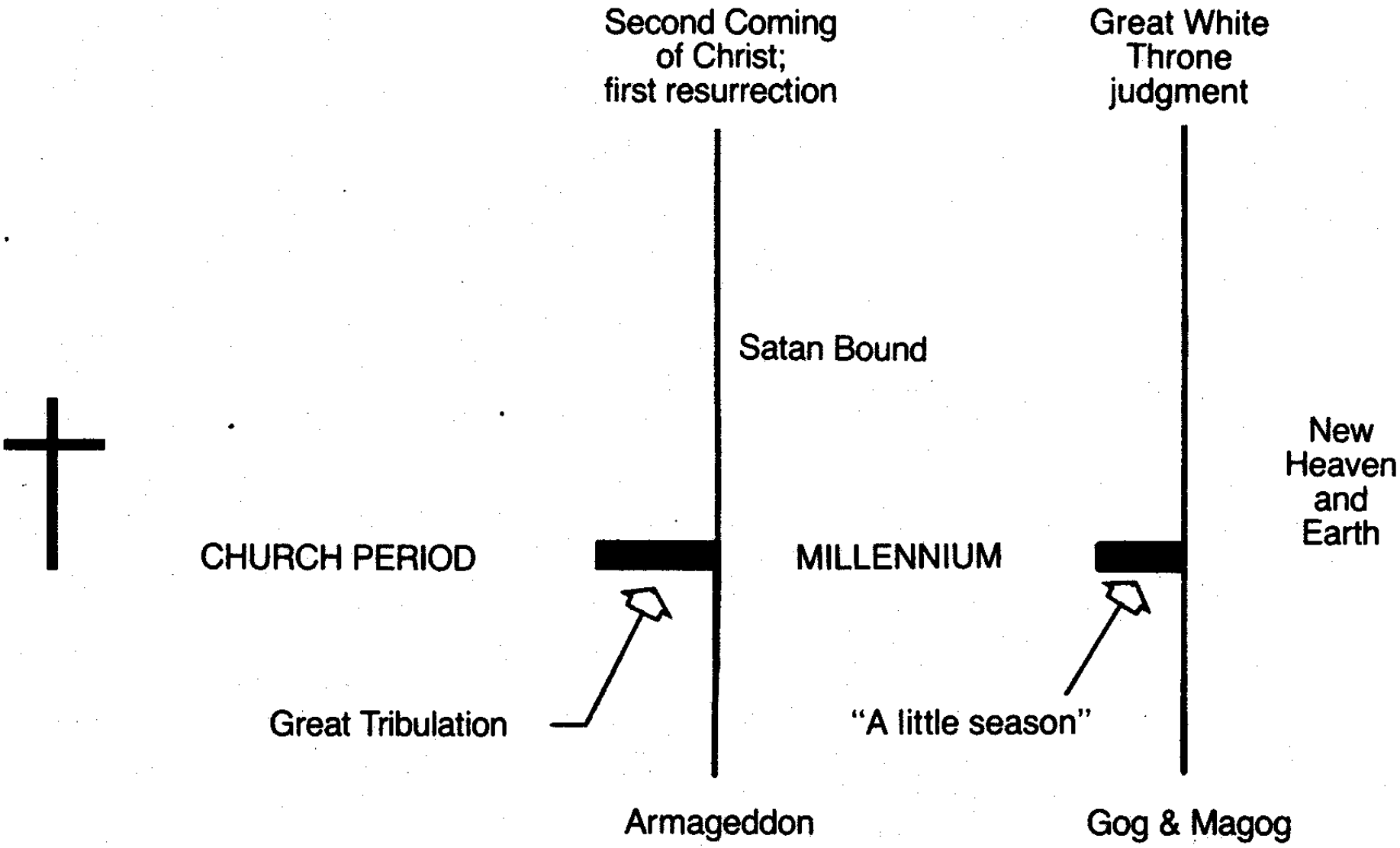
Distinctive to the premillennial view is the belief in a literal one thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. There are two schools of thought within premillennialism:

1. historic premillennialism; and
2. dispensational premillennialism.

Dispensational premillennialism tends to interpret eschatological passages in the Bible more literally, and thus believes that Old Testament promises to Israel will be literally fulfilled to the nation of Israel.

The historic school, so called because the early church fathers did not talk much about Israel's future role, applies most of the Old Testament promises to the church in a figurative way similarly to the amillennialists.

Finally, premillennialism views history as generally declining toward a culmination in the Great Tribulation.




**1.4 The Major Assumptions Behind Each Millennial View**

We will focus on the following major assumptions behind the two predominant views (i.e. amillennialism and premillennialism):

1. pertaining to Israel; and
2. pertaining to Hermeneutics.

What information I give about amillennialism generally applies to postmillennialism, anyway.

### *1.4.1 Assumptions pertaining to Israel*

The Old Testament contains numerous promises to the nation of Israel, starting with the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 17:1-8; 22:16-18) all the way to the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:1-40. Since they have never been fulfilled, what is to be our point of view regarding these promises of restoration and kingdom?

#### *1.4.1.1 The amillennial view*

The amillennialist believes that promises concerning Israel's possession of the land of Canaan and her kingdom were fulfilled when Israel conquered Canaan in the days of Joshua (see Joshua 21:43-45) and became a great nation under Solomon, and / or that because of Israel's wholesale rejection of Jesus the Messiah these promises were revoked and applied in a figurative way to a more obedient New Testament people known as the "church."

The issue turns on the interpretation of the following New Testament texts, which might be understood to mean that Israel as a nation has been rejected by God, and only Jews who become Christians can inherit the ancient promises:

1. **Matthew 3:2**. Jesus and John the Baptist preached that the kingdom of heaven was "near." Since no earthly kingdom was established at that time nor shortly after, none, therefore, is to be expected except a spiritual kingdom, the church.

2. **Matthew 21:43**. The kingdom of God will be taken away from you [Jews], and be given to a nation [the church] producing the fruit of it. The "kingdom" here is interpreted as the earthly kingdom, and thus we should not look for such a kingdom but should expect that it will be spiritually realized in the church.

3. **John 18:36**. Jesus affirms, "My kingdom is not of this world." This is interpreted to mean that only a spiritual kingdom should be expected.

4. **1 Thessalonians 2:14-16**. The wrath of God is upon the Jews "to the utmost," implying a rejection of national Israel.

Amillennialists insist that such texts as these should alert us to the fact that a fundamental change in God's plans for Israel had been made. Their persistent disobedience led to the dissolving of hopes for an earthly, worldwide kingdom, and to a fulfillment of the ancient promises of the kingdom spiritually in the church.

### *1.4.1.2 The premillennial view*

The premillennialist believes that the passages cited above can be explained differently:

1. Although Joshua 21:43-45 says that Israel possessed all that God had given, it evidently pertains to that which Israel actually possessed, not all she potentially could have had (see Judges 1:27-36; Joshua 13:1). The failure of Israel to realize the promised kingdom is a temporary situation to be remedied by a conversion of Israel at the second advent (Romans 11:26) and ultimate restoration to their heritage.

2. The announcement by Jesus that His kingdom was "near" means: (1) the earthly kingdom was actually being offered but was rejected and postponed until the second advent; or (2) only a spiritual kingdom was offered by Christ, who intended that the earthly kingdom be establised at His second coming. This latter view is my preference.

3. To say that Jesus' kingdom is "not of this world" means not of this world system, the meaning of *kosmos* or "world."

4. The wrath of 1 Thessalonians 2:14 is toward that generation, not necessarily all generations.

Beyond these verses, premillennialists find several unconditioned promises of Israel's ultimate restoration:

1. **Deuteronomy 30:1-10**. Even if Israel is scatered "to the ends of the earth" (her present condition), God will gather them again when they "return to the Lord," which Romans 11:26 predicts will indeed occur.

2. **Jeremiah 31:27-37**. Only if the "fixed order" of the universe can be destroyed, will God cause Israel to cease being a "nation before Me" or cast her off for all they have done. This seems to require national restoration, not merely preservation of the Jews as a race, in light of the Old Testament meaning of "nation before Me."

3. **Romans 11:25-27**. The present condition of Israel is due to a "hardening in part" until the "fulness [full number] of the Gentiles has come in," a possible reference to world evangeliztion. When the Deliverer (Christ) comes "out of Zion," He will "remove ungodliness" and "all Israel will be saved." The previous analogy of the olive tree refers to Israel's reinstatement to covenant blessings, which for them would involve national restoration.

Premillennialists believe that the Old Testament promises to Israel are still valid and certain to be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ, a conviction based largely on the Old Testament. Since God's promises cannot be annulled (Galatians 3:15-16), no further expansion was needed upon the Old Testament by New Testament writers. Jesus did not deny a restoration to Israel in

Acts 1:6-7. He merely told the disciples it was not their concern.

### *1.4.2 Assumptions pertaining to hermeneutics*

Amillennialists reach their conclusions because they have followed a non-literal interpretation of all eschatology. Conversely, premillennialists apply a more literal method of interpretation, especially to Revelation 20, and thus reach the conclusions they do.

#### *1.4.2.1 The amillennial view*

Amillennialists believe in a non-literal interpretation of eschatology, especially Revelation, for at least two reasons:

1. eschatology is a literary style that demands it (called "apocalyptic"), and
2. the rejection of Israel requires a non-literal fulfillment of the promises of God to the church, because of the church is a "spiritual," not an earthly, kingdom.

First, the ammillennialist believes he can produce examples of a non-literal interpretation of Old Testament eschatological passages. He points to Hebrews 8 where a covenant originally made with Israel is applied to the church. He also points to Acts 2 where Peter applies a prophecy from Joel to a New Testament event (Pentecost), which would be a "non-literal" fulfillment of the original prophecy. If these examples and others are interpreted in a non-literal way, does this not imply that all prophecy should thus be interpreted?

Amillennialists justify the non-literal application to the church of Old Testament promises to Israel partly because they regard the church as the "new Israel." They interpret Galatians 6:16, "Israel of God" and James 1:1, "twelve tribes," as pertaining to the church. The church is simply the continuation of Old Testament Israel as God's chosen people.

#### *1.4.2.2 The premillennial view*

The premillennialist, especially the dispensational variety, believes that except for certain genuinely non-literal "apocalytic" books like Daniel and Revelation, most Old Testament eschatological passages should be taken in a normal, literal fashion. They believe this is consistent with a rule of hermeneutics which affirms that you interpret something literally unless it makes no sense otherwise (a rule with which amillennialists agree, except with eschatology).

Although many premillennialists see a spiritual application to the church of promises originally made to Israel (like Hebrews 8 -

the new covenant), they qualify the application by noting that it is done by New Testament writers only in reference to the spiritual aspects of a prophecy (like forgiveness of sin and inner transformation), not promises that pertain to earthly, temporal matters. These latter features will be literally fulfilled to the earthly nation of Israel.

Finally, premillennialists note that all Old Testament prophecies that have already been fulfilled, like the prophecies concerning Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection, were fulfilled literally. Why should we not expect the same kind of literal fulfillment for prophecies that have not yet been realized?

### *1.4.3 Conclusion*

If Old Testament prophecies can stand on their own literally, except for those which are of an apocalyptic style, there appears to be a future for Israel. If the millennium of Revelation 20 is a literal period of time on earth, then the Old Testament kingdom promises fit logically into that period. The New Testament does not clearly contradict this; in fact, the passages amillennialists cite can be interpreted in other ways without any strain upon them. I conclude that the premillennial scheme of eschatology is the most viable.

## 2. VIEWS OF THE RAPTURE

The Scriptures predict a period of tribulation which would come between the present age and the age to come. This period of will end with the second coming of Christ to the earth. But will it begin with His coming into the air and the rapture of the saved, or will it begin before He comes, and will the church pass through the tribulation?

Some say that the church will pass through the tribulation and that the catching up of the redeemed will be immediately followed by their return with Christ. Other say that the church will pass through the first half of the period and that the rapture will take place in the middle of it. The partial-rapturists teach that the unspiritual part of the church will pass through the tribulation, but the mature and Spirit-filled will be caught up before tribulation. And some say that Jesus will come for the church before tribulation. In summary, there are five major views of the rapture:

1. partial rapturism;
2. posttribulational;
3. midtribulational;
4. pre-wrath; and
5. pretribulational.

It is the purpose of this section to examine the underlying reasons and assumptions of each view in order to give you a better basis for deciding which view you will take. Let us consider briefly some early Christian teaching and then examine the teaching of Scripture.

## 2.1 Early Christian Teaching

As noted earlier, the early church expected the premillennial coming of Christ. Was its teaching also pretribulational? In the testimony of the early church fathers, there is almost complete silence on the subject of the tribulation. They often speak of going through tribulations, but very seldom of a future period known as the great tribulation. This is probably because during the first centuries of the church, the church was passing through many persecutions and it did not concern itself with the future tribulation period.

### *2.1.1 Writings from the early church fathers support pretribulational rapture*

However, there are two intimations of a belief in the pretribulational return of Christ:

1. Hermas' writings; and
2. Irenaeus' writings.

#### *2.1.1.1 Hermas' writings*

*Hermas* writes that he passed by a wild beast on the way, and that thereafter a maiden met him and saluted him, saying, "Hail, O Man!" He returned her salutation, and said, "Lady, hail!" Then she asked him, "Has nothing crossed your path?" To this, Hermas replied, "I was met by a beast of such a size that it could destroy peoples, but through the power of the Lord and His great mercy I escaped from it." Then the maiden said, "Well did you escape from it, because that you can be saved by no other than His great and glorious name ... You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it, if your heart be free and spotless, and ye spend the rest of your days in serving the Lord blamelessly" (*Hermas*, **Shepherd of Hermas**, Book I, Vision IV, Chapter ii). This seems to show that there was teaching that the church would escape the future great tribulation period.

#### *2.1.1.2 Irenaeus' writings*

*Irenaeus* also seems to hold that the church will be caught up during the tribulation, for he says:

"And therefore, when in the end the church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, "There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be. For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome, they are crowned with incorruption" (*Irenaeus*, **Against Heresies**, Book V, Chapter xxix).

### *2.1.2 Early church fathers believe in the imminence of the Lord Jesus Christ's return*

It is clear that the early church fathers regarded the Lord Jesus Christ's coming as imminent. The Lord Jesus had taught the church to expect His return at any moment, and the church looked for Him to come in their day and taught His personal return as being imminent. The early church lived in the constant expectation of their Lord, and hence was not concerned with the possibility of a tribulation period in the future (*Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson*, **The Ante-Nicene Fathers**, I, 11). This may be the reason for the silence concerning the tribulation in the fathers.

The doctrine of imminency is taught in Scripture in such passages as John 14:2-3; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 4:16-17; 5:5-9; Titus 2:13; James 5:8-9; Revelation 3:10; 22:17-22. The doctrine of imminence forbids the participation of the church in any part of the tribulation period.

### *2.1.3 The teaching of future tribulation period was ignored during the Middle Ages*

Further, it is not strange that the leaders in the Middle Ages are silent concerning the pretribulational rapture. With the rise of Constantine and the state church, the church turned to an allegorizing of the Scriptures concerning the Lord's return. And with the denial of a literal millennium, the tribulation was allegorized or ignored. The Reformers returned to the doctrine of the second coming, but their emphasis was on the doctrine of Salvation rather than the development of the details of eschatology.

### *2.1.4 Revival of pretribulational rapture (The seventeenth to twentieth centuries)*

In 1830, a new school arose within the fold of premillennialism, pretribulational rapture was developed as an important doctrine in eschatology. Nowadays, most of the reputable Bible scholars hold the pretribulational rapture view, they are:

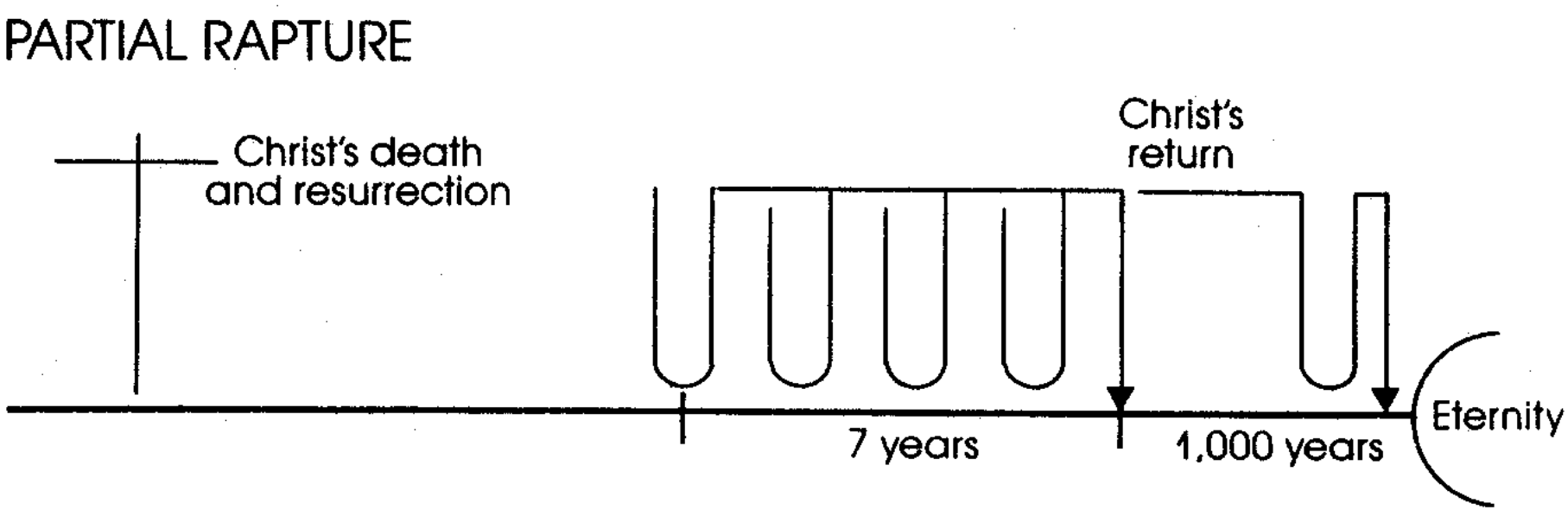
1. John Nelson Darby;
2. C.I. Scofield;
3. William R. Newell;
4. J. Dwight Pentecost;

5. John F. Walvoord;
6. Henry C. Thiessen;
7. Charles C. Ryrie;
8. Robert L. Thomas;
9. Leon J. Wood;
10. R.E. Harlow;
11. John Phillips;
12. William MacDonald;
13. Henry M. Morris; and
14. William H. Baker.

## 2.2 The Major Views of the Rapture

### *2.2.1 Partial Rapturism*

According to the partial rapturism view, not all believers will be taken at the translation of the church, but rather only those who are "watching" and "waiting" for that event, who have reached some degree of spiritual attainment that makes them worthy to be included.



### *2.2.1.1 Reasons for holding this view*

The partial rapturist believe that a clear inference from Luke 21:36 is that those Christians who do not "watch" will not "escape all these things that shall come to pass," and will not be accounted worthy "to stand before the Son of Man." They gather from such passages as:

1. Matthew 24:41-42;
2. 1 Corinthians 15:23;
3. 2 Timothy 4:8;
4. 1 Thessalonians 1:10;

that those only will be taken who "wait," "look for," and "have loved His appearing" (*Thomas Waugh*, **When Jesus Comes**, p. 108).

### *2.2.1.2 Comments*

The partial rapturists have made the following mistakes:

1. It is based on a misunderstanding of the value of the death of Christ (i.e. doctrines of propitiation, reconciliation and redemption) as it frees the sinner from condemnation and renders him acceptable to God. The believer is justified, made acceptable to God, placed in Christ positionally, to be received by God as though he were the Son Himself. The individual who has this perfect standing of Christ can never be less than completely acceptable to God. The partial rapturist, who insists that only those who are "waiting" and "watching" will be translated, minimizes the perfect standing of the child of God in Christ and presents him before the Father in his own experimental righteousness.

2. They must deny the New Testament teaching on the unity of the body of Christ. According to 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, all believers are united to the body of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 5:30). If the rapture includes only a portion of those redeemed, then the body, of which Christ is the Head, will be a dismembered and disfigured body when it is taken to Him.

3. They must deny the completeness of the resurrection of the believers at the translation. Since not all the living saints could be raptured, logically, not all the dead in Christ could be resurrected, inasmuch as many of them died in spiritual immaturity. But since Paul teaches that "we shall all be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:14), it is impossible to admit a partial resurrection.

4. They confuse the Scriptural teaching on rewards. The rewards are given by God as the recompense for faithful service (Revelation 2:10; James 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; Philippians 4:1; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 1 Peter 5:4; 2 Timothy 4:8). Nowhere in its teaching about rewards is the rapture included as the reward for watching.

5. They confuse the distinction between law and grace. If this view is correct, the believer's position before God, eternally, would depend on his works, for what he did and what attitudes he developed would then be the basis of his acceptance.

6. They must place a portion of the believing church in the tribulation period. This is impossible. One of the purposes of the tribulation period is to judge the unbelievers. The church needs not such a purging judgment unless the death of Christ be ineffective.

7. They must deny the distinction between Israel and the church. There are certain passages which the partial rapturist uses to support his position. They use Scriptures that are applicable to God's problem for Israel and applies them to the church.

8. **Luke 21:36**. The primary reference of this passage is to the nation Israel, who is already in the tribulation period, and therefore this is not applicable to the church. The things to be escaped are the judgments associated with "that day" (v. 34), that is, the Day of the Lord. Watchfulness is enjoined upon the church (1 Thessalonians 5:6; Titus 2:13) apart from being found worthy to participate in the translation.

9. **Matthew 24:41-42**. This passage is in that discourse in which the Lord Jesus outlines His program for Israel, who is already in the tribulation period. The one taken is taken to judgment and the one left is left for the millennial blessing. Such is not the prospect for the church.

10. **1 Corinthians 15:23**. This is made by the partial rapturist to teach a division in the ranks of the believer in the resurrection of the church. However, Paul is not giving instruction on the order of the resurrection for the church, but rather the divisions within the whole resurrection program, which will include not only church saints, but also Old Testaments and tribulation saints as well.

11. **2 Timothy 4:8**. This is used by the partial rapturist to show that the rapture must be a partial one. However, the subject of translation is not in view in this passage, but rather the question of reward. The second advent was intended by God to be a purifying hope (1 John 3:3). Because of such purifying a new life is produced because of the expectancy of the Lord's return. Therefore those that truly "love His appearing" will experience a new kind of life which will bring a reward.

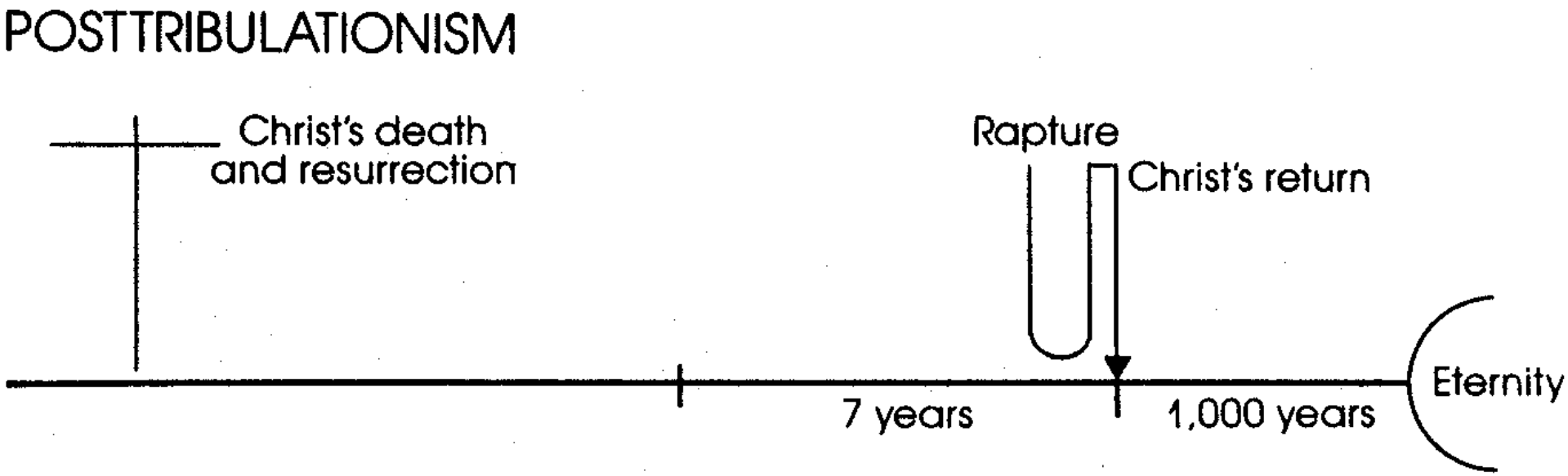
12. **1 Thessalonians 1:10**. This is used by the partial rapturist to teach that the church that was unprepared for the rapture will meet the Lord in the clouds on His way to the earth at the second advent. Such a view coincides with the interpretation of the posttribulationist and will be shown to be contrary to the teaching of Scripture in the next section.

### *2.2.1.3 Conclusion*

An examination of the Scriptures used by the partial rapturists to support their position shows that their interpretation is not consistent with true exegesis. From these considerations then, I conclude that the partial rapture position is untenable.

### *2.2.2 Posttribulational rapture*

According to the posttribulational view, the church will pass through the whole tribulation period and only then be raptured, just before the millennium when Christ returns.




### *2.2.2.1 Reasons for holding this view*

There are several major arguments on which the posttribulationist rests his case:

1. The historical argument. His position is that pretribulationism is a new doctrine, arising in the last hundred years, and

therefore to be rejected because it is not apostolic.

2. The promise of tribulation given to the church. Passages such as Matthew 24:9-11; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 23:27-31, which are addressed to Israel and promise them tribulation, are used to prove that the church will go through the tribulation period. In the light of such specific promises it is impossible to say that the church will be raptured prior to the tribulation period. Their argument is substantiated by citing the persecutions recorded in the New Testament into which the church came (John 16:33; Acts 8:1-3; 11:19; 14:22; Romans 12:12) as being a partial fulfillment of those warnings.

3. The argument from resurrection. Perhaps the strongest evidence for this view is the fact that the resurrection passages in the Bible make no reference to an earlier, separate resurrection for the church, but place the resurrection of all believers at a point prior to the millennium (see 1 Corinthians 15:23-24; Revelation 20:1-4). Upon examining passages that speak of the first resurrection, they find that this first resurrection is associated with the coming of the Lord (Isaiah 26:19), the conversion of Israel (Romans 11:15), the inauguration of the kingdom (Luke 14:14-15; Revelation 20:4-6), the giving of rewards (Revelation 11:15-18), the Great Tribulation coming before it (Daniel 12:1-3).

#### *2.2.2.2 Comments*

The posttribulationists have made the following mistakes:

1. They must be based on a denial of dispensationalism and all dispensational distinctions. It is only thus that they can place the church in that period which is particularly called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7).

2. They must deny the Scriptural teaching concerning the nature and purpose of the tribulation period which is to pour out judgment on sin instead of believers.

3. They must deny all the distinctions observed from the Scriptures between the rapture and the second advent, making them one and the same event.

4. They must deny the doctrine of imminence, which says that the Lord Jesus Christ may come at any time, and substitute the teaching that a multitude of signs must be fulfilled before the Lord can possibly come.

5. They must deny any future fulfillment to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, claiming for it an historical fulfillment.

6. They must apply major passages of Scripture that outline God's program for Israel (Matthew 13, 24-25; Revelation 4-19)

to the church in order to support his views. Therefore, they must also deny the distinctions between Israel and the church.

7. In response to the historical argument, we reply that the failure to discern the teaching of the Scripture does not nullify that teaching. It should be observed that each era of church history has been occupied with a particular doctrinal controversy, which has become the object of discussion, revision, and formulation, until there was general acceptation of what Scripture taught. It was not until the last century that the field of eschatology became a matter to which the mind of the church was turned. The whole concept of the progress of dogma would be our strongest argument against the posttribulation rapturist who argues that the doctrine must be rejected because it was not clearly taught in the early church. In addition, the early church lived in the light of the belief in the imminent return of Christ. Pretribulationism is the only position consistent with this doctrine of imminence.

8. In response to the promise of tribulation given to the church, we reply that the Scripture abounds in promises that Israel will be brought into a time of purging to prepare them as a nation for the millennium to follow the advent of Messiah. However, since Israel is to be distinguished from the church in the economy of God, those Scriptures (Matthew 24:9-11; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 23:27-31) which promise tribulation to Israel cannot be made to teach that the church is to experience the tribulation period. Further, the term "tribulation" is used in several different ways in Scripture. It may be used in a non-technical, non-eschatological sense in reference to any time of suffering or testing into which one goes. When the word "tribulation" is used in reference to the church, as in John 16:33; Acts 8:1-3; 11:19; 14:22; Romans 12:12, it is used in a non-technical, non-eschatological sense, in which the church is promised an age-long opposition from the god of this age, but it is not teaching that the church will be brought into the tribulation period. Otherwise one would have to teach that the tribulation has already existed for over nineteen hundred years.

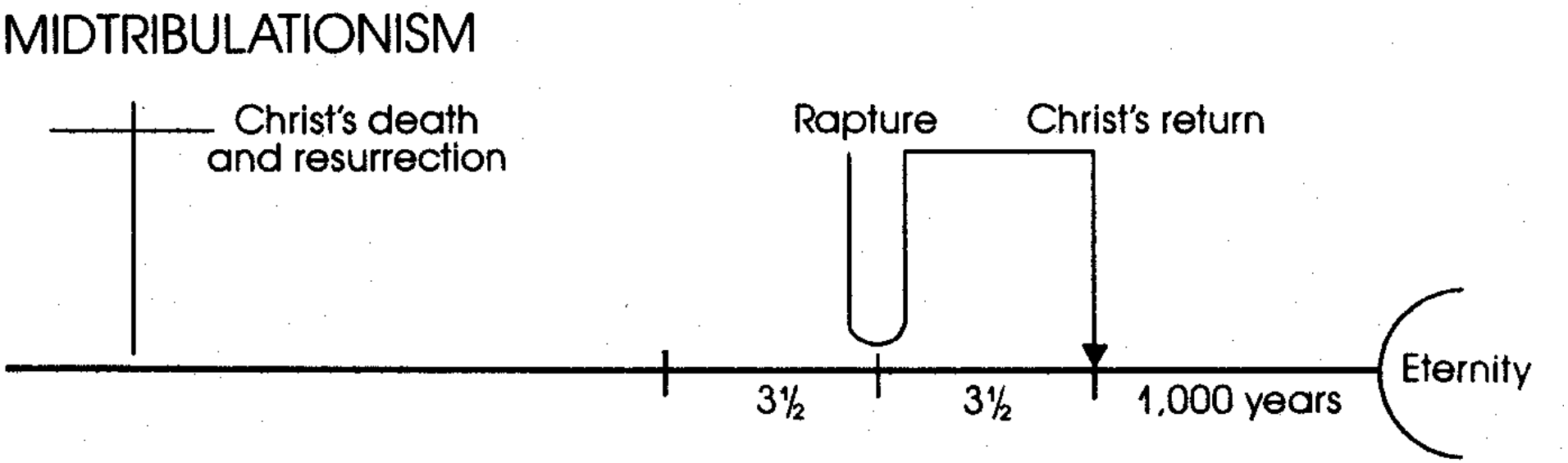
9. In response to the argument from resurrection, we would explain that this is due to the fact that the rapture of the church is a "mystery" doctrine (1 Corinthians 15:52) previously unrevealed and given mainly to the apostle Paul, and thus it is not clarified in the resurrection passages. Further, if one separates the resurrection of the church from the resurrection of Israel, there is no strength left in the posttribulationist's argument. We believe that the Old Testament saints are raised after the end of the tribulation period.

#### *2.2.2.3 Conclusion*

From the above considerations of the arguments presented by the posttribulation rapturist it can be seen that his arguments are invalid. I conclude that the posttribulational rapture position is untenable.

### *2.2.3 Midtribulational rapture*

The midtribulational view is actually a variation of the pretribulational view. The midtribulationist simply considers the period from which the church is exempt from tribulation to be the three-and-one-half-year part of the tribulation that closes the tribulation period (Revelation 11:2) instead of the full seven years. The only difference in the view, other than this, is that the rapture is not imminent. The beginning of the seven-year period will be marked by a "covenant" or treaty by the Antichrist with Israel (Daniel 9:27).




### *2.2.3.1 Reasons for holding this view*

There are several major arguments on which the midtribulationist rests his case:

1. The denial of the imminent return of Christ. This position rests on the argument that the announcements of events such as the destruction of Jerusalem, the death of Peter, the imprisonment of Paul, and the announced program for the age as set forth in Matthew 28:19-20, together with the outlined course of the age with its development of apostasy, all make an imminent return impossible; therefore the Lord Jesus could not come until these events had taken place.

2. The promise of tribulation given to the church. If the church was promised tribulation, then we can expect to experience the first half of the tribulation period (John 16:33; Acts 8:1-3; 11:19; 14:22; Romans 12:12).

3. The identity of the last trump. They argue that the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15 and the last trump of 1 Corinthians

15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16 are identical. In addition, Jesus pictures the tribulation as follows by "a great sound of the trumpet" (Matthew 24:29-31).

4. Revelation 7:14 seems to give the strongest evidence in this view. In the parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seal, where the scope of the whole vision is given, those saved in that time are said to have come out of "great tribulation." This seems to indicate that the time covered by the seals is considered a part of the tribulation period.

### *2.2.3.2 Comments*

The midtribulationists have made the following mistakes:

1. They must deny the dispensational interpretation of the Scriptures.

2. They must deny the distinctions between Israel and the church. This is observed in that this position places the church in the first half of the last seven years of the period determined upon Daniel's people and city.

3. This position must rest on a view of the tribulation that divides the period into two separate and unrelated halves, so that the church can go through the first half, even though it has no part in the last half.

4. In response to the denial of the imminent return of Christ, we reply that such argument fails to see that the very men who received such announcements themselves believed that what would be the natural course of history could be interrupted by the translation of the believers out of the sphere in which history unfolds and held to the imminent return. The exhortation to watchfulness addressed to the church became the hope of the early church and that they lived in the light of the expectation of the imminent return of Christ. Further, the doctrine of imminency is clearly taught in the Scriptures cannot be denied.

5. In response to the promise of tribulation given to the church, since this question has been dealt with previously reference need only be made to the fact that tribulation may be used in either a technical sense, referring to the seven years of Daniel's prophecy, or in a non-technical sense, referring to any time of trial or distress. The tribulation promised to the church is of this non-technical kind.

6. In response to the identity of the last trump, we reply that inasmuch as the program for the church differs from that for Israel, each may be terminated by the blowing of a trumpet, without making the two last trumpets identical and synchronous as to time. We have numerous reasons to believe that the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15 is not identical

to the last trump of 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16. **(1)** The trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 sounds before the wrath of God descends, while the chronology of Revelation indicates that the trumpet in Revelation 11:15 sounds at the end of the time of wrath, just prior to the second advent. **(2)** The trumpet for the church is singular. No trumpets have preceded it so that it cannot be said to be the last of a series. The trumpet that closes the tribulation period is clearly the last of a series of seven. **(3)** In 1 Thessalonians 4, the voice associated with the sounding of the trumpet summons the dead and the living and consequently is heard before the resurrection. In the Revelation, while a resurrection is mentioned (11:12), the trumpet does not sound until after the resurrection, showing us that two different events must be in view. **(4)** The trumpet in 1 Thessalonians issues in blessing, in life, in glory, while the trumpet in Revelation issues in judgment upon the enemies of God. **(5)** In Matthew 24:31, Jesus teaches that the Israel will be regathered by the sounding of a trumpet after the second advent, therefore it is clear that the trumpet is purely related to Israel instead of the church.

7. In response to the parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seal (Revelation 7:14), we reply that the Scriptures clearly indicate that a great multitude of both Jews and Gentiles will trust in the Lord Jesus after the church is caught up to glory. Though all genuine Christians living on earth will be raptured to the Heaven when Christ comes for His church, immediately a testimony will be raised up to the name of Christ through new converts among Jews and Gentiles. There are many in the world who either have never heard the gospel or have not fully understand it. There is no reason to think that these cannot be saved, if still alive after the rapture. By reading the Bible and related books regarding the Bible Prophecy, many Jews and Gentiles, for instances, will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith. This will also include some previous professing Christians who will repent and have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They will then go throughout the world (Matthew 24:14), preaching the gospel of the Kingdom resulting in many Jews and Gentiles will be converted. Though these are never described by the term "church," they are constantly called "saints" in the book of Revelation. In this connection, those saved in that time are said to have come out of "great tribulation."

#### *2.2.3.3 <u>Conclusion</u>*

Examination of the midtribulation rapture position has shown us that the essential arguments of the view will not stand the examination of true interpretation of Scripture and must be rejected as false.

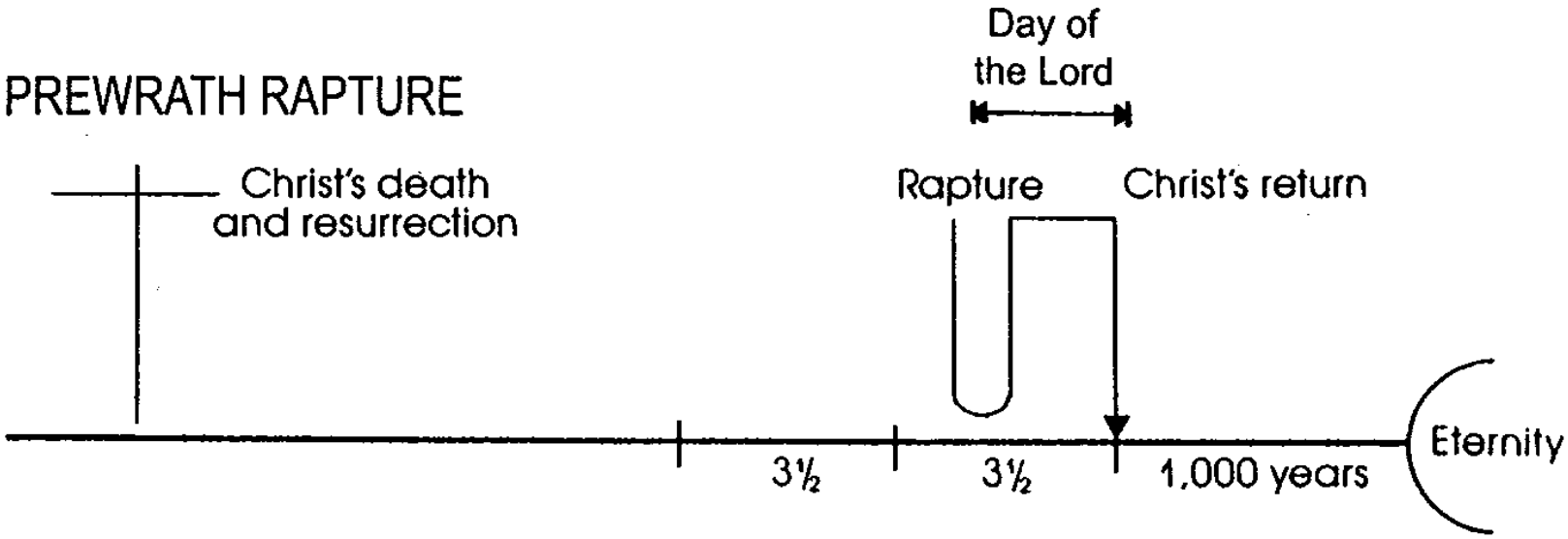
### *2.2.4 Pre-wrath Rapture*

The pre-wrath view of the rapture departs from the customary two-fold division of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:27 and suggests that a threefold division is more valid. They would be:

1. the first division, the "beginning of birth pangs" (Matthew 24:4-8) or first seal (Revelation 6:1-2) which cover the first half

of the seventieth week;

2. the second division, the "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21) or second to fifth seals (Revelation 6:3-11) which will begin in the middle of the seventieth week and end sometime between the middle and end. The sixth seal warns believers about the coming of the "Day of the Lord" (Revelation 6:12-17), and at this point the rapture will occur; and
3. the third division, will consist of the "Day of the Lord" which begins with the breaking of the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1) and continues until the end of the seventieth week.




### *2.2.4.1 Reasons for holding this view*

In this way, believers escape the "wrath" of God as promised in 1 Thessalonians 5, and the problems of a division between the rapture and second coming of Christ are avoided.

### *2.2.4.2 Comments*

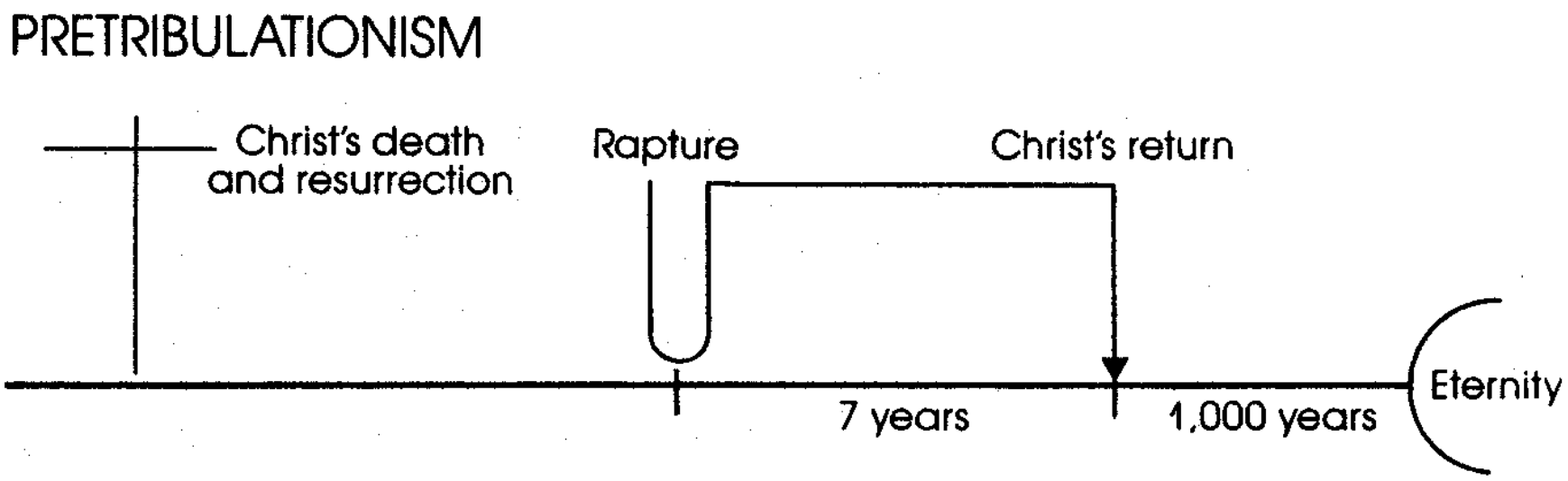
The major weakness of this view is that there is lack of Biblical evidence to support the threefold division of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:27. The other weaknesses of this view is similar to the midtribulational rapture view.

### *2.2.4.3 Conclusion*

This view is obviously wrong.

### *2.2.5 Pretribulational Rapture*

According to the pretribulationists, a removal and resurrection of believers takes place prior to the seven-year tribulation period. This is an event which they believe is imminent or could possibly occur at any moment.




### *2.2.5.1 Reasons for holding this view*

It is worthwhile to examine the reasons for holding this view:

## *Reason 1: The literal method of interpretation*

The doctrine of the pre-millennial return of Christ to institute a literal kingdom is the outcome of the literal method interpretation of the Old Testament of promises and prophecies. The post-tribulationist must either interpret the book of Revelation historically, which is basically a spiritualizing method which spiritualize away the literalness of the events in an attempt to harmonize these events with other Scriptures such the Old Testament prophecies regarding the future Millennial reign of the Messiah.

## *Reason 2: The nature of the seventieth week*

There are a number of words used in both the Old and New Testaments to describe the seventieth week period, which give us the essential nature of this period:

1. wrath (Revelation 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 5:9; Zephaniah 1:15, 18);
2. punishment (Isaiah 24:20-21);
3. hour of trouble (Jeremiah 30:7);
4. destruction (Joel 1:15); and
5. darkness (Joel 2:2; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Amos 5:18).

Let us understand the nature of the Tribulation is divine wrath. We know that our Lord Jesus Christ bore for us the wrath of God, therefore we who are in Him shall not come into judgment. "For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10).

## *Reason 3: The scope of the seventieth week*

This period relates to the unbelieving Gentile nations and particularly to Israel. Jeremiah 30:7 calls this period "the time of Jacob's trouble." God says to Daniel "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" (Daniel 9:24). This whole period has special reference to Daniel's people, Israel, and Daniel's holy city, Jerusalem. Inasmuch as many passages in the New Testament such as Ephesians 3:1-6; Colossians 1:25-27 make it clear that the church is a mystery and its nature as a body composed of Jew and Gentile alike was unrevealed in the Old Testament. Since the church did not have its existence until after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2), the church could not have been in the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy. Since it had no part in the first sixty-nine weeks, which are related only to Israel, it can have no part in the seventieth week, which is again related to God's program for Israel after the mystery program for the church has been concluded.

## *Reason 4: The purpose of the seventieth week*

There are two major purposes to be accomplished in the seventieth week. The first purpose is stated in Revelation 3:10, "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." First of all we see that this period has in view "them that dwell on the earth" and not the church. The true church does not need to be tested to see if her faith is genuine. The second major purpose of the seventieth week is in relation to Israel. The God will send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the day of the Lord in order to prepare a remnant in Israel for the advent of the Lord (Malachi 4:5-6). It is evident that no such ministry is needed by the church since she by nature is without spot, but is holy and

without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27).

## *Reason 5: The unity of the seventieth week*

The entire seventieth week is in view when it is described and predicted in Bible prophecy. It becomes impossible to adopt the position that the church although exempt from a portion of the seventieth week, may be in the first half of it, for the nature of the entire seventieth week is the same throughout.

## *Reason 6: The nature of the church*

It should be observed that the professing church is composed of those who make a profession of faith in Christ. To some this profession is based on reality and to some on no reality at all. This latter group will go into the tribulation period, for Revelation 2:22 indicates clearly that the unsaved professing church will experience this visitation of wrath. Only the true church will be raptured.

Membership in the group called national Israel is based on a physical birth, and all in this group who are not saved and removed by rapture and who are alive at the time of the rapture will, with the professing church, be subjected to the wrath of the tribulation.

There is a distinction between the true church and true or spiritual Israel. Prior to Pentecost there were saved individuals, but there was no church, and they were a part of spiritual Israel, not the church. After the day of Pentecost and until the rapture we find the church which is Christ's body, but no spiritual Israel because all faithful men will become a church member. After the rapture we find no church, but a true or spiritual Israel again. These distinctions must be kept clearly in mind as they would help us to understand the nature of the true church.

Since the church is the object of Christ's love (Ephesians 5:25) and has been perfected and delivered from all judgment (Romans 8:1; John 5:24; 1 John 4:17), if she is subjected to wrath and judgment again the promises of God would be of none effect and the death of Christ would be ineffectual.

Again, all who are in the seventieth week are brought into subjection to the powers of the Beasts and Satan (Revelation 13:7). If the church were in this period she would be subjected to Satan, and Christ would Himself, because of His union with the church, would be likewise subjected to Satan's authority. Such a thing is impossible.

## *Reason 7: The concept of the church as a mystery*

The fact that God was going to form Jews and Gentiles alike into one body was never revealed in the Old Testament and forms the mystery of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 3:1-7; Romans 16:25-27; Colossians 1:26-29. This whole mystery program was not revealed until after the rejection of Christ by Israel. It was after the rejection of Matthew 12:23-24 that the Lord first makes a prophecy of the coming church in Matthew 16:18. It is after the rejection of the Cross that the church had its inception in Acts 2. It was after the final rejection by Israel that God called out Paul to be the Apostle of the Gentiles through whom this mystery of the nature of the church is revealed. The church is manifestly an interruption of God's program for Israel, which was not brought into being until Israel's rejection of the offer of the Kingdom. This mystery program must itself be brought to a conclusion before God can resume His dealing with the nation Israel. This concept of the church makes a pre-tribulation rapture a necessity.

## *Reason 8: The distinctions between Israel and the church*

*Lewis Sperry Chafer*, **Systematic Theology, IV, pp. 47-53**, has set forth twenty-four contrasts between Israel and the church which show us conclusively that these two groups cannot be united into one, but that they must be distinguised as two separate entities with whom God is dealing in a special program. I add four more contrasts between Israel and the church, therefore there are twenty-eight contrasts now. More information and also the relevant Bible references can be found in the book written by *Dr. C.I. Scofield*, **Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth**.

These twenty-eight contrasts are listed in below table:

| No. | Contrasts | Israel | Church |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The extent of Biblical revelation | nearly four-fifths of the Bible | about one-fifth |
| 2 | The Divine purpose | the earthly promises in the covenants | the heavenly promises in the gospel |
| 3 | The seed of Abraham | the physical seed, of whom some become a spiritual seed | a spiritual seed |
| 4 | Birth | physical birth that produces a relationship | spiritual birth that brings relationship |
| 5 | Headship | Abraham | Christ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Covenants | Abrahamic and all the following covenants | indirectly related to the Abrahamic and new covenants |
| 7 | Nationality | one nation | from all nations |
| 8 | Divine dealing | national and individual | individual only |
| 9 | Dispensations | seen in all ages from Abraham | seen only in this present age |
| 10 | Ministry | no missionary activity and no gospel to preach | a commission to fulfill |
| 11 | The death of Christ | guilty nationally, to be saved by it | perfectly saved by it now |
| 12 | The Father | by a peculiar relationship God was Father to the nation | we related individually to God as Father |
| 13 | Christ | Messiah, Immanuel, King | Saviour, Lord, Bridegroom, Head |
| 14 | The Holy Spirit | came upon some temporarily | indwells all |
| 15 | Governing principle | Mosaic Law system | grace system |
| 16 | God's dwelling place | Jewish Temple | indwells to all believers |
| 17 | Place of worshipping the God | Jewish Temple at the Temple Mountain of Jerusalem | every places |
| 18 | Time of Assembly | Last day of a week, Sabbath | First day of a week, Sunday |
| 19 | Treatment of human enemies | all enemies must be resisted or killed | love your enemies, pray for them, forgive them |
| 20 | Divine enablement | none | the indwelling Holy Spirit |
| 21 | Two farewell discourses | Olivet discourse | upper room discourse |
| 22 | The promise of Christ's return | in power and glory for judgment | to receive us to Himself |
| 23 | Position | a servant | members of the family |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 24 | Christ's earthly reign | subjects | co-reigners |
| 25 | Priesthood | had a priesthood which is restricted to a special class | all believers are priests |
| 26 | Marriage | unfaithful wife | bride |
| 27 | Judgments | must face judgment | delivered from all judgments |
| 28 | Positions in eternity | spirits of just men made perfect in the new earth | church of the firstborn in the new heavens |

These clear contrasts, make it impossible to identify the two in one program, which it necessary to do if the church goes through the seventieth week.

## *Reason 9: The doctrine of imminence*

Many signs were given to the nation Israel, which would precede the second advent, so that the nation might be living in expectancy when the time of His coming should draw nigh. To the church no such signs were ever given. The church was told to live in the light of the imminent coming of the Lord to translate them in His presence (John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Timothy 6:14; 1 Peter 3:3-4). All believers to be watching for the Lord Himself, not for signs that would precede His coming. The fact that no signs are given to the church, but she, rather, is commanded to watch for Christ, precludes her participation in the seventieth week.

## *Reason 10: The work of the restrainer (i.e. Holy Spirit) in 2 Thessalonians 2*

As long as the Holy Spirit is resident within the church (i.e. all believers), which is His temple, this restraining work will continue and the man of sin cannot be revealed. It is only when the church, the temple, is removed that this restraining ministry ceases and lawlessness can produce the lawless one. This ministry of the Holy Spirit must cease before the lawless one can be revealed, requires the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, for Daniel 9:27 reveals that that lawless one will be manifested at the beginning of the week.

It should be noted that the Holy Spirit does not cease His ministries with the removal of the church, nor does He cease to be omnipresent, with her removal, but the restraining ministry does cease.

## *Reason 11: The necessity of an interval*

Passages such as 2 Corinthians 5:9; 1 Corinthians 3:11-16; Revelation 4:4; 19:8, 14 show that the church has been examined as to her stewardship and has received her reward at the time of the second advent of Christ. It is impossible to conceive of this event as taking place without the expiration of some period of time. The church is to be presented as a gift from the Father to the Son (Ephesians 5:25-27; Jude 24). In Revelation 19:7-9 it is revealed that the consummation of the union between Christ and the church precedes the second advent. In many passages, such as Matthew 25:1-13; 22:1-14; and Luke 12:35-41, the King is seen in the role of Bridegroom at His coming, indicating that the marriage has taken place. This event requires the expiration of a period of time and makes the view that the rapture and revelation are simultaneous events impossible. In this connection, an interval between the rapture and the revelation is required.

## *Reason 12: Distinction between the rapture and the second advent*

There are a number of contrasts (note: 17 contrasts here) to be drawn between the rapture and the second advent which will show that they are not viewed as synonymous in Scripture. Diligent students should find out all the relevant Bible references for these contrasts and e-mail a copy to me for correction. These contrasts are listed in below table:

| No. | Rapture | Second Advent |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | removal of all believers | appearing of the Son of God |
| 2 | saints are caught up into the air | Christ returns to the earth |
| 3 | Christ comes to claim a bride | Christ returns with the bride |
| 4 | removal of the church and the inception of the tribulation period | establishment of the millennial kingdom |
| 5 | imminent | preceded by a multitude of signs |
| 6 | a message of comfort | a message of judgment |
| 7 | related to the program for the church | related to the program for Israel and the unbelieving world |
| 8 | a mystery | predicted in both Old and New Testaments |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9 | believers are judged and rewarded | Gentiles and Israel are judged and punished |
| 10 | leaves creation unchanged | the change in creation |
| 11 | Gentiles are unaffected | Gentiles are judged |
| 12 | Israel's covenants are unfulfilled | Israel's covenants are fulfilled |
| 13 | no relation to the judgment of evils | evil is judged |
| 14 | take place before the day of wrath | follows the day of wrath |
| 15 | for believers only | has its effect on all men |
| 16 | expectation is "Lord at hand" | expectation is "the kingdom is at hand" |
| 17 | expectation is "to be taken into the Lord's presence" | expectation is "to be taken into the kingdom" |

## *Reason 13: The twenty-four elders*

In Revelation 4:4 John is given a vision of twenty-four elders who are seated on thrones, clothed in white raiment, crowned with golden crowns, and in heaven in the presence of God. The twenty-four elders could not be angelic beings, for angels are not crowned with victors' crowns received as rewards, nor are they seated on thrones, which throne speaks of royal dignity and prerogative, nor are angels robed in white as a result of judgment. The impossibility of this view argues for the second view which sees them as resurrected redeemed men, who are clothed, crowned and seated on thrones in connection with royality in Heaven.

Since, according to Revelation 5:8, these twenty-four are associated in a priestly act, which is never said of angels, they must be believer-priests associated with the Great High Priest. Inasmuch as Israel is not resurrected until the end of the seventieth week, nor judged nor rewarded until the coming of the Lord according to Isaiah 26:19-21 and Daniel 12:1-2, these must be representatives of the saints of this present age.

Since they are seen to be resurrected in heaven at the beginning of the seventieth week, it is concluded that the church must have been raptured before the seventieth week begins. If the church is not resurrected and translated here, how could the church be in Heaven in Revelation 19:7-11?

For further discussions of the identity of the twenty-four elders, please read Section 4 of the Chapter 5 of this course.

## *Reason 14: The problem behind 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

The Thessalonian Christians had misunderstood the relation between the resurrection and the saints who were asleep in Christ to the rapture. Paul wrote that at the rapture the living would not have an advantage over the dead in Christ.

If the Thessalonians had believed that the church would be going through the seventieth week they would have rejoiced that some of their brethren had missed this period of suffering and were with the Lord in the Heaven without experiencing the outpouring of wrath on the earth. If the church were going through the tribulation it would be better to be with the Lord in the Heaven than to have to await the events of the seventieth week. They would be praising the Lord that their brethren were spared these events instead of feeling that those had missed some of the Lord's blessings (i.e. rapture).

These Christians evidently believed that the church would not go through the seventieth week and in their anticipation of the return of Christ mourned for their brethren, whom they thought had missed the blessing of this event (i.e. rapture).

## *Reason 15: The announcement of peace and safety*

In 1 Thessalonians 5:3 Paul tells the Thessalonian church that the Day of the Lord will come after the announcement of "peace and safety." This false security will lull many into a state of lethargy in relation to the Day of the Lord so that that day comes as a thief. This announcement that has produced this lethargy precedes the Day of the Lord.

If the church were in the seventieth week there would be no possibility that, during the period when believers are being persecuted by the beast to an unprecedented degree, such a message could be preached and find acceptation so that men would be lulled into complacency. All the signs would point to the fact that they were not in a time of "peace and safety." The fact that the visitation of wrath, judgment and darkness is preceded by the announcement of such a message indicates that the church must be raptured before that period can begin.

## *Reason 16: The relation of the church to governments*

The church is instructed to be in subjection to human governments (1 Peter 2:13-16; Titus 3:1; Romans 13:1-7). According to Revelation 13:4 the government during the seventieth week is controlled by Satan and is carrying out his will. Because of the relationship of the church to governments in this age and because of the Satanic control of government in the seventieth week,

the church must be delivered before this Satanic government manifests itself. The church could not subject herself to such a government.

## *Reason 17: The destiny of the church*

The destiny of the church is a heavenly destiny. When we study the destiny of the saved in the seventieth week we find that their expectation and promise is earthly (Matthew 25:34). If the church is on earth during the seventieth week all who are saved during that period would be saved to a place in the body of Christ. If the rapture did not take place till the end of the seventieth week, and part of the saved went into an earthly blessing and part into a heavenly destiny, the body of Christ would be dismembered and the unity destroyed. Such dismemberment is impossible. This can only indicate that those saved during this seventieth week to go into the Millennium must have been saved after the termination of the program for the church.

## *Reason 18: The message to Laodicea*

In Revelation 3:14-22 John gives a message to the church in Laodicea. This church represents the final form of the professing church, which is rejected by the Lord and vomited out of His mouth because of the unreality of its profession. If the church goes into the seventieth week in its entirety and not just the professing portion of it, it would have to be concluded that this Laodicean church is the picture of the true church.

The true church could not go through the persecutions of the seventieth week and still be lukewarm to her Lord. The persecution would either fan the fire and turn the lukewarmness into an intense heat, or else it would extinguish the fire altogether. The other alternative is to see that the true church terminates with the Philadelphia church, which is removed from the earth according to the promise of Revelation 3:10 before the tribulation begins, and the false professing church, from which the true has been separated by rapture, is left behind, rejected by the Lord, and vomited out into the seventieth week to reveal the true nature of her profession so that such may be rejected justly by the Lord.

## *Reason 19: The waiting remnant at the second advent*

Passage such as Malachi 3:16; Ezekiel 20:33-38; 37:11-28; Zechariah 13:8-9; Revelation 7:1-8, indicate clearly that when the Lord returns to earth there will be a believing remnant in Israel awaiting His return. Along with these are passages such as Matthew 25:31-40 and such parables as Matthew 22:1-13 and Luke 14:16-24 that show that there will be a multitude of believers among the Gentiles who will believe and await His return.

There must also be group of believing Gentiles who can receive, through faith, the benefits of the covenants in His reign. These groups go into the Millennium in their natural bodies, saved, but not having experienced death and resurrection (Matthew 25:31-40; Revelation 7:9-17).

If the church were on earth until the time of the second advent, these saved individuals would have been saved to a position in the church, would have been raptured at that time, and consequently there would not be one saved person left on the earth. These considerations make necessary the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, so that God may call out and preserve a remnant during the tribulation in and through whom the promises may be fulfilled.

## *Reason 20: The sealed 144,000 from Israel*

As long as the church is on the earth there are none saved to a special Jewish relationship. All who are saved are saved to a position in the body of Christ (i.e. church) as indicated in Colossians 1:26-29; 3:11; Ephesians 2:14-22; 3:1-7. During the seventieth week the church must be absent, for out of the saved remnant in Israel God seals 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe (Revelation 7:14). The fact that God is again dealing with Israel on this national relationship, setting them apart to national identities, and sending them as special representatives to the nations in place of the witness of the church, indicates that the church must no longer be on earth.

## *Reason 21: The great object of satanic attack*

According to Revelation 12, the object of satanic attack during the tribulation period is "the woman" who produced the child. Since this child is born "to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Revelation 12:5), it can only refer to Christ, the one whose right it is to rule. The Psalmist confirms this interpretation in Psalm 2:9, which is admittedly Messianic. The one from whom Christ came can only be Israel.

At the time Satan is cast out of Heaven (Revelation 12:9) he goes forth with "great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:12). The church must not be here, for, since it is the "body of Christ," it would be the object of satanic attack then as it has been all through the age (Ephesians 6:12) if it were present. The reason Satan turns against Israel can only be explained by the absence of the church from that scene.

## *Reason 22: The apostasy of the period*

The complete apostasy of the period on the part of the professing church prevents the church from being in the world. The only

organized church ever mentioned in the tribulation period is the Jezebel system (Revelation 2:22) and the harlot system (Revelation 17 and 18). If the true church were on earth, since it is not mentioned as separate from the apostate system, it must be a part of that apostasy. Such a conclusion is impossible. The believing witnesses, converted during the period, are specifically said to have kept themselves from defilement by this apostate system (Revelation 14:4). Since the church is not mentioned as also having kept herself from this system it must be concluded that the church is not there.

## *Reason 23: The promises to the true church*

There are certain passages of Scripture which definitely promise the church a removal before the seventieth week.

1. "I will keep thee from the hour of temptation" (Revelation 3:10). John is promising a complete removal from the sphere of testing, not a preservation through it.
2. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). The contrast in this passage is between wrath and salvation from that wrath. 1 Thessalonians 5:2 indicates that this wrath and darkness is that of the Day of the Lord. A comparison of this passage with Joel 2:2; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Amos 5:18 will describe the darkness mentioned here as the darkness of the seventieth week. A comparison with Revelation 6:17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19 will describe the wrath of the Day of the Lord.
3. Paul clearly teaches that our expectation is not wrath, but the revelation of "His Son from Heaven." This could not be unless the Son were revealed before the wrath of the seventieth week falls on the earth (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

## *Reason 24: The agreement of typology*

If a teaching is contrary to all typology it cannot be a true interpretation. Scripture abounds in types which teach that those who walked by faith were delivered from the visitations of judgment which overtook the unbelieving. Such types are seen in the experience of Noah (Genesis 6:13-9:19) and Rahab (Joshua 2:1-24; 6:1-17), but perhaps the clearest illustration is that of Lot (Genesis 18:20-19:25). In 2 Peter 2:6-9, Lot is called a righteous man. This divine commentary will shed light on Genesis 19:22, where the angel sought to hasten the departure of Lot with the words "Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither." If the presence of one righteous man prevented the outpouring of deserved judgment on the city of Sodom, how much more will the presence of the church on earth prevent the outpouring of divine wrath until after her removal.

### *2.2.5.2 Conclusion*

A number of reasons for belief in the pretribulation rapture position have been presented. Some of them are particularly

applicable to the midtribulation rapture position and others applicable to the posttribulation rapture position. The pretribulation doctrine is not based on these arguments singly, but rather they are considered as cumulative evidence that the church will be delivered by rapture before the inception of Daniel's seventieth week. I conclude that the pretribulation rapture position is correct.

### 3. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


1. **Survey of Theology II**, Lesson 11, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
2. **The Bible and Future Events**, Chapter 2, Academie Books, Zondervan Corporation, 1973 Edition, by Leon J. Wood.
3. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapter XLII, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.
4. **Things to Come**, Chapters X to XIII, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1st printing 1964, 1996 reprint, by J. Dwight Pentecost.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Go to Chapter Ten

# Chapter Ten - The End-Time Scenario

Please note that this chapter should be read in conjunction with the course, Bible Prophecy.

I will acquaint the readers with end-time events according to the premillennial scheme. The amillennial viewpoint is far more simplistic, as most end-time events are located in the brief period which closes this age (the "spiritual millennium") and witnesses the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the premillennial scheme differentiates between so many events that its final scenario is stretched out for seven and one thousand years. Premillennial eschatology is so complex, and so many conclusions depend on other conclusions, that the novice is overwhelmed at first by its scope. Nevertheless, if you choose a literal interpretation of most eschatological passages in Scripture, you are left with a premillennial chronology.

This chapter is divided into the following 13 main sections:

1. Erroneous Interpretations of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ;
2. The Study of Bible Prophecy;
3. Signs of the Second Coming of Christ;
4. God's Dealings With Israel;
5. The Present Church Age;
6. The Second Coming of Christ;
7. The Anti-christ;
8. The Great Tribulation;
9. The Battle of Armageddon;
10. The Millennium;
11. After the Millennium;
12. The Judgments of God; and
13. The Eternal State.

## 1. ERRONEOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

There are many erroneous interpretations of the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. Therefore, it is necessary to refute such teachings before proceeding further with the study of this doctrine. Five of these will be dealt with briefly:

1. The coming of the Holy Spirit;
2. The conversion of the soul;

3. The destruction of Jerusalem;
4. The coming of death; and
5. The conversion of the world.

### 1.1 The Coming of the Holy Spirit

It is taught by some that the return of Christ is the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Some have referred Matthew 16:28, "there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" and John 16:16, "again a little while, and you will see Me." This view must be wrong due to the following reason:

1. The promise in Matthew 16:28 more naturally means Christ's reappearance after His resurrection.
2. Jesus promised that He would send the Comforter, but He does not send Himself (John 14:16; 15:26).
3. He declared that the Spirit's descent was conditional on His withdrawal (John 16:7).
4. Many other promises of Christ's return were uttered after the day of Pentecost.

### 1.2 The Conversion of the Soul

Some people think that the return of Christ is the conversion of the soul. They have referred to John 14:23, "both the Father and the Son coming to dwell in the believer." This view is unscriptural due to the following reasons:

1. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ but Christ and the Holy Spirit are never confused.
2. The animating dynamic of the Lord Jesus Christ's indwelling and influence in the believer is the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9f; Galatians 2:20; 4:6; Philippians 1:19; cf. Acts 20:28 with Ephesians 4:7, 11).
3. The authors of the Epistles spoke of the Lord's coming as still future.

Therefore, the coming of Christ into the life of a repentant sinner is not His coming in the eschatological sense of that term.

### 1.3 The Destruction of Jerusalem

Some believe that the coming of Christ is the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and Matthew 16:28 is interpreted in that manner. This view is also false due to the following reasons:

1. The book of Revelation and 1 John were both written a number of years after the destruction of Jerusalem; yet each of them has a number of definite predictions of the Lord's second coming (1 John 2:28; 3:2f; Revelation 1:7; 3:11; 22:12, 20).
2. At the destruction of Jerusalem Israel was scattered, but at the return of Christ Israel will be gathered to Palestine.

### 1.4 The Coming of Death

Some have taken Matthew 24:42, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming," to refer both to death and to the return of Christ. This view is also false due to the following reasons:

1. When the believer dies, the Lord Jesus takes his soul to Himself, this is not to be confused with the return of Christ.
2. We must not apply Scriptures that speak of Christ's return to death because the two are very different.
3. Death is in the Bible treated as an enemy (1 Corinthians 15:25f; Hebrews 2:14f), but the Lord's return is represented as a blessed hope (Titus 2:13).
4. At death the grave is occupied; at the Lord's return the grave is abandoned (John 5:28f; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).
5. If death and the second coming are the same, then such Scriptures as Matthew 16:27f; 1 Thessalonians 4:16f; Revelation 1:7, will recognize the absurdity of this interpretation.

### 1.5 The Conversion of the World

Some think the reference is to world conversion when they pray, "Thy kingdom com" (Matthew 6:10). They hold that as the world accepts the principles of Christ, Christ comes. This view is also false due to the following reasons:

1. The Scriptures teach that there will be a great falling away from the faith in the last days (Luke 18:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 Timothy 4:1).
2. Sound doctrines will not be tolerated and damnable heresies will be introduced (2 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Peter 2:1f).
3. The conditions of the days of Noah and of Lot will again prevail (Luke 17:26-30).
4. Difficult times will exist (2 Timothy 3:1). This does not look like a converted world at the time of Christ's return.
5. The Scriptures represent Christ's coming as something sudden, as the lightning (Matthew 24:27), and unexpected, as a thief (Matthew 24:43; 1 Thessalonians 5:2), and the resurrection as "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52). This too does not fit in with the idea of a gradual conversion of the world.
6. The Bible associates the conversion of the world with Christ's return, but it represents it as taking place after the event (Isaiah 2:2-4; Zechariah 8:21-23; Acts 15:16-18; Romans 11:12, 25).

It is clear that the coming of Christ is not the conversion of the world.

2. THE STUDY OF BIBLE PROPHECY

3. SIGNS OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

4. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL

5. THE PRESENT CHURCH AGE

6. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

7. THE ANTI-CHRIST

8. THE GREAT TRIBULATION

9. THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

10. THE MILLENNIUM

11. AFTER THE MILLENNIUM

12. THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD

13. THE ETERNAL STATE

## 14. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. **Bible Prophecy**, Chapters 1 to 12, Bible Studies On the Internet, 1998 Internet Edition, by John Fok.
2. **Things to Come**, Chapters XIII to XXXIII, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1st printing 1964, 1996 reprint, by J. Dwight Pentecost.
3. **Survey of Theology II**, Lesson 12, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
4. **The Bible and Future Events**, Chapter 3 to 9, Academie Books, Zondervan Corporation, 1973 Edition, by Leon J. Wood.
5. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapter XL to XLVII, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.

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Go to Chapter Eleven

# Chapter Eleven - Revelation and the Inspiration of Scripture

The study of what the Bible teaches about itself is called Bibliology. The Bible claims to be a revelation from God about Himself. The true church has believed all through its history that the Bible is the embodiment of a divine revelation and that the records which contains that revelation are genuine, credible, canonical, and supernaturally inspired. Bibliology examines the Scriptures to see if these beliefs concerning the Bible are true.

This chapter is designed to help the readers to understand the importance of the doctrine of the Bible (i.e. Bibliology) and what are the proofs for this belief. It is divided into eleven major divisions, they are:

1. Terms used for the Bible;
2. Reasons why Bibliology is the most important doctrine;
3. Various attitudes or viewpoints toward the Bible;
4. Evidences that support the Bible is the Written Word of God;
5. Revelation from God is both reasonable and necessary;
6. The general revelation of God;
7. The Bible is the special revelation of God;
8. The Bible is the inspired revelation of God;
9. Major Biblical texts on the doctrine of inspiration;
10. The inadequate theories and correct Biblical doctrine of inspiration; and
11. The objections to the Biblical doctrine of inspiration.

## 1. TERMS USED FOR THE BIBLE

### 1.1 Bible

Our English term *bible* is from the Greek word *biblion*, which means "book" or "roll."

> The name comes from *byblos*, which denoted the papyrus plant that grew in marshes or river banks, primarily along the Nile. Writing material was made from the papyrus plant by cutting the pith of the plant in one foot strips and setting it in the sun to dry. The strips were then laid in horizontal rows with rows of vertical strips glued to the horizontal rows in a criss-cross fashion similar to the way plywood is constructed today. The horizontal rows were smoother and became the writing surface. Sections of these strips were glued together to form a scroll up to thirty feet in length. Eventually, the plural form *biblia* was used by Latin-speaking Christians to denote all the books of the Old and New Testaments (*Paul Enns*, **The Moody Handbook of Theology**, Moody Press, Chicago, 1989, p. 153).

### 1.2 Scripture

Another term used for the Bible is the word, "Scripture," from the Greek *grafh*, meaning "a writing, that which is written." The plural is used collectively of the sacred writings as a whole, *the Scriptures* (i.e., the Old Testament, Matthew 21:42; 26:54; John 5:39; Romans 15:4). The singular is sometimes used of the sacred writings as a whole (Romans 4:3; John 7:42) and sometimes of a specific passage (Mark 12:10; 15:28; Luke 4:21). In the New Testament this term is used exclusively of the Scripture.

In the Old Testament this writing was recognized as carrying great authority (e.g. 2 Kings 14:6; 2 Chronicles 23:18; Ezra 3:2; Nehemiah 10:34). The statement, "the Scripture says," is equivalent to "God says" (cf. Romans 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; Galatians 4:30; 1 Timothy 5:18). To stress the character of these writings as sacred and unique, they are also described as "holy" or "sacred" (Romans 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:15), and stated to be "inspired of God," literally, "God-breathed." Consequently, with God as the author behind the human authors, the Bible is both profitable and authoritative. The noun form, *scripture*, occurs fifty times in the New Testament (used mostly of the Bible) and the verb form, often found in a form meaning "it is written" or "it stands written," is used about ninety times.

### 1.3 The Word of God

"The word of God" is another title used of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. This expression highlights the nature of the Bible as the revelation of God in written form as well as its source; it is the revelation from God. The Greek term used is *logos*, which means "a word as embodying a conception or idea, speech or discourse." But it is also used of the "revelation of God, of God's word, God's command." In Mark 7:13, "the word of God" is used of Moses's command regarding honoring father and mother and is seen as equivalent to the phrase, "the commandment of God" (vs. 8). In Matthew 15:6, this expression is used specifically of the Law of Moses. In John 10:35, it is used of the Old Testament and further defined as Scripture. In Hebrews 4:12, the "word of God" is used of all Scripture, referring to both the Old and New Testaments.

### 1.4 The Oracles of God

Another term used of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament Scripture, is *logion*, a diminutive form of *logos* meaning, "an oracle, divine response or utterance." It is used of Scripture in Romans 3:2 and Acts 7:38 where it is translated *oracles*. In Acts 7:38 the Old Testament law received on Mount Sinai is referred to as the *living* oracles.

### 1.5 Testament

A less common term for Scripture is the word *testament*. The Greek word is *diaqhkh*, "covenant, testament, will." This term is used to distinguish between the Old and New Covenants, the Old Testament and the New Testament. In particular, the word is used in dealing with the specific, unique covenants of Scripture, but since these covenants are contained in God's revelation, it is a synonym of the Scripture. Paul wrote about the "reading of the old covenant" (2 Corinthians 3:14).

### 1.6 The Law

Another term often used in the New Testament for the Old Testament Scripture is *the law*. On the principle that the most authoritative part gives its name to the whole, sometimes the expression *the law* refers to the entire Old Testament. Under this principle and because the whole of the Old Testament is authoritative as God's Word of instruction to men, Jesus quoted from Psalm 82 in John 10:34 and referred to it as *the law*. In John 12:34, the multitudes answered Jesus and said, "We have heard out of the law that the Christ is to remain forever." Here again *the law* is used of the entire Old Testament for the passages in mind included other portions like Psalm 110:4, Isaiah 9:7, and Ezekiel 37:25, and the first five books of Moses.

### 1.7 The Law and the Prophets

Another expression used for the entire Old Testament is *the law and the prophets*. This particular expression looks at the Old Testament from the standpoint of its divisions "the law, the prophets, and the writings." Compare Matthew 5:17; 7:12; Luke 16:16; Romans 3:21. See also Luke 24:27 and 44.

### 1.8 Other Terms Used of the Old Testament

Psalm 19:7-9 presents us with a number of synonyms in a six-fold description of God's special revelation, the Word of God. It is called *law*, God's revealed direction, or will; *testimony*, a witness of God's person and purpose; *precepts*, a general term for the responsibilities of God's people; *commandments*, God's authoritative words of instruction; *fear*, reverential trust that the Word produces in God's people; *judgments*, specific directions relating to different human circumstances.

Psalm 119, where devotion to the Word of God is the dominant theme, has even more terms used for the Word of God. The multiple terms used by the Psalmist convey the truth that the Word of God contains all we need for the life God wants to give us. At least nine different terms may be seen in Psalm 119, "*law, testimonies, ways, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word*, and *path*." Focusing on eight of these terms, the NIV Bible Commentary comments. The psalmist uses eight words for God's law:

1. **Law** (*torah*) occurs twenty-five times. In the broad sense it refers to any "instruction" flowing from the revelation of God as the basis for life and action. In the narrow sense it denotes the Law of Moses, whether the Pentateuch, the priestly law, or the Deuteronomic law.

2. **Laws** (*mishpatim*) pertain to particular legal issues (case laws) that form the basis for Israel's legal system. God himself is the Great Judge.

3. **Word** (*dabar*) is any word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. It is a general designation for divine revelation.

4. **Statute(s)** (*eduth/edoth*) derives from the word that means "witness," "testify"; "testimony" is often synonymous with "covenant" (cf.

25:10; 132:12). The observance of the "statutes" of the Lord signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant between God and Israel.

5. **Command(s)** (*mitswah/mitswoth*) is a frequent designation for anything that the Lord, the covenant God, has ordered.

6. **Decrees** (*huqqim*) is derived from the root for "engrave," "inscribe." God reveals his royal sovereignty by establishing his divine will in nature and in the covenant community.

7. **Precepts** (*piqqudim*) occurs only in the book of Psalms and appears to be synonymous with "covenant" (103:18) and with the revelation of God (111:7). Its root connotes the authority to determine the relationship between the speaker and the object.

8. **Word** or **promise** (*imrah*) may denote anything God has spoken, commanded, or promised.

## 2. REASONS WHY BIBLIOLOGY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DOCTRINE

### 2.1 The Bible Helps us to Understand the God, Jesus Christ and Salvation

Of all the doctrines of the Bible, none is more important or foundational than bibliology, the doctrine of the Bible. The reason for this is simple. The Bible's witness to itself is that it is God's Word and thus, our authority for belief and practice. Our understanding of God, of man, and of the Salvation He offers mankind in Christ is all very much dependent on how much men believe and know the Bible.

The majority of that which we can know about God comes from the Bible. If men do not hold the Bible in high esteem as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and fail to handle it properly (interpretation and application), then they will turn to other sources as their authority (human reason alone, science, tradition, the church, mysticism, experiences) for what they believe and practice. Consequently, if men do not hold to the Scripture as the *complete, sufficient, clear, authoritative, and adequate rule of faith*, they will reject the Bible's truth either completely or partly and in the process miss its message of salvation and deliverance from sin, which it offers them in the person of Jesus Christ.

### 2.2 The Bible is the God's Infallible and Inerrant Word

Our view, approach, and attitude toward the Bible is foundational. If I do not think it is God-breathed, I won't think it is profitable and vital. If I think it might contain errors, or that only some of it is inspired, say the thoughts, not the words, then I am left with a dilemma and I must approach it much like a cafeteria line, choosing according to my own likes or bias. What do I believe and not believe? If it is wrong in some places, then how can I be sure what it says about Jesus is true? On the other hand, if I believe it is God's infallible and inerrant Word, as the evidence supports, then I should accept it all and study it carefully. An unfortunate element very obvious today within the evangelical community is that most who call themselves evangelicals will theoretically, at least, claim allegiance to the Bible as the all-sufficient and authoritative rule of faith, but in practice, many are raising other sources on a level above the Scripture as their authority for what they believe and practice.

### 2.3 The Bible is the Basis for the Reformation

Again, we need to recognize that the doctrine of bibliology is a vital and fundamental doctrine. In fact, so important is this truth that one of the battle cries of the reformers was *sola Scriptura*, (i.e. Scripture only). What this meant for the reformers was that "the church should not preach, teach, command, or practice anything contrary to the written Scriptures of the biblical canon." It became the basis for the reformation.

## 3. ATTITUDES OR VIEWPOINTS TOWARD THE BIBLE

In the study of bibliology it is important to be aware of the various attitudes people either have or with which they approach the Scriptures. We will divide these attitudes toward the Bible into seven different categories:

1. Rationalism;
2. Mysticism;
3. Romanism;
4. Neoorthodoxy;

5. Cultism;
6. Church traditions; and
7. Conservative Protestantism (The Orthodox Position).

**3.1 Rationalism**

The philosophy behind rationalism is "the theory that the exercise of reason, rather than the acceptance of empiricism, authority, or spiritual revelation, provides the only valid basis for action or belief and that reason is the prime source of knowledge and of spiritual truth." The rationalistic approach toward the Bible may be extreme or moderate.

In its extreme form it denies divine revelation and represents the belief of atheists and agnostics. Moderate rationalism may admit divine revelation but tends to accept only those parts of divine revelation that personal reason approves. Under this approach the Bible is not viewed as authoritative, but the moderated rationalist seeks to eliminate or honor various Scriptures as he may choose. This is often the attitude of modern liberals.

The issue in rationalism is that the *mind* is supreme and becomes the final authority.

**3.2 Mysticism**

Mysticism also falls into a two-fold classification:

1. false mysticism; and
2. true mysticism.

***3.2.1 False mysticism***

The fundamental premise in false mysticism is that divine revelation is not limited to the Bible, but that God continues to give new truth beyond the Bible. In the final analysis, false mysticism makes human *experience* supreme; one's personal experiences become the final authority rather than the Bible. If it fits with one's experience, then it is accepted as valid; but if it does not fit one's experience, it is rejected as invalid. For this kind of mystic, the Bible is not complete or final. God is still in the business of giving truth if one is only receptive to its revelation. Those holding to some form of false mysticism believe spiritual truth is being added beyond the Scriptures. This type of false mysticism is seen in the ideas of pantheism, theosophy, modern-day spiritism, Seventh-day Adventism, new thought, Christian Science, Swedenborgianism, Mormanism, Quakerism, and Millennial Dawnism (Jehovah's Witnesses).

In addition, it can be seen in the beliefs of some forms of the modern-day charismatic movement. Some non-cessationists believe all the gifts mentioned in the New Testament are operative today. Some believe that God is still speaking through present day prophets, and some even go a step further and claim that the revelation coming to and from these prophets is equal in authority with the Bible. This is a growing movement within some circles of the evangelical church.

***3.2.2 True mysticism***

There is, however, a form of true mysticism which stems from the indwelling and teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit illuminates the minds of believers to enable them to grasp and apply the truth of the Scripture. As Hebrews 12:25 affirms, God is speaking today, but He does so through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit to the truths of the completed canon of Scripture. This is the work of illumination, leading, and conviction, but this must be distinguished from the Spirit's work of revelation.

True mysticism is the proper approach of systematic theologians who believe the Bible. It involves the fact that all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and therefore are able to be enlightened directly by the Spirit in their understanding of divine revelation. Such revelation does not exceed what the Scriptures reveal; it consists in making known divine truth recorded in Scripture. True mysticism extends to what may be called normative revelation, but it does not exclude God's application of scriptural truth to an individual seeking guidance. Guidance is always in keeping with the Scriptures themselves (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

A true mystic in the biblical sense believes that the Bible is our final authority and seeks to always judge personal experience by the Bible. He does not allow experience to either take precedence over the Bible nor does he judge the Bible or what is biblical by his experience.

**3.3 Romanism**

In Romanism, the Roman Catholic Church is both the channel of divine revelation and the final authority for how the Bible is to be interpreted in faith and practice. Since the Bible is the product of the church, and since the Scriptures are obscure (another teaching of Romanism), only the church can properly interpret the Scriptures. In Romanism, the Bible is viewed as incomplete; there is more truth available, but it can only come through the church. Furthermore, the traditions of the church are, along with the Bible, a source of divine revelation. Ecumenical Councils and Popes have from time to time made pronouncements that are considered infallible and therefore binding on church members.

Particularly objectionable is the concept that the church can supersede Scripture itself. As a part of this approach to divine revelation, tradition must also be examined and should be studied in the light of important Scriptures (Galatians 1:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6). In His earthly ministry, Christ repeatedly had to contradict the traditions of men in affirming the truth of the Word of God.

**3.4 Neoorthodoxy**

*Karl Barth* (1886-1968), often viewed as the father of neoorthodoxy, believed that the basis of authority is the Word, but for *Barth*, the Word is mainly Christ. The Bible only witnesses to the Word and only becomes authoritative when it speaks to the individual. This means that the Bible's witness to Christ is fallible. The individual must determine what is the word of God within the Bible and what is not. To clearly grasp what is and what is not, there is the need for some type of divine encounter. In short, neoorthodoxy does not believe that the Bible *is* the word of God, only that it *contains* the word of God. This means the individual becomes the final judge as to what in the Bible is the word of God and what is not. Since in neoorthodoxy the encounter is primary, the encounter actually becomes the authority and anyone can have his or her own encounter and come up with totally different conclusions.

**3.5 Cultism**

Many of the cults teach that the Bible *along with some other writing* is supreme and authoritative. A key characteristic of the cults, however, is that though they make a claim to believe the Bible is God's word, they either affirm another writing as having equal authority or raise the other writing as more important or authoritative than the Bible itself. The perfect illustration of this is Mormonism and the *Book of Mormon* which Mormonism views as inspired. Christian Science views Mary Baker Eddy's book, *The Key to the Scriptures*, as equally inspired. In the final analysis, the Bible is not the only authority; in matter of fact it is relegated to a lower position of importance.

**3.6 Church Traditions**

Sometimes in practice, some local churches can and do deny that the Bible is their sole basis of authority:

1. Some traditions or denominations give their creeds coordinate authority with the Bible. Creeds can provide helpful statements of truth; but creeds can never be the authoritative judge of truth. Credal statements must always be considered fallible, in need of possible revision, and subservient to biblical authority.

2. Some groups give tradition and accepted practice coordinate authority with the Bible. A church has a divine mandate to set authoritative guidelines for its members (Hebrews 13:7, 17), but these too are fallible, in need of periodic revision, and always subservient to biblical authority.

3. Some church leaders make religious experience authoritative. Healthy experience is the fruit of allegiance to biblical authority, but all experiences must be guided, governed, and guarded by the Bible. To make experience normative and authoritative is to commit the same error as liberalism by replacing an objective criterion with subjective existentialism.

**3.7 Conservative Protestantism (the Orthodox Position)**

The conservative or orthodox position is that the **Bible alone is our final authority for faith and practice**. For the conservative believer, the Bible is the infallible word of God. It is inspired in the original autographs and is without error. The Bible is true in everything it affirms to be true.

"Conservative eliminates liberalism's humanistic and subjective bases of authority, and protestantism removes the church as a base of authority. So one would agree that orthodoxy is that branch of Christendom which limits the ground of religious authority to the Bible" (*Edward John Carnell,* **The Case for Orthodox Theology**, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969, p. 13).

Concerning the mind or reason, it must be subservient to the word of God. If the mind is thinking in terms which are contrary to the Scriptures, it is not the mind that judges the Scriptures, but the Scriptures judge the thoughts of the mind. Concerning the experience of Mysticism, the Bible is the final judge of experience, and experience cannot determine the truth of Scripture. Concerning Romanism, it is not the church that

determines the meaning of the Bible but, rather, the Bible determines the proper place of the Church. Concerning the encounter, a man does not need a unique encounter before he can comprehend what is the word of God in the Scriptures. Concerning the issue of the cults, the answer of Orthodoxy is that the Bible, and the *Bible alone, is* supreme, and the 66 books of the Scriptures are all that has been inspired by God in written form. Any other writing is the writing of a false prophet or false prophetess. We who hold to the supremacy of the Bible believe that knowledge is subject to the Bible, and there is no inner light that adds revelation beyond the Bible.

The Scriptures contain the objective revelation of God and are therefore the basis of authority for the conservative Protestant. To be sure, understanding God's revelation in the Bible involves using the rational processes of a redeemed mind, a commitment of faith in matters not revealed or not understood, a dependence on the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, a conscience clear before God, and some insight into the lessons of history.

## 4. EVIDENCES THAT SUPPORT THE BIBLE IS THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

Even a casual reader of the Bible will soon discover he is reading a very unusual book. Even though he may not accept its claims, a careful and reflective reading will demonstrate, for most at least, that this book is not only unique, but makes some very unique claims. The following are a number of evidences that support this uniqueness:

1. the claims of the Scriptures themselves;
2. indestructibility of the Bible;
3. the continuity of the Bible;
4. the Bible's revelation of God is unique among all the religious writings;
5. the nature, condition, and cure for man's sin;
6. the ethics and morals of the Bible;
7. the influence of the Bible;
8. the Bible as Revelation Beyond Human Comprehension; and
9. fulfilled prophecy.

### 4.1 The Claims of the Scriptures Themselves

In hundreds of passages, the Bible declares or takes the position explicitly or implicitly that it is nothing less than the very Word of God.

Some thirty-eight hundred times the Bible declares, "God said," or "Thus says the Lord" (e.g. Exodus 14:1; 20:1; Leviticus 4:1; Numbers 4:1; Deuteronomy 4:2; 32:48; Isaiah 1:10, 24; Jeremiah 1:11; Ezekiel 1:3; etc.). Paul also recognized that the things he was writing were the Lord's commandments (1 Corinthians 14:37), and they were acknowledged as such by the believers (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Peter proclaimed the certainty of the Scriptures and the necessity of heeding the unalterable and certain Word of God (2 Peter 1:16-21). John too recognized that his teaching was from God; to reject his teaching was to reject God (1 John 4:6). For other passages which either declare or assume the Bible as God's Word see Deuteronomy 6:6-9, 17-18; Joshua 1:8-9; 8:32-35; 2 Samuel 22:31; Ps. 1:2; 12:6; 19:7-11; 93:5; 119:9, 11, 18, 89-93, 130; Proverbs 30:5-6; Matthew 5:17-19; 22:29; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; John 2:22; 5:24; 10:35; Acts 17:11; Romans 10:17; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 3:15-16; Revelation 1:2; 22:18.

But isn't this a circular kind of argument, and is that a valid argument? In a court of law, the accused has the right to testify on his own behalf. That testimony should be considered in the light of the evidence.

In response to those who would reject the above-mentioned argument, it should be noted that the writers who made those claims for the Scripture were trustworthy men who defended the integrity of the Scripture at great personal sacrifice. Jeremiah received his message directly from the Lord (Jeremiah 11:1-3), yet because of his defense of the Scripture some attempted to kill him (Jeremiah 11:21); even his family rejected him (Jeremiah 12:6). Counterfeit prophets were readily recognized (Jeremiah 23:21, 32; 28:1-17). However, the Bible's claims should not be understood as arguing in a circle or by circular reasoning. The testimony of reliable witnesses, particularly of Jesus, but also of others such as Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, and Nehemiah in the Old Testament, and John and Paul in the New Testament, affirmed the authority and verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

The ever present assumption of the writers of the Bible is that the Bible is the God-breathed Word of God. A good illustration is seen in Psalm 19:7-11 which not only declares the Bible to be the Word of God, but identifies six perfections with corresponding transformations of human character that the Bible will produce in those who study and apply it in faith.

**4.2 Indestructibility of the Bible**

When we recall that only a very small percentage of books survive more than a century, we at once realize that the Bible is a unique book. And when in addition to this we remember the circumstances under which the Bible has survived, this fact becomes very startling. Some efforts have been put forth to suppress or exterminate the Bible, or, when that did not succeed, to rob it of its divine authority.

The Roman emperors soon discovered that the Christians grounded their beliefs on the Scriptures. Consequently, they sought to exterminate them. Diocletian, by a royal edict in 303 AD, demanded that every copy of the Bible be destroyed by fire. He killed so many Christians and destroyed so many Bibles that when the Christians remained silent for a season and staying in hiding, he thought that he had actually put an end to the Scriptures. But it was only a few years later that Constantine came to the throne and made Christianity the state religion.

During the Middle Ages, schoolmen put the creed above the Bible. Church tradition became increasingly important. The state church assumed the authority of interpreting Scripture, and the study of Scripture by laymen was restricted and regarded with suspicion.

During the time of the Reformation, when the Bible was translated into the tongue of the common people, the established church put severe restrictions on the reading of the Bible on the ground that laymen were incapable of interpreting it. The reader was not to seek to interpret for himself. Many laid down their lives for the simple reason that they were the followers of Christ and put their trust in the Scriptures. Laws were even made to prohibit the publishing of the Bible.

Neither imperial edict nor ecclesiastical restraints have succeeded in exterminating the Bible. The greater the efforts put forth to accomplish such a destruction the greater has been the circulation of the Bible. The latest attempt to rob the Bible of its authority is the effort to degrade it to the level of all the other ancient religious books. The Bible is protected by the supernatural power of the God. It is being read by millions of believers around the world and being translated into hundreds of languages. The fact of the indestructibility of the Bible strongly suggests that it is the embodiment of a divine revelation.

**4.3 The Continuity of the Bible**

One of the amazing facts about the Bible is that though it was written by a wide diversity of authors (as many as 40) over a period of 1,600 years, from many different locations and under a wide variety of conditions, the Bible is uniquely one book, not merely a collection of sixty-six books. It has one doctrinal system, one moral standard, one plan of salvation, one program of the ages. Its several accounts of the same incidents or teachings are not contradictory, but supplementary. In contrast to the Mohammedan, Zoroastrian, and Buddhist scriptures, which are for the most part collections of heterogeneous materials without beginning, middle, or end, the Bible is an amazingly unified whole. Its authors came from all walks of life. Some were kings, some peasants, still others were philosophers, fishermen, physicians, statesmen, scholars, poets, and farmers. They lived in a variety of cultures, in different experiences and often were quite different in their make up.

*Enns* has an interesting comparison as it pertains to the Bible's continuity (*Paul Enns*, **The Moody Handbook of Theology**, Moody Press, Chicago, 1989). He writes:

> "The divine origin of the Bible is further seen in considering the continuity of its teaching despite the unusual nature of its composition. It stands distinct from other religious writings. For example, the Islamic Koran was compiled by an individual, Zaid ibn Thabit, under the guidance of Mohammed's father-in-law, Abu-Bekr. Additionally, in A.D. 650, a group of Arab scholars produced a unified version and destroyed all variant copies to preserve the unity of the Koran. By contrast, the Bible came from some forty different authors from diverse vocations in life. For instance, among the writers of Scripture were Moses, a political leader; Joshua, a military leader; David, a shepherd; Solomon, a king; Amos, a herdsman and fruit pincher; Daniel, a prime minister; Matthew, a tax collector; Luke, a medical doctor; Paul, a rabbi; and Peter, a fisherman."

Summing up the significance of the Bible's continuity, *Enns* writes,

> "It is apparent that many of the writers did not know of the other writers of Scripture and were unfamiliar with the other writings, inasmuch as the writers wrote over a period of more than fifteen hundred years, yet the Bible is a marvelous, unified whole. There are no contradictions or inconsistencies within its pages. The Holy Spirit is the unifier of the sixty-six books, determining its harmonious consistency. In unity these books teach the triunity of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the fall and depravity of man, as well as salvation by grace. It quickly becomes apparent that no human being(s) could have orchestrated the harmony of the teachings of the Scripture. The divine authorship of the Bible is the only answer."

Speaking of the Bible as "a phenomenon which is explainable in but one way - it is the word of God," the late *Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer* wrote, "It is not such a book as man would write if he *could*, or could write if he *would*. It is beyond the scope of man's capacity to write a book like

the Bible under the conditions describes above apart from its divine origin."

In view of the unity of the Bible we are obliged to conclude that it is the embodiment of a divine revelation.

**4.4 The Bible's Revelation of God Is Unique Among All the Religious Writings**

The Bible's revelation of God is unique among all the religious writings of either antiquity or of more modern times. While the Bible is a very ethical book, it never divorces its code of morality from a personal relationship with the God of the Bible, teaching that God's laws are not meant to hinder joy and pleasure, but to enhance man's capacity to know and love God and people. Morality is to be a product of knowing and loving the God of the Bible (Deuteronomy 4:4-6; Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31).

The contents of the Bible recognizes the holiness and love of God; it pictures sin as inexcusable and under the judgment of eternal punishment; it teaches the sovereign rule of God in the universe; it sets forth in great details God's provision of salvation; it delineates the purposes of God concerning Israel and the church; it forecasts the developments of the world, socially, economically, politically, and religiously; it portrays the culmination of all things in the second coming of Christ, the resurrections, the judgments, the millennium, and the eternal state. Surely, this book comes from the hand of an infinite God.

In addition, no other religious writing presents both the absolute holiness of God combined with God's love, mercy, and grace that reaches out to sinful man who has been separated from God not only because of man's sin, but because of God's absolute holiness. One of the great revelations and themes of the Bible is that which is expressed by Isaiah, "holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3; Habakkuk 1:13a).

While other contemporary writers were primarily polytheistic, the Bible is monotheistic. It presents a monotheistic concept of God rather than the polytheism which was so flagrant in the days when the Scriptures were written. Furthermore, when later holy books like the Koran and others presented a monotheistic concept of God, the Bible remained unique because it is the only book about God that presents God as one (monotheism) yet one in three persons, the Triunity or Trinity. Indeed, the Bible's revelation of God is one that is starkly different from the ones depicted in all other holy books whether of antiquity or of modern times.

**4.5 The Nature, Condition, and Cure for Man's Sin**

Only the Bible describes man's condition in sin as it really is and demonstrates the impossibility for man to deal with his sin and sinfulness apart from God's grace solution in the person and death of His Son. Every other religion in the world, past and present, has man seeking to obtain his own Salvation or gain God's favor by some form of human works or religious activity. Only the Bible presents a solution for man's sin that is truly life changing, when properly embraced and believed.

**4.6 The Ethics and Morals of the Bible**

The ethics and morals of the Bible cover all areas of human conduct from the home, the husband/wife relationships, parent/child relationships, to human conduct in society as with employers and employees, neighbors and enemies, and the state and its citizens. It covers morals on all levels as well as business, economic, and social spheres. But as mentioned previously, the ethics and morals of the Bible are unique in that they are always related to one's belief in the existence of God and one's relationship with Him; in this way, the motives themselves are judged. Ethics and morals are never simply a matter of outward conformity to the moral standards of Scripture as other religions or religious books do. The emphasis of the Bible is "search me O God, and know my heart."

**4.7 The Influence of the Bible**

The Koran, the book of Mormon, Science and Health, the Zend Avesta and the Classics of Confucius have all had a tremendous influence in the world. But there is a vast difference in the kind of influence they have exerted when compared with that of the Bible. The former have led to a low view of God and sin, even to the ignoring of it.

The Bible, on the contrary, has produced the highest results in all walks of life. It has led to the highest type of creations in the fields of art, architecture, literature and music. The fundamental laws of the nations have been influenced; great social reforms have been made. In addition, there is the impact of the regenerating effect on millions of individual lives. Where is there a book in all the world that even remotely compares with it in its beneficent influence upon mankind? Surely, this is proof of its being the revelation of God to needy humanity.

**4.8 The Bible As Revelation Beyond Human Comprehension**

The extent of Bible revelation is beyond human comprehension. Like a telescope, the Bible reaches beyond the stars and penetrates the heights

of heaven and the depths of hell. Like a microscope, it discovers the minutest details of God's plans and purposes as well as the hidden secrets of the human heart. The Bible deals as freely with things unknown as it does with the known. It can speak with complete freedom and assurance about situations and events outside the realm of human experience. The Bible knows no limits to the infinite knowledge of God who guided its writers. It permits its readers to gaze on events in eternity past as well as in eternity future. The comprehension of divine revelation is utterly beyond the capacity of even the most brilliant men unaided by the Spirit of God. Other unique features of the Bible that give evidence of its divine origin are its *types and antitypes*, its nature as unique *literature*, its *scientific accuracy* when compared to true science, its *enduring freshness*, and its *power to change lives* (*Lewis Sperry Chafer*, **Systematic Theology**, Vol. 1, Abridged Edition, Walvoord, Campbell, Zuck).

**4.9 Fulfilled prophecy**

Another amazing illustration of the divine origin and uniqueness of the Bible is its many fulfilled prophecies. In contrast to the Mohammedan, Zoroastrian, and Buddhist scriptures, they haven't contained any fulfilled prophecies. Only God can reveal the future, and prophecy as it relates to prediction is a miracle of knowledge.

Throughout Scripture, hundreds of prophecies were made by Old Testament writers concerning the Messiah, the future kingdom on earth, the restoration of Israel as a nation, and their return to their Promised Land. In the New Testament also many predictions are made of events to come. As Scripture unfolds, about half of these prophecies have already been fulfilled, but others, following the same pattern of literal fulfillment, are subject to fulfillment in the future. The perfect precision of prophecy extending to such details as the place of Christ's birth, the character of His execution, the very words He would speak on the cross testify to the absolute accuracy of the Word of God. In Scripture, prophecy is just as accurate as history.

Fulfilled prophecy indicates that the writers of prophecy possessed in some manner supernatural intelligence. Peter speaks of this when he declares of the Old Testament prophets, "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21). If we can demonstrate that Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled in every particular, then we can prove divine revelation. Let us consider certain prophecies.

The prophecies concerning Israel's dispersion have been minutely fulfilled (Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Jeremiah 15:4; 16:13; Hosea 3:4). In the fulfillment Samaria was to be overthrown, but Judah to be preserved (1 Kings 14:15; Isaiah 7:6-8; Hosea 1:6f); Judah and Jerusalem, though rescued from the Assyrians, were to fall into the hands of the Babylonians (Isaiah 39:6; Jeremiah 25:9-12); the destruction of Samaria was to be final (Micah 1:6-9), but that of Jerusalem was to be followed by a restoration (Jeremiah 29:10-14); the very restorer of Judah was foretold by name (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1); the Medes and the Persians were to overthrow Babylon (Isaiah 21:2; Daniel 5:28); the city of Jerusalem and the temple were to be rebuilt (Isaiah 44:28).

So also the prophecies concerning the Gentile nations were fulfilled. Prophecies concerning Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia were fulfilled (Isaiah 13-23; Jeremiah 46-51). Particularly, the prophecies concerning the four great world empires in Daniel 2 and 7 have been fulfilled. Certain parts connected with the fourth of these are manifestly still future and lead us to the return of Christ, but the rest have been fulfilled. So also the prophecy of the detailed struggle between Syria and Egypt, following the break-up of Alexander's empire, has been fulfilled.

There are many other predictions in the Bible that could be mentioned as proof of the same thing. Some are the increase knowledge and of travel in the latter days (Daniel 12:4), the continuation of wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6f), the increase of wickedness (2 Timothy 3:1-13), the preservation of a remnant of Israel (Romans 11:1-5; 25-32), and the stirring of these dry bones and their return to national and spiritual life (Ezekiel 37:1-28). What man could foresee and predict any of these things! This, again, proves we have in the Bible the embodiment of a divine revelation.

For more information relating to the fulfilled Bible Prophecy, please study the course, **Bible Prophecy**.

**4.10 Conclusion**

According to the above reasons, we conclude that the Bible is the written Word of God.

## 5. REVELATION FROM GOD IS BOTH REASONABLE AND NECESSARY

### 5.1 Definition of Revelation

The term revelation comes from the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means "a disclosure" or "an unveiling." It is used in the New Testament of

the disclosure of truth in general (Luke 2:32; Romans 16:25; Ephesians 1:17), of the disclosure of a specific area of truth (2 Corinthians 12:1; Galatians 1:12; 2:2; Ephesians 3:3), of the second coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 4:13), and of the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:1).

Theologically, Bible students use this word to signify God's work of revealing Himself to mankind through the various sources of revelation as in creation (Romans 1:18-21; Psalm 19), in providential acts (Acts 14:17; Romans 8:28), in miracles (John 20:30-31), through direct acts of communication (Exodus 3:1-9; Acts 22:17-21), through the person of Christ (John 1:14, 18), and through the Bible.

What then is "revelation"? *Thiessen* defines it as:

> "Revelation is that act of God whereby he discloses himself or communicates truth to the mind; whereby he makes manifest to His creatures that which could not be known in any other way. The revelation may occur in a single, instantaneous act, or it may extend over a long period of time; and this communication of Himself and his truth may be perceived by the human mind in varying degrees of fullness" (*Henry C. Thiessen*, **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapter II, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, p.7).

For simplicity, "revelation" in this course is that which God has revealed to man about Himself, and what He requires of man. The term may pertain to the act by which God reveals a truth (e.g. oral communication, supernatural encounters, dreams), or it may pertain to the content of the truth revealed (the words contained in the Bible). The concept of revelation falls into two principal divisions or areas:

1. General revelation, creation or conscience; and
2. Special revelation, which we will narrowly define for this lession as the Scriptures, containing the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.

Before we begin this study in detail, we must establish that revelation from God is both reasonable and necessary for man to receive.

**5.2 The Need for Revelation**

Revelation from God is necessary for man due to the following reasons:

1. Man's confusion and ignorance about God;
2. Man's thirst for meaning; and
3. Man's need for an ultimate authority.

***5.2.1 Man's confusion and ignorance about God***

There are thousands of religions in the world today. From loosely defined philosophies with a minor following, to major denominations and churches with millions in their ranks, one finds organized and disorganized religions containing ideas that water down, conjure up, or exclude God. It is obvious that man is in a state of conflict and confusion in his perceptions, and therefore needs communication from God about God.

***5.2.2 Man's thirst for meaning***

Man's pursuit of meaning through religion and philosophy, though not necessarily a search for the true God (Romans 3:11), nevertheless reflects the fact that there is a vacuum in his life due to the absence of God which needs to be filled.

***5.2.3 Man's need for an ultimate authority***

Everyone recognizes some "authority," and there is a basic human need to operate according to what one perceives as truth. There are sources of authority other than the Bible that mankind submits to, for example:

1. religious groups; individuals, systems, or church traditions (these may have valid authority, but they must never subjugate or substitute Scripture);
2. occult practices or superstitions;
3. human reason,

when placed above or in place of Scripture. Though biblical revelation is comprehended by human reason, it is with the help of the Holy Spirit, and when the truth or authority of Scripture is challenged by human reason, Scripture is always the authority. Authorities other then Scripture

do not provide valid answers to the mysteries of life.

**5.3 The Reasonableness of Revelation**

Several facts make divine revelation reasonable. They can be stated in the form of several propositions with a final conclusion:

- Assuming the existence of God, it is reasonable that He would reveal Himself.
- Assuming the power of God, it is reasonable that He is able to reveal Himself.
- Assuming the personality of God, it is reasonable that He would want to reveal Himself.
- Assuming man has an intellect, it is reasonable that he would understand divine revelation.
- Conclusion: It is reasonable to believe that God has revealed Himself through the vehicles of creation and Scripture.

**6. THE GENERAL REVELATION OF GOD**

**6.1 Definition of General Revelation**

By general revelation, we mean revelation that is simply general in its extent. It is general in its scope; that is, it reaches to all people (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17). It is general in geography; that is, it encompasses the entire globe (Psalm 19:2). It is general in its methodology; that is, it employs universal means like the heat of the sun (vv. 4-6) and human conscience (Romans 2:14-15). General revelation comes to mankind in a number of ways (creation, order and design, the nature of man as an intelligent being), but the most obvious and powerful means of general revelation is nature or creation. General revelation is God revealing certain truths and aspects about His nature to all humanity, which revelation is essential and preliminary to God's special revelation.

General revelation includes:

1. creation; and
2. conscience.

**6.2 Creation**

Creation as a part of God's general revelation affirms certain facts about God. Two key passages emphasize God's general revelation in creation:

1. Romans 1:18-21; and
2. Psalm 19:1-6.

***6.2.1 Romans 1:18-21***

In Romans 1:18-21, Paul says that knowledge of God is "evident" to man, even if he has not read the Bible. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). Thus, revelation through creation is sufficient to condemn those who refuse to acknowledge it.

What is it that God has revealed "through what has been made?" In general, the answer is "His invisible attributes" (literally, "the invisible things"). These fall into two categories:

1. God's "eternal power"; and
2. God's "divine nature."

Eternal power means that the greatness of the universe should teach us that a sufficiently great power brought it into being; divine nature means that the orderly and intelligent functioning of the universe, and man's own personality both point to the existence of a supreme, intelligent personality.

***6.2.2 Psalm 19:1-6***

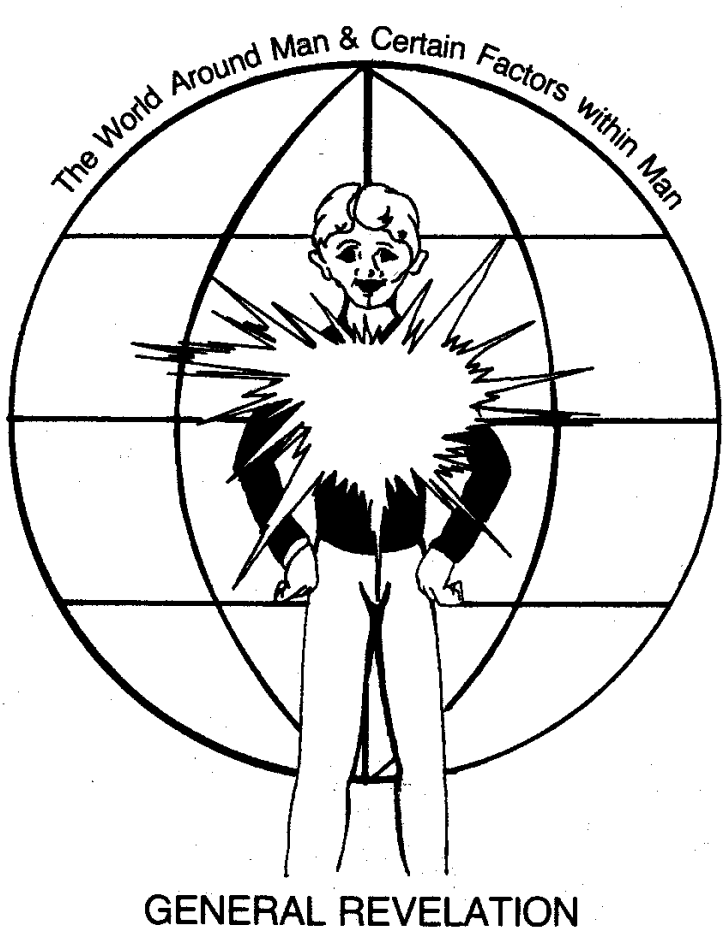
Centuries before Romans was written, the Psalmist praised God's invisible attributes. It affirms:

1. the heavens declare the fact of God's glory to the human race throughout the earth (v. 1);
2. that this revelation is constant, occurring "day to day" and "night to night" (v. 2);
3. that it is a nonverbal revelation, "there is no speech, nor are there words, their voice is not heard" (v. 3); and
4. its scope is worldwide, "their line [sound] has gone out through all the earth, and their utterance to the end of the world" (v. 4).

No one is excluded from this revelation of God. Wherever man peers at the universe, there is orderliness. At a distance of ninety-three million miles from the earth, the sun provides exactly the right temperature environment for man to function on earth. Were the sun closer, it would be too hot to survive, and were it further away it would be too cold for man to function. If the moon were closer than two hundred forty thousand miles the gravitational pull of the tides would engulf the earth's surface with water from the oceans. Wherever man looks in the universe, there is harmony and order. Similarly, God has revealed Himself on earth (v. 1). The magnificence of the human body is perhaps the best evidence of general revelation on earth. The entire human body, its cardiovascular system, the bone structure, the respiratory system, the muscles, the nervous system including its center in the brain, reveals an infinite God.

**6.3 Conscience**

Romans 2:14-15 teaches that another source of knowledge is available, even for those who do not "have the Law," or moral truth about God. It is "the work of the Law written in their hearts," or human conscience. In other words, all men have a moral sensitivity; we are conscious of the existence of right and wrong. This exists by virtue of being created in the "image of God" (cf. Genesis 1:26). Man intuitively knows not only that God values goodness and abhors evil but also that he is ultimately accountable to such a righteous Power. While the Jews will be judged according to the written law, Gentiles, who do not have the written Law, will be judged according to an unwritten law, the law of conscience written on their hearts. Moreover, Paul says the conscience acts as a legal prosecutor (v. 15).




**6.4 Conclusion**

General revelation is knowledge from nature and conscience about who God is and what His moral standards are. But the New Testament teaches that only the knowledge of God which comes by special revelation can actually bring the truth necessary for Salvation. We therefore assume that general revelation is necessary for comprehending special revelation. In other words, the Gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection,

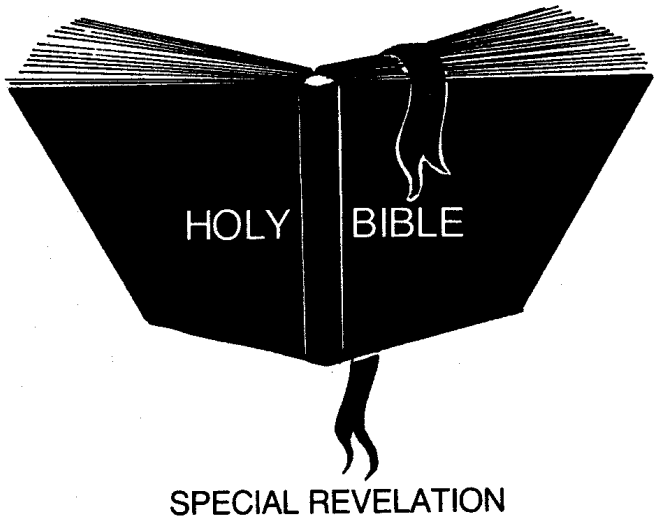
part of special revelation, cannot be adequately understood apart from a basic knowledge, provided through general revelation, of who God is.

**7. THE BIBLE IS THE SPECIAL REVELATION OF GOD**

**7.1 Definition of Special Revelation**

Special revelation is that which God reveals about Himself directly and specifically. Special revelation is seen in history, nature, miracles, prophecy, and the person of Christ, and is now recorded in the Bible, the record of special revelation. In other word, the Holy Bible is the special revelation of God. Special revelation includes:

1. providence of God;
2. preservation of nature by God;
3. miraculous intervention by God;
4. direct communication from God; and
5. the person of Jesus Christ.



SPECIAL REVELATION

**7.2 Providence of God**

Providence is the outworking of the plan of God within the affairs of man. Thiessen defines providence as the "sovereign control" of God over creation. By looking backwards, historically, we can recognize such things as God's sovereignty, justice, goodness, and love, in His dealings with man. All through the Old Testament we read of God's intervention in the affairs of Israel and her enemies (for example, the Egyptians in Exodus 12:29-33; the Babylonians in 2 Kings 24:1-4) to bring about His plan for blessing, and sometimes punishing, His people.

Some call this general revelation. But because we understand it most clearly from the historical record of specific events in Scripture we call it special revelation (see also Daniel 2:36-45; Romans 8:28).

**7.3 Preservation of Nature by God**

By this we mean that our universe is not a self-sustaining system. God did not merely create and then withdraw from creation, leaving it to run itself. As Thiessen reasons, "where is there a machine that can sustain itself?" No - God is actively maintaining His creation. This is seen in the continuous orderly operation of our universe.

The Scriptures also clearly support this, and further name Christ as the agent of preservation, as He was the agent of creation (Psalm 36:6; 37:28; 66:9; Acts 17:28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3).

**7.4 Miraculous Intervention by God**

Miracles are unusual phenomena that reveal God's existence, His power and His concern for His creatures in a direct way. They are naturally

inexplicable events of which Scripture is full:

1. the ten plagues in Egypt (Exodus 7-12);
2. the water from a rock in the wilderness (Exodus 17);
3. the turning of water into wine (John 2);
4. the feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9); and
5. the healing of the blind and the lame (Matthew 11:2-6).

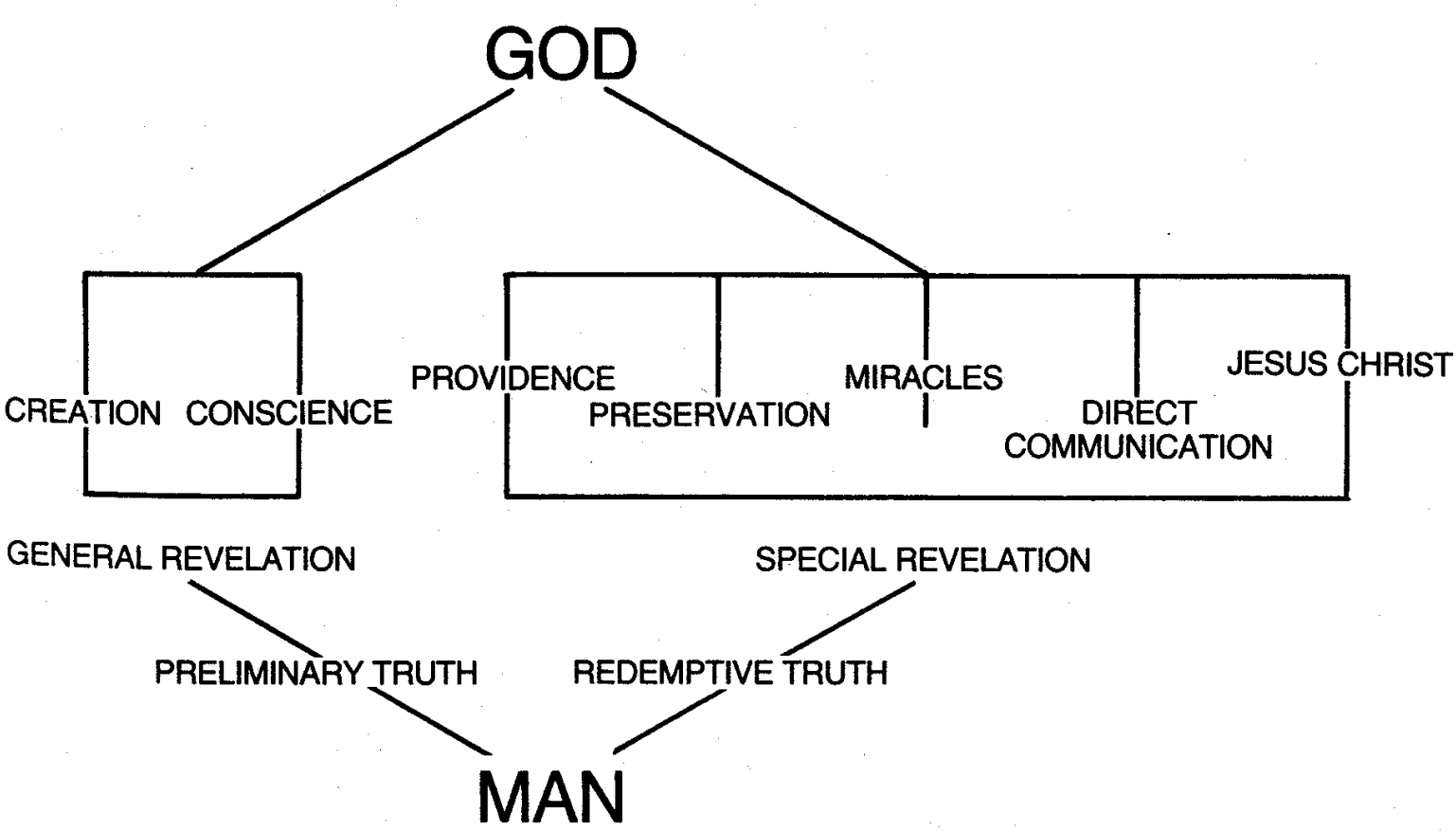
Genuine miracles always have genuine purposes, that is, they are not superfluous or showy displays of power (see John 9). The miracle of regeneration in the heart of man is perhaps the most astounding miracle of all.

**7.5 Direct Communication from God**

The Old Testament is full of prophecy concerning the first coming of Christ. Prophecy usually involves special truth concerning the redemption of man and is given through someone with the gift of prophecy (i.e. proclamation, or telling, as well as predicting, or foretelling. See Acts 22:17-21).

**7.6 The Person of Jesus Christ**

Our Lord is the ultimate or most perfect of God's revelations. "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Hebrews 1:3). God's moral and personal attributes (holiness, authority, mercy, etc.) are most clearly revealed in Jesus as is witnessed throughout the gospels (Matthew 1:23; Mark 4:41; Luke 5:24; John 1:14; 14:7-11).




**7.7 Conclusion**

God has committed Himself to bringing the message of the gospel to those who respond positively to general revelation (Romans 10:14-15). Special revelation contains the kind of truth necessary for faith, for Salvation. It is manifested in a variety of ways, but Scripture is the "embodiment of them," and serves as the only thoroughly reliable source of truth about God. Special revelation is available to anyone calles upon the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13).

## 8. THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED REVELATION OF GOD

### 8.1 The Necessity of Inspiration

As special revelation is God's communication to man of the truth he must know in order to be properly related to God, so inspiration deals with the preservation of that revelation so that what was received from God was accurately transmitted to others beyond the original recipient. In revelation we have the *vertical reception* of God's truth while in inspiration we have the *horizontal communication* of that revelation accurately to others. The question is how can we be sure the Bible is God's revelation to man and not merely the product of human ingenuity or merely human opinion? If what God revealed has not been accurately recorded, then that record is subject to question. The doctrine of inspiration answers that question and guarantees the accuracy of the Bible as God's special revelation.

### 8.2 Meaning of Inspiration

The word "inspiration" is derived from the Latin Vulgate Bible where the verb *inspire* is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21. The word *inspiration* is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 to translate *qeopneustos*, a word that occurs only here. *Qeopneustos* is derived from *qeos*, "God," and *pnew*, "to breath." Literally, it means "God-breathed" and expresses the concept of exhalation by God. More accurately, it emphasizes that the Scriptures have been breathed out by God.

### 8.3 A Biblical Definition of Inspiration

Inspiration may be defined as:

> "God's superintendence of the human authors of Scripture so that using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs."

If we break this definition down into its various parts, we note several elements, each of which is vital to understanding what the Bible teaches about inspiration:

1. The word "superintendence" refers to the guiding relationships God had with the human authors of Scripture in the various material of the Bible. His superintendence varied in degree, but it was always included so that the Spirit of God guaranteed the accuracy of what was written.

2. The word "composed" shows that the writers were not simply stenographers who wrote what God dictated to them. They were actively involved using their own personalities, backgrounds, and God's working in their lives, but again, what was composed had the superintendence of God over the material written.

3. "Without error" expresses what the Bible itself claims to be true regarding its record; it is God's word and that word is truth (John 17:17; Psalm 119:160).

4. Though our translations of the Bible are tremendously accurate, being based on thousands of manuscript witnesses, inspiration can only be ascribed to the *original autographs*, not to manuscript copies or the translations based on those copies.

To this definition, *Enns* commented that there are several important elements that belong in a proper definition of inspiration:

1. the divine element—God the Holy Spirit superintended the writers, ensuring the accuracy of the writing;
2. the human element—human authors wrote according to their individual styles and personalities;
3. the result of the divine-human authorship is the recording of God's truth without error;
4. inspiration extends to the selection of words by the writers; and
5. inspiration relates to the original manuscripts only.

### 8.4 The Inspiration of Scripture Is Testified by the Lord Jesus Christ, Apostles and Early Churches

Regardless of whether a person responds or has an encounter with God through the Bible, it is the objective and authoritative Word of God. The Thessalonian Christians accepted it as the Word of God, but Paul's comment regarding their response was not that they had an encounter so that their message became the word of God, but rather "when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as

the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). They did come to know God through the Word, but Paul emphatically affirms it was the Word of God regardless.

In conclusion, the strongest defense for the verbal plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is the testimony of Jesus Christ. He testified to the inspiration of the entire Scriptures, the various books of the Old Testament and the actual words of Scripture as they were originally recorded. The fact that He based His arguments on the precise wording of Scripture testifies to His exalted view of Scripture. We will demonstrate Christ's view of Scripture under the concept of inerrancy. In addition, Paul declared all Scripture to be God-breathed; man was God's instrument, being guided by God in the writing of Scripture. Peter confirmed the truth by emphasizing that the authors were carried along by the Holy Spirit in the writing of Scripture. The testimony of each of these witnesses draws attention to the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture.

## 9. MAJOR BIBLICAL TEXTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION

The concept that the Bible is inspired, breathed out of God, is not something man has forced on the Bible, but a concept fully in keeping with the claims of the Bible itself. Inspiration is the testimony of the Bible to itself. As in any just court of law, we need to allow the Bible to give testimony to itself. We will approach the subject by examining the following four major biblical texts on the subject:

1. Key facts about inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16-17);
2. The how of inspiration (2 Peter 1:20-210); and
3. The Breadth of Inspiration (1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:3-4).

### 9.1 Key Facts About Inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

> "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

A number of important things are stated in this passage regarding the inspiration of Scripture:

#### *9.1.1 The extent of inspiration*

The phrase "all Scripture" includes all of the Old Testament and the part of the New Testament that had been written and circulated at the time Paul wrote this letter to Timothy (see 2 Peter 3:16 which implies that the apostle Paul's letters are Scripture). The rest of the New Testament, written after this epistle and immediately recognized by most as God-given, is now included in the term "Scripture." This concept that the entire Bible is inspired, not merely parts, is called *plenary* (full) inspiration.

#### *9.1.2 The nature of inspiration*

The word translated "inspired" is the rare Greek term *theopneustos*, which means "God-breathed." This expresses metaphorically the fact that Scripture originated with God and represents His thoughts. This verse unequivocally states that Scripture is God-breathed. The Apostle Paul, a man authenticated by signs and wonders (2 Corinthians 12:12) and recognized as a writer of Scripture (2 Peter 3:16), declares Scripture to be the product of the out-breathing of God.

#### *9.1.3 The object of inspiration*

"Scripture" is inspired. Strictly speaking, writers are not inspired; the text inself, the words, are inspired. This is called verbal inspiration. **Inspiration only applies to the original documents penned by the authors.** There is no biblical guarantee that later copies made through the centuries are absolutely flawless reproductions of the originals. The history of the manuscripts demonstrates that minor copyist errors did creep in.

However, through the process of examining and comparing thousands of manuscripts (textual criticism), today we can be confident that the Hebrew and Greek text we have is virtually the same as the originals. Nevertheless, we ascribe inspiration only to the documents supervised by the Holy Spirit.

### *9.1.4 The value of inspiration*

Scripture is "profitable" for promoting spiritual growth. God knows what believers need for maturing and has given it by way of inspiration. This is seen in the second statement of 3:16, “and is profitable for teaching, …” along with verse 17, “that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Obviously, since all Scripture is God breathed, being the product of an all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful and loving God, the Apostle Paul goes on to state that the entire Bible is profitable for four things:

1. **Teaching**— “Teaching” is the Greek *didaskalia* and means “doctrine” or “teaching.” It is used in both the active sense (i.e., the act of teaching), and in the passive sense (what is taught, doctrine). In the pastoral epistles, Paul uses it of the act of teaching (1 Timothy 4:13, 17; 2 Timothy 3:10), and of what is taught as in sound doctrine (cf. 1 Timothy 1:10; 4:6, 16; 6:1, 3; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1; 2:7, 10). As many of these passages show, especially Titus 2:1, theological teaching, if it is to be truly profitable, must be in accord with sound doctrine, truth from the inspired word. Ultimately, teaching or doctrine, which looks at the content, refers to God’s fundamental principles for man’s life both eternal and abundant. It gives us the basics, the fundamental truths upon which life is to be built.

2. **Reproof—**“Reproof” is the Greek *elegmos* which means “proof, conviction, reproof.” The *mos* ending shows this is a passive noun which looks at the ***result*** of the process of the convicting ministry of the Spirit through the Word—personal conviction through exposure to truth. The Bible reproves and exposes us to the various ways we violate the plan and principles of God in all the relationships of life, with God and with people as in one’s family, in the church, and in society. Once we have been reproved and experience conviction (reproof) to the violations, we each face a very important decision. We can move toward God and **respond** to His correction and training, or we can **rebel** and **resist**. If we resist, then, as a Father, He disciplines us to draw us back to Him.

3. **Correction**—This is the Greek *epanorqwsis* which means “setting up straight, setting right.” It stresses the restorative nature and capacity of Scripture and points to the more immediate work of the Word to set our feet back on course. The Psalmist wrote, “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul” (Psalm 19:7a).

4. **Training in righteousness**— “Training” is *paidia* which basically means “training, instruction, discipline,” not in the sense of punishment, but in the sense of the disciplines that train and develop character, strength, skill, etc. This is undoubtedly more long range and refers to those truths that develop godly character and spiritual strength—growth truths and procedures like Bible study, meditation, and prayer.

But these four objectives have a greater goal or purpose. The purpose is that “the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17). The Bible offers us God’s comfort and His peace as it reveals His love, care, and mercy, but this is always in the context of conforming us into the image of His Son (Romans 8:28-29) and equipping us for a life of good works (Ephesians 2:10). Equipping us is designed to produce righteousness and ministry rather than self-indulgence.

The word “adequate” is the Greek *artios* which means “fit, complete, capable, sufficient: i.e., able to meet whatever is needed.” Being “fit” looks at the result or the intended result of a process, the aim in view. I think the process itself is seen in the word “equipped.” Note these three points about this word:

1. It is the Greek *ezartizw* which means “to outfit, fully furnish, fully supply” as in fitting out a wagon or a ship for a long journey. It was actually used of outfitting a rescue boat. We might compare our Coast Guard vessels and their crews that are so well equipped to go out and rescue ships in trouble.

2. It is an adverbial participle which points us to the mode or the means of becoming “adequate” “capable,” or “competent.” We might translate the verse as, “that the man of God may be capable, by having been thoroughly equipped.” In the context, the equipping comes from knowing this God-breathed book.

3. It is in the perfect tense which, in Greek, often looks at the results of preceding action or a process. In the context, the process is that of studying, knowing, and applying God’s inspired Word while the result is ability for ministry through spiritual growth.

God’s goal in giving us His Word and our goal in studying and knowing God’s Word is to thoroughly fit us out that we might become fully competent servants of God for every kind of good work in the midst of a dark and needy world, like thoroughly equipped rescue vessels on missions of mercy.

### 9.2 The How of Inspiration (2 Peter 1:20-21)

In 2 Peter 1:20-21:

> *"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."*

#### *9.2.1 The term "prophecy of Scripture"*

The expression is a literal translation from the Greek, and means "prophetic Scripture." "Prophetic" is used here in the broad sense, meaning revelation from God whether proclamation (telling), or prediction (foretelling). The gift of prophecy enables men and women to receive a message directly from God.

#### *9.2.2 The origin of prophetic Scripture*

Prophetic Scripture is not a "matter of one's own interpretation." This "interpretation" does not refer to the individual's understanding of Scripture as he reads, but to the original interpretation of God's communication to man. In other words, Scripture did not result from man's understanding of God, or human philosophy which would have involved "human will," but men "spoke from God." Scripture originated with God.

Note the connecting and explanatory “for” of verse 21. This teaches us that both God and man were involved in the production of the Bible, but in such a way that God was the ultimate source (though man’s will was involved, Scripture was never the product of human will). God both directed the writing and guaranteed the accuracy of the product. The human authors actively spoke God’s Word and they were more than dictation machines, but to ensure the accuracy of what was spoken, the human authors were moved and carried along by the Holy Spirit.

#### *9.2.3 The giving of prophetic Scripture*

This verse affirms that men were "moved by the Holy Spirit" to speak from God. The word "moved" is *feromenoi*, a Greek passive participle meaning, “to be carried, be borne along.” In Acts 27:15 the same word is used when the ship carrying the Apostle Paul was "driven along" by the force of the wind. the picture here is of the writer being impelled by God the Spirit to write God's words. This allows for the full use of the writer's faculties, like the helmsman on a ship who would be fully conscious and active, steering the ship within the limits allowed by the wind. The divine and the human collaborated in the production of Scripture.

This verse, then, teaches us two things regarding the “how” of inspiration:

1. the will of the human authors never directed the writings of the Bible; and
2. the Holy Spirit as the ultimate source ensured the accuracy of what they wrote in every way.

### 9.3 The Breadth of Inspiration

#### *9.3.1 1 Corinthians 2:12-13*

In 1 Corinthians 2:12-13:

> "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might 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*."

The subject in this passage is God’s revelation by which we know of the things of God, things which man cannot know by human wisdom. But the point we must not miss is that this revelation comes to us, not just in thoughts or concepts, but in specific words. This shows the fallacy of *concept inspiration*, that inspiration extends to the concepts, but not to the words. In its scope or breadth, by the Bible’s own explanation, inspiration extends to the very words of the Bible.

#### *9.3.2 2 Peter 1:3-4*

In 2 Peter 1:3-4:

> "Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

It is clear from verse 4 and the reference to “His precious and magnificent promises” that Peter has the Word of God in view in these two verses. First, there is the declaration that God “has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness.” Second, life and godliness come through the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus, but such knowledge comes through the Word, the precious promises. In essence then, this points us to the breadth of what God’s Word covers, “everything pertaining to life and godliness.”

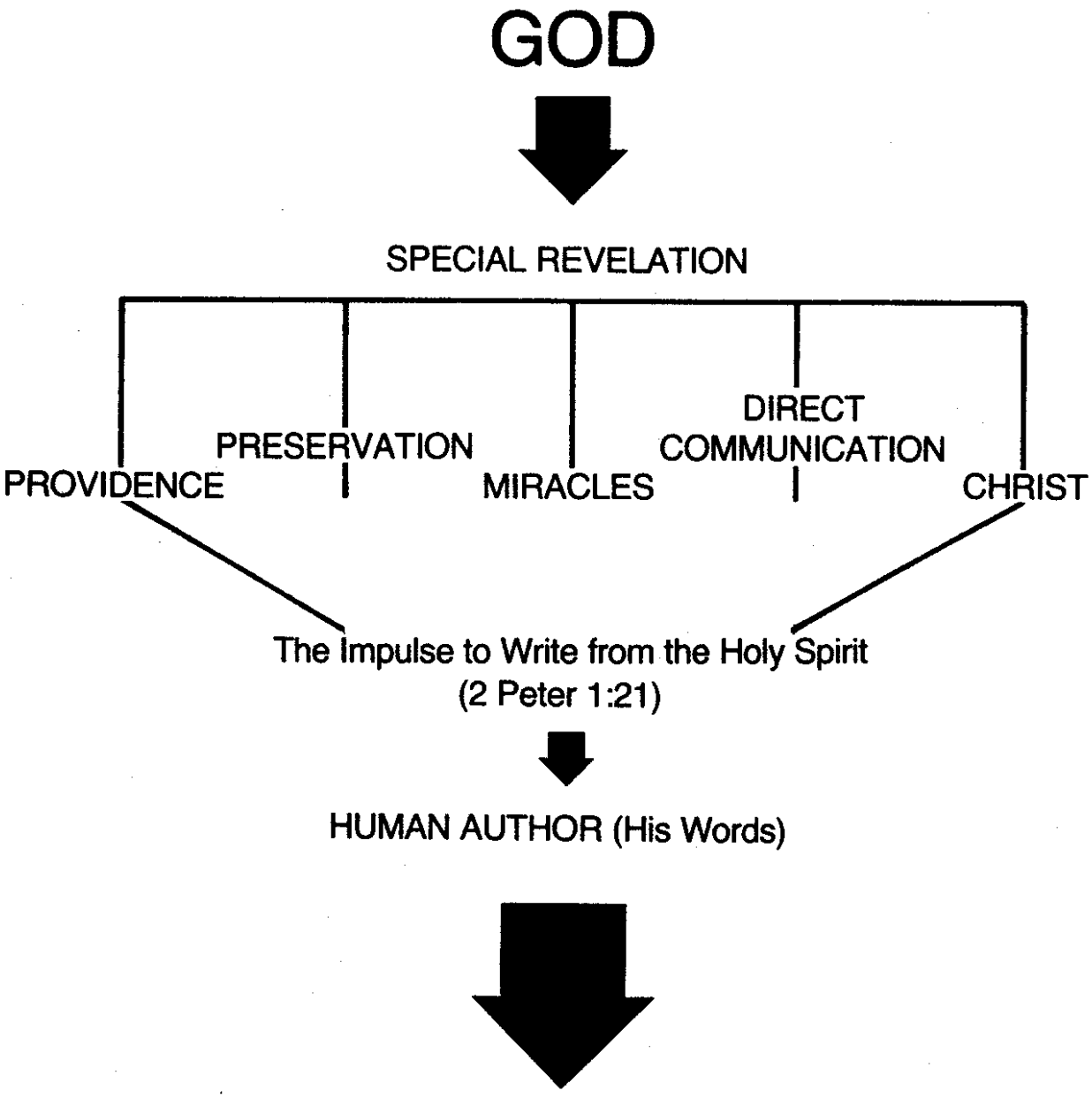
While God does not reveal everything that He could reveal, many things He has chosen to keep to Himself (Deuteronomy 29:29), the Bible, in progressive fashion, does cover all that man needs for life and godliness through its revelation of God and of Jesus our Lord. We have everything we need, nothing is missing.

**9.4 Summary**

God has taken the initiative and given His truth through the Holy Spirit who impelled and guided men to write it. The word "God-breathed" strongly implies Scripture is God's very words; "moved" suggests the conscious participation of the men who wrote. Both of the passages we have looked at clearly support the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

The relationship between revelation and inspiration is chronological, and logical. God revealed truth, and then the Holy Spirit oversaw the written record of that same truth.

What we have discussed so far can be visualized like this:



# SCRIPTURE (Original Autographs)

## 10. THE INADEQUATE THEORIES AND CORRECT BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION

Various false theories of inspiration have been suggested down through the ages which often contain some truth, but remain inadequate definitions. In order to give an adequate and precise Biblical doctrine of inspiration, these false theories must be considered and refuted, they are:

1. natural inspiration;
2. spiritual or mystical illumination;
3. degree inspiration;
4. Neo-orthodox or Barthian view;
5. partial inspiration;
6. conceptual inspiration;
7. divine dictation; and
8. correct Biblical doctrine of inspiration (orthodox position).

### 10.1 Natural Inspiration

This view denies the supernatural element in biblical inspiration; the writers of Scripture were simply men of special genius who possessed unusual religious insight into moral and spiritual truth. Through their special abilities, they wrote the books of the Bible in much the same way as any individual might write any book. Through their religious insight, they wrote on religious subjects in the same way Shakespeare wrote literature. Writing by their own will, the writers conceived what they wrote.

### 10.2 Spiritual or Mystical Illumination

This viewpoint goes a step farther than natural inspiration, for it conceives of the writers as more than natural geniuses in that they were also Spirit-filled and guided. “The inspiration of the books of the Bible does not imply for us the view that they were produced or written in any manner generically different from that of the writing of other great Christian books.… There is a wide range of Christian literature from the fifth to the twentieth century which can with propriety be described as inspired by the Holy Spirit in precisely the same formal sense as were the books of the Bible” (*Alan Richardson*, **Christian Apologetics**, New York: Harper, 1948, p.207). Thus:

1. other Christian writings are as inspired as the Bible;
2. the Bible books are not infallible even though they represent great religious literature that may even contain messages from God.

In this view any Christian, if illuminated by the Holy Spirit, could be the author of inspired Scripture. Those who hold to this view teach that it is the writers who are inspired, not the writings themselves.

### 10.3 Degree Inspiration

This view holds to the inspiration of Scripture, but it holds that some parts are more inspired than others. It is true that some parts of Scripture are more relevant than others, but all of Scripture is equally inspired and accurate, and it all has an important place in the overall revelation of God.

### 10.4 Neoorthodox or Barthian View

This is a very dangerous view because those who hold it often sound evangelical, but they are actually often very liberal in their theology. This view teaches the Bible is not the Word of God, but only becomes the Word of God through a special encounter when God speaks to a person in some kind of subjective experience. In other words, the Bible only witnesses to the Word of God, but it is not the Word of God.

Moreover, the Bible is enshrouded in myth necessitating a demythologizing of the Bible to discover what actually took place. The historicity of the events is unimportant. For example, whether or not Christ actually rose from the dead in time and space is unimportant to the neoorthodox adherent. The important thing is the experiential encounter that is possible even though the Bible is tainted with factual errors. In this view the authority is the subjective experience of the individual rather than the Scriptures themselves.

Can such a Bible have any kind of authority? Yes, declares the Barthian. Its authority is in the encounter of faith with the Christ of Scripture. The Bible, because it points to Christ, has instrumental authority, not inherent authority. And those parts which do point to Christ have more authority than those which do not. Yet all the parts contain errors.

To sum up: Barthianism teaches that the Bible (B) points to Christ the Word (C). But in reality we do not know anything about C apart from B. It is not that we already have a clear concept of C by which we can test the accuracy of B, the pointer. Actually the Bible is the *painter* of C; that is, what we know about Christ comes from the Bible. So if the Bible has errors in it, the portrait of Christ is erroneous. And make no mistake about it, the Barthian Bible does have errors in it.

**10.5 Partial Inspiration**

This theory holds that God supplied the ability needed for the trustworthy transmission of the truth which the writers of Scripture were commissioned to deliver. This made them infallible in matters of faith and practice, but not in things which are not of an immediately religious character. Thus the writer could be in error in things which relate to history or science. In other words, the partial inspiration theory teaches that some parts of the Bible are inspired and some parts are not. Those parts related to matters of Salvation and faith are inspired, but those parts that deal with history, science, chronology, or other non-faith matters may be in error.

This view maintains that though some material may be in error, God still preserves the message of Salvation. We can trust the Bible in spiritual matters, but in some areas, there may be error. The problems with this view are obvious. How can we accept one sentence of Scripture and not another? Who can tell us which part is right and which part is not? And further, who can tell us how to distinguish between things that are essential to faith and practice and those that are not? Nowhere does the Bible tell us that inspiration covers only things which relates to faith and practice. It declares all Scripture to be God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16).

The partial theory rejects both verbal inspiration (that inspiration extends to the words of Scripture) and plenary inspiration (that inspiration extends to the entirety of Scripture). Despite the presence of errors in Scripture, partial theorists teach that an imperfect medium is a sufficient guide to Salvation.

But this creates real problems regarding the trustworthiness of Scripture. But is not the biblical teaching about salvation based on historical facts? Suppose those facts are inaccurate? Then our understanding about salvation might also be erroneous. You cannot separate history and doctrine and allow for errors (however few) in the historical records and at the same time be certain that the doctrinal parts are true.

The basic question then is what parts of the Bible can we trust and what parts are in error? Furthermore, who decides these questions?

**10.6 Conceptual Inspiration**

This view says that the concepts or ideas of the writers are inspired but not the words. God communicated the concepts to the human author, but not the words. It is true that a correct doctrine of inspiration does not include dictation, but God did superintend the authors so that the words they used from their own vocabularies were guided by the Holy Spirit. In response, how are concepts expressed, if they are to be expressed accurately? Through carefully chosen words. The Scripture indicates that the words themselves are inspired. Paul records that he spoke, "not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:13). He further declared that all Scripture is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16); this means the very words used. Further, both Jesus and Paul affirmed the concept of verbal inspiration (See Matthew 5:18 and Galatians 3:16).

**10.7 Divine Dictation**

The mechanical or dictation view teaches that the whole Bible was dictated word for word by God; the writers were passive, much like secretaries or stenographers who sat and wrote down what was given to them. On this view the style is that of the Holy Spirit. Some have even argued that the grammar must be everywhere perfect because it is the Holy Spirit's grammar. But this theory ignores the manifest differences in the style of Moses, David, Peter, James, John, and Paul, for example. We must acknowledge the twofold nature of Scripture: on the one hand it is a God-breathed book, but on the other hand it has a human character. God used living men, not dead tools. He did not set aside human personality, but rather used the very personality of the human authors in the penning of his revelation.

Concerning this view, *Enns* remarks:

> "This claim would render the Bible similar to the Koran which supposedly was dictated in Arabic from heaven. Although some parts of the Bible were given by dictation (cf. Exodus 20:1, “Then God spoke all these words”), the books of the Bible reveal a

distinct contrast in style and vocabulary, suggesting the authors were not mere automatons. The beginning student in Greek will quickly discover the difference in style between the gospel of John and the gospel of Luke. John wrote in a simple style with a limited vocabulary, whereas Luke wrote with an expanded vocabulary and a more sophisticated style. If the dictation theory were true, the style of the books of the Bible should be uniform."

**10.8 The Correct Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration (Orthodox Position)**

The Holy Spirit so guided and superintended the writers of the sacred text, making use of their own unique personalities, that they wrote all that he wanted them to write, without excess or error. Several things must be noted:

1. Inspiration is inexplicable. It is the operation of the Holy Spirit, but we do not know exactly how that power of the Spirit operates.

2. Inspiration, in this restricted sense, is limited to the authors of Scripture. Other books are not inspired in the same sense.

3. Inspiration is essentially guidance. That is, the Holy Spirit supervised the selection of the materials to be used and the words to be employed in writing.

4. The Holy Spirit preserved the authors from all error and from all omission.

5. Inspiration extends to the words, not merely to the thoughts and concepts. Thus, we speak of the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures; plenary, because the inspiration is entire and without restriction, that is, it includes all and every Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16); verbal, because it includes every word (1 Corinthians 2:13).

6. Inspiration is affirmed only of the autographs of the Scriptures, not of any of the versions, whether ancient or modern, nor of any Hebrew or Greek manuscripts in existence, nor of any critical texts known. All these are either known to be faulty in some particulars, or are not certainly known to be free from all error. While there are no original autographs available, the number of words which are still in doubt is very small, and no doctrine is affected by this situation.

7. The inspired writers were oftern restrained in what they wrote. Sometimes they would have liked to write more but the Holy Spirit restrained them. For instance, in the book of Revelation John was about to record the message of the seven thunders but was told not to do so (10:4). The writer of Hebrews wanted to write about Melchizedek (5:11), but was prevented. Jude planned to write about Salvation, but instead found it necessary to exhort the saints earnestly to contend for the faith (v. 3). In what they wrote and in what they did not write, all these Bible authors were impelled and restrained by the Spirit of God.

**11. THE OBJECTIONS TO THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION**

In the light of the facts above, men ought to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures; but there are problems with this view which need to be addressed:

1. quotations of ignorance or error;
2. in science and history;
3. in miracle and prophecy;
4. in quoting and interpreting the Old Testament; and
5. in morals and religion.

**11.1 Quotations of Ignorance or Error**

Paul said before Ananias, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest" (Acts 23:5). Here Paul merely admits his ignorance and does not deal with the question of inspiration. The record of this statement is fully inspired. The speeches of Job's comforters contain error. Inspiration guarantees the accurate recording of these speeches, not the truthfulness of the contents of the speech. There is a difference between what is recited and what is asserted, between the fact that something was said and the truthfulness of what was said. Whatsoever Scripture asserts as true and free from error is to be received as such.

But what does the following mean: "But to the rest I say, not the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:12)? The Lord has given commands concerning divorce (Matthew 5:31f; 19:3-9); now Paul speaks with the authority given him. He is not drawing a line between the authoritative commands

of Christ and his own. Rather, he himself is claiming inspiration and the authority to set forth doctrine and practice (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:12, 25). He has "the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 7:40).

**11.2 In Science and History**

The Bible is not a textbook on either science or history; but if it is verbally inspired, then we expect it to speak truthfully whenever it touches on either of these subjects. But just as scientists still speak of the rising and setting of the sun, the four corners of the earth, etc., so the Bible often uses the language of appearance. The seeming imperfections, errors, and contradictions usually disappear when we take into account the non-technical style of the writers, the fragmentary character of many of the accounts, the supplementary nature of many of the things that are recorded by the several authors, the historical situations that gave rise to a line of conduct, and the fallibility of the scribes.

Archaeological discoveries have done much to confirm the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. Hammurabi, Sargon II, the Hittites, and Belshazzar no longer present problems to the historian. This is likewise true of the New Testament. Quirinius (Luke 2:2), Lysanias (Luke 3:1), Paulus (Acts 13:7), and Gallio (Acts 18:12) have all been identified, thus proving the historicity of the accounts.

The differences in the number that fell in the plague (Numbers 25:9; 1 Corinthians 10:8) disappear on a careful reading of the two texts. The "level place" (Luke 6:17) was probably a level place on the mountain (Matthew 5:1). There was an old Jericho and a new Jericho, and the blind men were probably healed between the two Jerichos (Matthew 20:29; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35). Mark and Luke probably meant to mention only the more conspicuous one, as also in the healing in Decapolis (Matthew 8:28; Mark 5:2; Luke 8:27).

**11.3 In Miracle and Prophecy**

The proof for miracles and prophecy has already been given, but we may add that the record of the miracles of Christ is so organically interwoven with the record of the rest of His life that it is impossible to eliminate the former without at the same time destroying the latter. If one believes in the physical resurrection of Christ, then there remains no insuperable hindrance to the acceptance of all the other miracles of Scripture as well. In the light of the fulfillments of prophecies concerning Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, concerning Israel, concerning Christ, and concerning the character of the present age, we ought not to be sceptical concerning the possibility of predictive prophecy. What are regarded as errors in prophecy are usually but false interpretations of it. Parts of Daniel 2, 7, 9, 11, 12, parts of Zechariah 12-14, and most of the Revelation are still awaiting fulfillment.

**11.4 In Quoting and Interpreting the Old Testament**

Most of our difficulties here will vanish if we observe several items:

1. Sometimes the New Testament writers merely express their ideas in words borrowed from an Old Testament passage, without pretending to interpret the passage (Romans 10:6-8; cf. Deuteronomy 30:12-14);

2. Sometimes they point out a typical element in a passage that has not been generally recognized as typical (Matthew 2:15; cf. Hosea 11:1);

3. Sometimes they give credit to an earlier prophecy when they really quote from a later form of it (Matthew 27:9; cf. Zechariah 11:13);

4. Sometimes they quote an apparently false translation in the Septuagint on the ground that the mistranslation conveys at least one of the meanings contained in the Hebrew text (Ephesians 4:26; cf. Psalm 4:4 in the LXX); and

5. Sometimes they combine two quotations into one and assign the whole to the more prominent author (Mark 1:2f; cf. Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1).

Furthermore, if we believe in the possibility of a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man, then we ought not to find it difficult to believe in the possibility of a supernatural operation of the Spirit in the production of the Scriptures. And if we recongize the Spirit as the true author of the Scriptures, then we cannot deny to him the right to use the Old Testament in any of the ways cited above.

**11.5 In Morals and Religion**

Practically all of the so-called errors in morals and religion are in the Old Testament. But all difficulties along these lines will disappear if we bear in mind the following facts:

1. The sinful acts of men may be recorded, but they are never sanctioned; as, for example, Noah's drunkenness (Genesis 9:20-27), Lot's incest (Genesis 19:30-38), Jacob's falsehood (Genesis 27:18-24), David's adultery (2 Samuel 11:1-4), Solomon's polygamy (1 Kings 11:1-3; cf. Deuteronomy 17:17), Esther's severity (Esther 9:12-14), and Peter's denials (Matthew 26:69-75).

2. Some evil acts appear to be sanctioned, but it is really the good intention or accompanying virtue that is recognized and not the evil act itself; as, for example, Rahab's faith, not her duplicity (Joshua 2:1-21; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25), Jael's patriotism, not her treachery (Judges 4:17-22; cf. 5:24), and Samson's faith, not his vagabondage (Judges 14-16; cf. Hebrews 11:32).

3. Some things were permitted as relatively, not absolutely, right; for example, divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1; cf. Matthew 5:31f; 19:7-9) and retaliation (Exodus 21:23-25; cf. Matthew 5:38f; Romans 12:19-21).

4. Some prayers and divine commands express but the purpose of a sovereign God, who frequently uses men to carry out his designs; for example, the imprecatory Psalms (35, 69, 109, 137), and the command to destroy the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 7:1-5, 16; 20:16-18).

Some have charged that certain books are unworthy of a place in the sacred canon. Esther, Job, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Jonah, James, and Revelation have been singled out for such criticism. In reply, we would say that this opinion rests upon a misapprehension of the aim and method of these books and ignores the testimony of many as to their values. When the true design of these books is perceived, they do not justify themselves as merely useful, but even as indispensable to a rounded-out scheme of doctrine.

**12. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY**

1. **Bibliology The Doctrine of the Written Word**, Biblical Studies Foundation, Internet Edition, 1997, by J. Hampton Keathley III.
2. **Survey of Theology I**, Lesson 1, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
3. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapters II, V and VII, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.
4. **The Moody Handbook of Theology**, Moody Press, Chicago, 1989, by Paul Enns.

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# Chapter Twelve - The Inerrancy, Canoncity and Interpretation of Scripture

When we accept that in the Bible we have the embodiment of a divine revelation, we forthwith wish to know whether the several books of the Bible are free from errors (i.e. inerrant), credible, genuine and canonical. This chapter is divided into ten major divisions, they are:

1. Inerrancy of Scripture;
2. Credibility of the books of the Old Testament;
3. Credibility of the books of the New Testament;
4. Genuineness of the books of the Old Testament;
5. Genuineness of the books of the New Testament;
6. Canoncity of the books of the Old Testament;
7. Canoncity of the books of the New Testament;
8. Illumination of the Bible;
9. Interpretation of the Bible; and
10. Animation of the Bible.

## 1. INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE

### 1.1 Definition of Terms

Two terms are used by theologians to describe the degree to which the Bible is inspired:

1. inerrant; and
2. infallible.

As synonyms, they both mean "incapable of error" or "without error."

#### *1.1.1 Infallible*

However, some theologians choose to define "infallible" as "dependable" or "reliable." When they do this, they deny that Scripture is inerrant (thoroughly free of error), and affirm that it is infallible (free of error in theological matters, capable of error in non-theological matters like history or science). This latter view is sometimes known as limited inerrancy. They would say that the Bible is religiously and spiritually inerrant, and merely "dependable," or possibly errant, in other areas.

### *1.1.2 Inerrancy*

Inerrancy means that the Bible, in whole and in part, is without error in everything that it affirms as true.

At the Chicago meeting in October 1978, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy issued the following statement on inerrancy: "Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives" (*James Montgomery Boice*, **Does Inerrancy Matter?**, Oakland: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1979, p. 13.).

In summary, inerrancy means that the Bible is:

1. without error in all that it affirms, whether in historical, scientific, moral, or doctrinal matters;
2. without error in the record it gives of those things that are untruths (such as statements by Satan); and
3. without error in all its teaching, it extends to all of Scripture and is not limited to certain teachings of Scripture.

It is important to bear in mind that belief in inerrancy is in keeping with the character of God. If God is true and He is (Romans 3:4), and if God breathed out the Scripture, then the Scripture, being the product of God, must also be true. This is why the Psalmist affirms, "All your words are true" (Psalm 119:160a). The concept of the Bible's inerrancy is reasonable due to its verbal, plenary inspiration (discussed in chapter 11).

## 1.2 Clarifications Regarding Inerrancy

Inerrancy means that the Bible is without error in all that it affirms to be true. However, a number of different issues invariably come up when considering the doctrine of inerrancy. What about the variety of styles, or the varying ways certain events are described, or the different reports of events? How does this mesh with the concept of inerrancy? *Paul Enns* has done an excellent job in summarizing these fundamental issues (*Paul Enns*, **The Moody Handbook of Theology**, Moody Press, Chicago, 1989):

1. The Bible is inerrant in the original manuscripts only;
2. The Bible is inerrant when accurately translated;
3. The Bible is inerrant when accurately interpreted;

4. The Bible is inerrant though our own knowledge of history and science is incomplete;
5. The Bible is inerrant when allowance is made for figurative expressions;
6. The Bible is inerrant when allowance is made for variety in style;
7. The Bible is inerrant when allowance is made for variety in details in explaining the same event;
8. The Bible is inerrant when it does not demand verbatim reporting of events;
9. The Bible is inerrant when allowance is made for departure from standard forms of grammar; and
10. The Bible is inerrant when it demands the account does not teach error or contradiction.

### *1.2.1 The Bible is inerrant in the original manuscripts only*

As far as we know, all the original manuscripts (autographs) of all the divinely chosen authors have been lost long ago. God in His wisdom has allowed this to happen, no doubt to avoid the worship of objects (cf. 2 Kings 18:4). There is no biblical guarantee that later copies made through the centuries are absolutely flawless reproductions of the originals. The history of the manuscripts demonstrates that minor copyist errors did creep in. Due to this reason, inerrancy applies to the original manuscripts only.

However, through the process of examining and comparing thousands of manuscripts (textual criticism), today we can be confident that the Hebrew and Greek text we have is virtually the same as the originals. Due to the differences between languages it is impossible to have a perfect translation. However, the translations we have are fully adequate for study and devotional reading.

### *1.2.2 The Bible is inerrant when accurately translated*

The "whale" in Matthew 12:40, (King James Version), should be rendered "sea-monster." This stifles the criticism that a man could not survive in a "whale" for three days (a topic of debate today). A creature that God specially prepared, or one that no longer exists, may have been the "sea-monster" that carried Jonah to shore. (Or it may very well have been a whale!)

### *1.2.3 The Bible is inerrant when accurately interpreted*

There appear to be some errors in the Bible when a given passage has not been properly interpreted. For example, Genesis 4:26 says that men "began to call upon the name of the Lord" during the days of Enosh, but Exodus 6:3 says that God did not make Himself "known" to them by the name "Lord" (Hebrews *Yahweh*) until Moses' time. The explanation is simply that the Hebrew for "known" means fully known. His name was used earlier but not understood until the Exodus.

Another matter of interpretation is that a Biblical statement must be understood in light of its immediate environment. Jesus called the mustard seed the tiniest of all seeds, which was true to His listeners' limited experience in the Middle East, not in light of our broader knowledge today.

### *1.2.4 The Bible is inerrant though our own knowledge of history and science is incomplete*

So far, our increasing knowledge of our universe has confirmed the integrity of Scripture. Many imagined errors have been based on the incomplete or incorrect knowledge and scientific theories of man. Even with so vast a work as the Holy Scriptures it is impossible to provide solutions to all the problems. In some cases the solution awaits the findings of the

archaeologist's spade; in another case it awaits the linguist's research; in other cases the solution may never be discovered for other reasons. The answer, however, is never to suggest there are contradictions or errors in Scripture. If the Scriptures are God-breathed they are entirely without error.

### *1.2.5 The Bible is inerrant when allowance is made for figurative expressions*

An example of this is in the expression, "the sun set." The sun does not actually "set," but instead the earth turns on its axis giving the impression that it sets. Nevertheless, the expression conveys the phenomenon in an intelligible way.

Another example is found in Psalm 91:4. Though Scripture declares that "He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge," it obviously does not imply that God has the physical features of a fowl!

### *1.2.6 The Bible is inerrant when allowance is made for variety in style*

The gospel of John was written in the simple style one might expect of an unlearned fisherman; Luke was written with a more sophisticated vocabulary of an educated person; Paul's epistles reflect the logic of a philosopher. All of these variations are entirely compatible with inerrancy.

### *1.2.7 The Bible is inerrant when allowance is made for variety in details in explaining the same event*

This phenomenon is particularly observed in the synoptic gospels. It is important to remember that Jesus spoke in Aramaic and the writers of Scripture wrote their accounts in Greek, meaning they had to translate the original words into Greek. One writer would use slightly different words to describe the same incident, yet both would give the same meaning, albeit with different words. There is an additional reason for variety in details. One writer might have viewed the event from one standpoint while the other gospel writer viewed it from another standpoint. This would make the details appear different, yet both would be accurate.

### *1.2.8 The Bible is inerrant when it does not demand verbatim reporting of events*

"In times of antiquity it was not the practice to give a verbatim repetition every time something was written out" (*E. J. Young*, **Thy Word Is Truth**, p. 119). A verbatim quote could not be demanded for several reasons. First, as already mentioned, the writer had to translate from Aramaic to Greek in recording Jesus' words. Second, in making reference to Old Testament texts it would have been impossible to unroll the lengthy scrolls each time to

produce a verbatim quote; furthermore, the scrolls were not readily available, hence, the freedom in Old Testament quotes (*William R. Eichhorst,* **The Issue of Biblical Inerrancy: In Definition and Defence**, Winnipeg, Man.: Winnipeg Bible College, n.d., p. 9).

### *1.2.9 The Bible is inerrant when allowance is made for departure from standard forms of grammar*

Obviously it is wrong to force English rules of grammar upon the Scriptures. For example, in John 10:9 Jesus declares, "I am the door," whereas in verse 11 He states, "I am the Good Shepherd." In English this is considered mixing metaphors, but this is not a problem to Greek grammar or Hebrew language. In John 14:26 Jesus refers to the Spirit (*pneuma* = neuter) and then refers to the Spirit as "He" (*ekeinos* = masculine). This may raise an English grammarian's eyebrows, but it is not a problem of Greek grammar.

### *1.2.10 The Bible is inerrant when it demands the account does not teach error or contradiction*

In the statements of Scripture, whatever is written is in accord with things as they are. Details may vary but it may still reflect things as they are. For example, in Matthew 8:5-13 it is noted that the centurion came to Jesus and said, "I am not qualified." In the parallel passage in Luke 7:1-10 it is noted that the elders came and said concerning the centurion, "He is worthy." It appears the elders first came and spoke to Jesus, and later the centurion himself came. Both accounts are in accord with things as they are.

### *1.2.11 Conclusion*

Someone has said that perhaps 95% of the Bible has been verified by history, archaeology, and science, and that the trend is toward verification, not contradiction. Should not such a trend encourage us to give the Bible the "benefit of the doubt," so to speak, when verification is not immediately at hand?

## 1.3 The Logical Necessity of Inerrancy

There are two major lines of reasoning that support inerrancy as more than a possibility; it is a logical necessity, they are:

1. the perfection of God; and
2. the need for unquestioned Authority.

### *1.3.1 The perfection of God*

The empirical evidence of Scripture is that all God does He does without error. Human beings introduce imperfection into the works of God. But when human beings are the instruments of the direct works of God, there are no imperfections in the products. For example, miracles of healing accomplished through the apostles in Scripture were never incomplete or marred; when Moses spoke and the Red Sea parted it was exactly what God wanted, without flaw.

Logic tells us to expect the same results in that direct act of God called inspiration; thus absolute accuracy in expressing the thoughts of God should characterize His final product, the Bible. Any imperfections entered at the point where these documents were copied at the point where these documents were copied by men. Though inspiration only guarantees that the original documents are free from error, we may say that God has compensated for human error by seeing to it that thousands of copies were made for textual scholars to compare and arrive at a "pure" text for us today.

Therefore, because God's works are perfect (inspiration being a work of God), the concept of the Bible's perfection, or inerrancy, is a logical necessity; it is consistent with our view of God.

### *1.3.2 The need for unquestioned authority*

If we admit that there may be errors in Scripture - even merely errors of science and history - we are trusting our own judgment of the truth. We set ourselves, for all practical purposes, over the Bible, and thus become the final authorities ourselves (unreliable ones, in fact - Jeremiah 17:9). How can the fallible become the judge of the infallible? It is far more practical to assume that the Bible, not man, is totally trustworthy. Then, when we encounter apparent problems or errors we will reserve our judgment and seek for reasonable explanations. This allows the Bible to exert its authority over us in full measure.

Furthermore, it seems arbitrary and unreasonable to say that truth lies in the theological and moral teachings only. Consider an employer who will ask a prospective employee for a list of references. He wants to know if this person has a reputation for integrity in his school, church, previous places of employment, and community. If proven trustworthy in these areas, the job-hunter will most likely be trustworthy in all areas of his life. Though this is an inadequate analogy, we can see the logic of trusting the entire Bible as the authoritative recording of religious, moral, scientific, and historical truths.

Beyond the above reasoning from logic, I will provide Biblical, historical and archaeological evidences for the accuracy and authority of Scripture in the following sections.

## 1.4 What Happens If Inerrancy Is Denied?

How important is inerrancy? What happens when this doctrine is denied? There are those (and some are even evangelicals) who believe that inerrancy is not important. But how sound is this kind of thinking and how does it stack up with the teaching of the Bible and particularly with what Christ taught?

If the Bible teaches inerrancy, then to deny it is to deny that which the Scripture claims is true. Further, if the Bible contains some errors, how can we be sure that its claims concerning Christ, Salvation, man, etc., are true? Also, the chronology, geography, and history of the Bible are often woven together like strands of a basket with vital spiritual truths. As you cannot start pulling strands out of a woven basket without doing damage to the whole, so it is with the Bible.

For instance, is the history of Adam and Eve important? Absolutely, for Paul developed a theological analogy between Adam and Christ which essentially breaks down if it is historically not true. The Old Testament has dozens of prophecies of the coming Messiah that detail his lineage. If the genealogy of Matthew 1 and Luke 3 are historically inaccurate, then this raises questions about whether Jesus is the one anticipated as well as about the rest of His life.

Even if the errors are supposedly in "minor" matters, any error opens the Bible to suspicion on other points which may not be so "minor." If inerrancy falls, other doctrines will fall too. If we can't trust Scripture in things like geography, chronology, and history, then how can we be sure we can trust it in its message of Salvation and Sanctification?

Some people questioned the story recorded in the gospels where Jesus delivered two demon possessed men and sent the demons into a herd of swine. Assuming that the owners of the pigs were Jews (which they were not), they doubted the historicity of the account because they could not imagine Jews raising pigs since it was contrary to the law for them to eat pork. A person believing in the inerrancy of the Bible, would know that the account was historical and accurate. Therefore, the apparent problem was not in the accuracy of the Scripture, but in their understanding of the event, which was precisely the case.

A denial of inerrancy is a serious matter and will lead to the following kinds of problems doctrinally and practically:

1. doctrinal matters; and
2. lifestyle errors (degradation of moral standard).

### *1.4.1 Doctrinal matters*

Some doctrinal matters which may be affected by denying inerrancy include the following:

1. A denial of the historical fall of Adam.
2. A denial of the facts of the experiences of the Prophet Jonah.
3. An explaining away of some of the miracles of both the Old and New Testaments.
4. A denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.
5. A belief in two or more authors of the Book of Isaiah.
6. A flirting with or embracing of liberation theology with its redefining of sin (as societal rather than individual) and Salvation (as political and temporal rather than spiritual and eternal).

### *1.4.1 Lifestyle errors (degradation of moral standard)*

Some lifestyle errors (degradation of moral standard) that may follow a denial of inerrancy include the following:

1. A loose view of the seriousness of adultery.
2. A loose view of the seriousness of homosexuality.
3. A loose view of divorce and remarriage.
4. "Cultural" reinterpretation of some of the teachings of the Bible (e.g., teaching on women, teaching on civil obedience).
5. A tendency to view the Bible through a modern psychological grid.

## 1.5 Conclusion

Belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is both Biblical and reasonable. If Scripture itself claims inerrancy, it is far safer to assume that it is, rather than carelessly exert our fallible judgment over what we think may or may not be true. Inerrancy is an important doctrine, the denial or even diluting of which may result in serious doctrinal and life errors.

## 2. CREDIBILITY OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A book is credible if it relates truthfully the matters which it treats. It is said to be corrupt when its present text varies from the original. Credibility then embraces both the ideas of truthfulness of the records and purity of the text. The credibility of the books of the Old Testament is established by the following two great facts:

1. The Proof from Christ's Recognition of the Old Testament; and

2. The Proof Derived from History and Archaeology.

## 2.1 The Proof from Christ's Recognition of the Old Testament

A study of what Jesus said about the Bible reveals not only His belief in its verbal, plenary inspiration, but that He also believed it was inerrant. In fact, the greatest testimony to the authenticity of the Bible as God's inspired and inerrant Word is the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is His testimony so important? Because God authenticated and proved Him to be His own divine Son by the resurrection (cf. Acts 2:22-36; 4:8-12; 17:30-31; Romans 1:4). Christ not only clearly confirmed the authority of the Old Testament, but He specifically promised the New Testament.

Note what Christ taught about the inspiration of the Old Testament:

1. its entirety;
2. its historicity;
3. its reliability;
4. its sufficiency;
5. its indestructibility;
6. its unity;
7. its inerrancy; and
8. its infallibility.

### *2.1.1 Its entirety*

The whole of the Bible is inspired (Matthew 4:4; 5:17-18). In Matthew 4:4, Jesus responded to Satan's temptation by affirming verbal plenary inspiration when He said, man is to live by *every word* (plenary) that proceeds out of the *mouth of God* (inspiration).

Jesus said. "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18). It is clear that Jesus had the highest view possible of the authority of Scripture ("Law" here means the whole Old Testament), right down to the smallest letter or tiniest part of a letter. He declared that not even the smallest Hebrew letter, the *yodh*, which looks like an apostrophe (¡¥), or stroke of a letter, a small distinguishing extension or protrusion of several Hebrews letters (cf. the extension on the letter R with it absence on the letter P), would pass away until all is fulfilled. This extends inerrancy to every part of the Bible, so that any attempt to distinguish between "theological" parts and "non-theological" parts, and ascribe inerrancy to only the theological parts, is unfounded. Jesus promised that the entire Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets,

would be fulfilled, not abolished. His point is that it is all inspired and true and will be fulfilled.

### *2.1.2 Its historicity*

He spoke of the Old Testament in terms of actual history:

1. the creation of the universe by God (Mark 13:19);
2. Adam and Eve were two human beings, created by God in the beginning, who lived and acted in certain ways (Matthew 19:3-5; Mark 10:6-8);
3. the personality of Satan and his malignant character (John 8:44);
4. the destruction of the world by a flood in Noah's day along with the ark (Matthew 24:38-39; Luke 17:26-27);
5. the destruction of Sodom and the historicity of Lot and his wife (Matthew 10:15; Luke 17:28-30);
6. the revelation of God to Moses at the burning bush (Mark 12:26);
7. the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (Luke 24:27);
8. the giving of the manna in the wilderness (John 6:32);
9. the existence of the tabernacle (Luke 6:3f);
10. the experience of Jonah in the belly of the great fish as an historical event (Matthew 12:40); and
11. the unity of Isaiah (Matthew 8:17; Luke 4:17f).

### *2.1.3 Its reliability*

Because it is God's word, the Scripture must be fulfilled (Matthew 26:54).

### *2.1.4 Its sufficiency*

It is sufficient to witness to the truth of God and His Salvation (Luke 16:31).

### *2.1.5 Its indestructibility*

Heaven and earth will not pass away until it is all fulfilled. Nothing can stop its fulfillment (Matthew 5:17-18).

### *2.1.6 Its unity*

The whole of the Bible speaks and witnesses to the person and work of Christ (Luke 24:27, 44).

### *2.1.7 Its inerrancy*

Men are often in error, but the Bible is not; it is truth (Matthew 22:29; John 17:17).

### *2.1.8 Its infallibility*

The Bible cannot be broken, it always stands the test (John 10:35). Jesus said that "the Scripture cannot be broken." In defense against His critics, Jesus points to an obscure statement in the Old Testament and says of the passage it "cannot be broken." That is, Scripture "cannot be emptied of its force by being shown to be erroneous." In the Savior's view the indefectible authority of Scripture attaches to the very form of expression of its most casual clauses.

## 2.2 The Proof Derived from History and Archaeology

### *2.2.1 History confirms the correctness of Biblical events*

History furnishes many proofs of the correctness of the Biblical representations of life in Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and so forth. A number of the rulers of these countries are mentioned by name in Scripture, and none of them is represented in a manner contradictory to what is known of him in history. Shalmaneser IV is said to have besieged the city of Samaria, but the king of Assyria, whom we now know to have been Sargon II, is said to have carried the people away into Assyria (2 Kings 17:3-6). History shows that he reigned from 722 to 705 BC. He is mentioned by name only once in the Bible (Isaiah 20:1). Neither Belshazzar (Daniel 5:1-30) nor Darius the Mede (Daniel 5:31-6:28) is any longer regarded as a fictitious character.

### *2.2.2 Archaeology confirms the correctness of Biblical events*

Archaeology supplies many confirmations of the Biblical accounts. The Babylonian "Epic of Creation," while a confirmation of the Genesis account, shows that the idea of a special creation by the God was widespread in early times. The same can be said about the Babylonian legends of the fall. More important is a tablet that has been found in Babylon containing an account of the flood which has marked similarities to the biblical account. The so-called battle of the kings (Genesis 14) can no longer be regarded with suspicion, since the inscriptions in the Valley of the Euphrates show that the four kings mentioned in the Bible as joining in this expedition are historical persons.

The Nuzi tablets throw light on the action of Sarah and Rachel in giving their handmaids to

their husbands. The Egyptian hieroglyphics indicate that writing was known more than a thousand years before Abraham.

Archaeology also confirms that Israel lived in Egypt, that the people were in bondage in that land, and that they finally left the country. The Hittites, whose very existence was questioned, have been shown to be a powerful people in Asia Minor and Palestine at the very time indicated in the Bible. The Tel el-Amarna tables give evidence of the trustworthiness of the book of Judges. As the science of archaeology progresses, no doubt more and more information will come to light confirming the accuracy of the biblical record.

For more information relating to the proof from Archaeology, please study the course, **Apologetics**, Chapters 3 and 4.

## 3. CREDIBILITY OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The credibility of the books of the New Testament is established by the following four great facts:

1. The writers of the New Testament were competent;
2. The writers of the New Testament were honest;
3. The writings harmonize with each others; and
4. Their accounts agree with history and experience.

### 3.1 The Writers of the New Testament Were Competent

They were qualified to bear testimony and to teach divine truth. Matthew, John, and Peter were disciples of Christ and eyewitnesses of His works and teachings (2 Peter 1:18; 1 John 1:1-3). Mark, according to Papias, was the interpreter of Peter and wrote down accurately what he remembered of the teaching of Peter. Luke was a companion of Paul and, according to Irenaeus, recorded in a book the gospel (i.e. Luke) preached by him. Paul was definitely called and appointed by Christ and claimed that he received his gospel directly from God (Galatians 1:11-17). James and Jude were brothers of Christ, and their messages come to us with this background. All of them had received the enduement of the Holy Spirit and so wrote not merely from memory, the deliverances of oral and written testimony, and spiritual insight, but as qualified by the Spirit for their tasks.

### 3.2 The writers of the New Testament were honest

The moral tone of their writings, their evident regard for the truth, and the circumstantiality of their accounts indicate that they were not deliberate deceivers, but honest men. The same thing

is also apparent from the fact that their testimony endangered all their worldly interests, such as their social standing, their material prosperity, and even their lives. What could be their motive in inventing a story that condemns all hypocrisy and is contrary to all their inherited beliefs, if they had to pay such a price for it?

### 3.3 Their Writings Harmonize with Each Other

The Synoptics do not contradict but supplement each other. The details in the Gospel of John can be fitted together with the first three Gospels into a harmonious whole. The Acts furnishes an historical background for ten of Paul's Epistles. The Pastoral Epistles do not have to be fitted into the Acts, for in none of them is it intimated that they belong to the period of the Acts. Hebrews and the General Epistles, as well as the Revelation, can without any violence to the contents be fitted into the first century. Doctrinally, also, the writngs of the New Testament harmonize. Christ is deity in the Synoptics as well as in John's Gospel. Paul and James do not contradict each other, but present faith and works from different viewpoints. There is a difference of emphasis, but not of fundamental conception. There is progress in the unfolding of doctrine from the Gospels to the Epistles, but not contradiction. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament present an harmonious picture of Jesus Christ and His work. This argues for the truthfulness of the record.

### 3.4 Their Accounts Agree with History and Experience

There are many references to contemporary history in the New Testament, such as the enrollment when Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:2), the acts of Herod the Great (Matthew 2:16-18), of Herod Antipas (Matthew 14:1-12), of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1), of Gallio (Acts 18:12-17), of Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25:13-26:32), etc., but thus far no one has been able to show that the biblical account is contradicted by a single fact derived from other trustworthy sources.

And as for experience, we have already said that if we grant the existence of a personal, omnipotent, and loving God, miracles are not only possible but probable. Physical miracles do not occur often now because they are not needed in the sense in which they were needed then. They were intended to attest God's revelation when first made, but now that Christianity has been introduced they are no longer needed for this purpose. Spiritual miracles still occur in abundance. We may, therefore, say that there is nothing in experience or history that contradicts the narratives of the Gospels and the Epistles.

## 4. GENUINENESS OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?)

By genuineness we mean that a book is written by the person to whom ancient tradition has assigned it. A book is said to be forged or spurious if it is not written at the time to which it has been assigned or by the author professed by it. A book is considered to be authentic when it relates facts as they really occurred. It is corrupt when the text has been in any manner changed. That the books of the Old Testament are authentic and genuine can be shown in the following manner. The Old Testament Scriptures will be approached in their threefold division (the order of the Hebrew Bible):

1. The Genuineness of the books of the Law;
2. The Genuineness of the books of the Prophets, and
3. The Genuineness of the books of the Kethubhim (or called Writings).

## 4.1 The Genuineness of the Books of the Law

Modern criticism denies the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The documentary hypothesis divides the authorship of these books up into the Jehovistic, Elohistic, Deuteronomistic, and Priestly codes, with many redactors. We can indicate the proofs of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (i.e. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy):

1. Moses' claims;
2. Lord Jesus Christ's testimony; and
3. Internal evidences.

### *4.1.1 Moses' claims*

Moses is repeatedly represented as the author of that which is written. He was to write it (Exodus 17:14; 34:27), and it is said that he did write (Exodus 24:4; 34:28; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 31:9, 24). What he wrote is described as "the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 28:58; 28:61; 29:20, 27; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26; 31:24). In addition, thirteen times outside the Pentateuch in the Old Testament Moses is represented as the author of a written work. It is called "the book of the law of Moses" (Joshua 8:31; 23:6; 2 Kings 14:6; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Chronicles 23:18; Daniel 9:11, Nehemiah 13:1).

### *4.1.2 Lord Jesus Christ's testimony*

In the New Testament our Lord Jesus Christ frequently speaks of "Moses" as a written work (Luke 16:29; 24:27; cf. John 7:19). He also ascribes various teachings in the Pentateuch to Moses (Matthew 8:4; 19:7f; Mark 7:10; 12:26; John 7:22f). Various writers of the New

Testament ascribe teachings found in the Pentateuch to Moses (Acts 3:22; 13:39; 15:21; Romans 9:15; 1 Corinthians 9:9; 2 Corinthians 3:15; Hebrews 8:5; 9:19; 10:28).

### *4.1.3 Internal evidences*

Certain other internal evidence may also be mentioned which attests to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The author is obviously an eyewitness to the account of the exodus; he shows an acquaintance with the land of Egypt, its geography, flora and fauna; he uses several Egyptian words; and he makes reference to customs which go back to the second millennium BC.

The Pentateuch is a homogeneous composition of five volumes, and not an agglomeration of separate and perhaps only rather casually related works. It described, against an accredited historical background, the manner in which God revealed Himself to men and chose the Israelites for special service and witness in the world and in the course of human history. The role of Moses in the formulation of this literary corpus appears pre-eminent, and it is not without good reason that he should be accorded a place of high honor in the growth of the epic of Israelite nationhood, and be venerated by Jews and Christians alike as the great mediator of the ancient law.

## 4.2 The Genuineness of the Books of the Prophets

The Hebrew speaks of the former and the latter prophets. To the former prophets belong:

1. Joshua;
2. Judges;
3. 1 and 2 Samuel; and
4. 1 and 2 Kings.

To the latter prophets belong:

1. Isaiah;
2. Jeremiah;
3. Ezekiel; and
4. the so-called Minor Prophets.

### *4.2.1 Former prophets*

First, looking at the former prophets, there is no reason for rejecting the traditional view that Joshua wrote the book that bears his name, nor that Samuel wrote Judges. Judges was written

after the commencement of the monarchy (19:1; 21:25) and before the accession of David (1:21; cf. 2 Samuel 5:6-8). In 1 Chronicles 29:29 we read of the things "written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet, and in the chronicles of Gad the seer." Tradition has, accordingly, felt justified in assigning 1 Samuel 1-24 to Samuel, and 1 Samuel 25 to 2 Samuel 24 to Nathan and Gad.

Jeremiah has been commonly considered the author of the books of Kings; at least the author was a contemporary of his. Kings speaks of the book of the acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41), the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:19), and the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah (1 Kings 14:29); and it has frequent insertions of the records of eyewitnesses in the portions about Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah, in which older material is used.

### *4.2.2 Latter prophets*

Second, the latter prophets are also genuine. The acts and deeds of Hezekiah are said to have been written "in the vision of Isaiah the prophet" (2 Chronicles 32:32); Isaiah is also said to have written "the acts of Uzziah" (2 Chronicles 26:22). The prophecy of Isaiah is assigned to him (1:1). Jesus and his apostles speak of the writing of Isaiah, assigning even the disputed parts to him (Matthew 8:17, cf. Isaiah 53:4; Luke 4:17f, cf. Isaiah 61:1; John 12:38-41, cf. Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10). Jeremiah was instructed, "write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book" (Jeremiah 30:2), and we are told that he "wrote in a single scroll all the calamity which would come upon Babylon" (Jeremiah 51:60).

Ezekiel also was asked to write (Ezekiel 24:2; 43:11), as was Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:2). It is commonly assumed by conservative scholars that the names which appear in the opening verses of a prophetic book are intended to give us faithfully the name of the author of that book. Even Malachi is probably intended as the name of the author as well as of the book, and not as a reference to 3:1.

## 4.3 The Genuineness of the Books of the Kethubhim (Writings)

The remaining books were divided into three groups:

1. The Poetic Books, which consists of the Psalms, Proverbs, Job;
2. The Megilloth, which consists of Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther; and
3. The Non-Prophetical Historical Books, which include Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. (Note: You may think that Daniel is a prophetic book.)

### *4.3.1 The Poetic Books, which consists of the Psalms, Proverbs, Job*

As for the Psalms and the works of Solomon, we read of "the writing of David" and "the writing of his son Solomon" (2 Chronicles 35:4). Although the inscriptions to the Psalms are not a part of the original text, they are generally accepted as accurate. Of the 150 Psalms, 100 are assigned to authors: 73 to David, 11 to the sons of Korah, 12 to Asaph, two to Solomon, and one each to Ethan and to Moses. The remainder are anonymous.

According to the headings in Proverbs, Solomon was the author of chapters 1 to 24. He was also the author of chapters 25 to 29, although these chapters were copied from his writings by the men of Hezekiah. Chapter 30 is ascribed to Agur the son of Jakeh, and chapter 31 to King Lemuel.

The Book of Job does not give us the name of the author, but it is likely that Job himself wrote the book. We regard the book as narrating faithfully the experiences of the man Job in the days of the patriarchs, and as not being mere poetic fiction. Who but Job himself could narrate faithfully his own experiences and sayings and also the speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, and God?

### *4.3.2 The Megilloth, which consists of Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther*

The Song of Solomon is also inscribed to Solomon (1:1). Ruth has frequently been associated with Judges and was probably written by the same man who wrote the book of Judges, probably Samuel. That David's name is mentioned (Ruth 4:22) and not Solomon's is an argument favouring the dating of the book as not later than David.

Lamentations is ascribed to Jeremiah by the heading in our Bibles. In form of expression and in general argument it has much in common with the book of Jeremiah, and we may confidently ascribe the book to this writer.

Ecclesiastes is said to be by "the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1:1), and this expression has been taken by conservatives to be Solomon. There is reference to the author's incomparable wisdom (1:16), and the great works which he made (2:4-11). Until the Reformation period, the book was assigned to Solomon by uniform consent of all Jewish and Christian scholars, and most conservative scholars still assign it to him, though there is some linguistic evidence that it may have been written by someone other than Solomon.

Esther may have been written by Mordecai the Jew, who best knew the facts related in the book. The author must have been a Jew who lived in Persia at the time of the events narrated

and who had access to the official chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia (2:23; 9:20; 10:2). Critics tend to agree that it was written by a Persian Jew, because of the absence of marks of its being written in Palestine. The diction is admittedly late, being comparable to that of Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.

### *4.3.3 The Non-Prophetical Historical Books, which include Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles*

Daniel, having the prophetic gift but not being a prophet in office, was classified as a non-prophetical book in the Hebrew Bible. Daniel was written by the statesman who bore that name. The author identifies himself as Daniel and writes in the first person (7:2; 8:1, 15; 9:2; 10:2). Further, Daniel was commanded to preserve the book (12:4). There is a noticeable unity in the book, with the name Daniel appearing throughout. Jesus attributed the book to Daniel (Matthew 24:15). Conservative scholarship dates the book to the 6th century BC, though because of their rejection of predictive prophecy, modern critics generally place the book into the Maccabean period and assign it to a date between 168-165 BC.

Ezra was written by Ezra the scribe. Since some of the book is written in the first person singular by a man identified as Ezra (7:28; cf. 7:1), and because the book bears the marks of unity, "it would seem to follow that the remainder is his also."

Nehemiah was written by Nehemiah, the Persian king's cup-bearer. This is made clear by the opening words, "The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah" (1:1), and the fact that the author speaks in the first person many times. It was written in the time of Malachi, somewhere between 424 to 395 BC.

The Chronicles are placed by the critics on a much lower plane than the books of Kings. The reason seems to be that while Kings deals with the prophetic aspects of the history, Chronicles deals more with the priestly aspects. Tradition has assigned these books to Ezra. The position of the books in the canon, the closing of the history at the very point where that of Ezra begins, and the style make this possible if not probable. They must have been written about 450 to 425 BC, before Ezra.

## 5. GENUINENESS OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?)

There is reason for believing that the Synoptic Gospels (including Matthew, Luke, Mark) were written in the order: Matthew, Luke, and Mark, due to the following reasons.

1. *Origen* frequently cites them in that order.

2. *Clement of Alexandria* before him puts the Gospels that contain the genealogies first on the basis of the tradition from the elders before him.
3. Tradition declares that for fifteen years Matthew preached in Palestine, and that after that he went to minister to foreign nations.
4. On the basis of the famous statement in *Papias* that "Matthew composed the Logia in the Hebrews (i.e. Aramaic) tongue," we must hold that it is most natural to suppose that when he left Palestine he left behind him this Aramaic Gospel, about AD 45, and that a little later he also wrote the Greek Gospel that has come down to us, for his new hearers, about AD 50.

There is also very general agreement that the second Gospel was written by John Mark. From the circumstances of the times and internal evidence, we assign it to the years AD 67 or 68.

There is also very general agreement that the third Gospel was written by Luke (Luke 1:1-4), the beloved physician. It was probably written about the year AD 58.

The Gospel of John is rejected by some because of its emphasis on the deity of Christ. It is said that the Synoptics do not reveal any such belief concerning him during the first century. But this is not true, for in the Synoptics he is no less deity than in John. The discovery of Papyrus 52, containing five verses of John 18 and dated in the first half of the second century, has done much to confirm the traditional date of the Gospel of John.

The book of Acts is today generally ascribed to Luke, the same man who wrote the third Gospel.

Ten of the so-called Pauline Epistles are today for the most part attributed to Paul, doubt being cast only upon the Pastoral Epistles, on the basis of style. But style changes can be due to change in subject matter and the age of the author.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is anonymous and no one knows who wrote it. It was undoubtedly written by a learned Christian somewhere between AD 67 and 69.

James and Jude were undoubtedly written by two of the brothers of Jesus.

1 and 2 Peter were written by the Apostle Peter. Some cast doubt upon 2 Peter on the ground of style. But Peter may have had Silvanus as his amanuensis in the first Epistle (1 Peter 5:12), and so have had some help with his diction, and may have written the second Epistle without his help.

The three Epistles of John and the Revelation were written by the Apostle John. The

difference in style in the book of Revelation as compared with the Epistles may be accounted for in the same way as the differences in 1 and 2 Peter. That is, he may have had help in the writing of the Epistles, but have written the Revelation all by himself, and further, the subject matter would itself account for the difference of style. This does not affect the question of inspiration in the least, for we argue for the inspiration of the final result that was produced and not for the inspiration of the man as such.

## 6. THE CANONICITY OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The fact of the inspiration of the Bible as God's special revelation to man naturally leads to the following questions:

1. Are any inspired books missing?
2. Are any books included that should not be in our Bible?
3. What books are inspired and should be recognized as a part of God's authoritative revelation?
4. Is our Old Testament Bible the same as the Lord's and is our New Testament the same as the Bible of the church fathers?

This is called the question of the "canon." These are obviously vital questions for the people of God to determine.

### 6.1 Meaning of "Canon" or "Canonicity"

The word "canon" comes from the Greek *kanon* and most likely from the Hebrew *qaneh* and Akkadian, *qanu*. Literally, it means:

1. a straight rod or bar;
2. a measuring rule as a ruler used by masons and carpenters; then
3. a rule or standard for testing straightness.

When it is applied to the books of the Bible, it means that they have met a certain standard which has segregated them from all other writings. In other words, it is used to describe those books recognized as inspired of God. This does not mean that the Bible was not God's Word before the individual books became part of the canon. It is important to note that church councils at no time had any power to cause books to be inspired. The process of canonization was simply an official recognition by church councils of what has always been God's Word. It concerns the recognition and collection of the God-inspired, authoritative books of the sacred Scriptures.

Jews and conservative Christians alike have recognized the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament as inspired. Evangelical Protestants have recognized the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as inspired. Roman Catholics have a total of eighty books because they recognize the Apocrypha as semi-canonical (*Paul Enns*, **The Moody Handbook of Theology**, Moody Press, Chicago, 1989, p. 170).

## 6.2 The Logical Necessity for a Canon of Scripture and Its Preservation

That God would provide and preserve a canon of Scripture without addition or deletion is not only necessary, but it is logically credible. If we believe that God exists as an almighty God, then revelation and inspiration are clearly possible. If we believe in such a God, it is also probable that He would, out of love and for His own purposes and designs, reveal Himself to men. Because of man's obvious condition in sin and his obvious inability to meet his spiritual needs (regardless of all his learning and technological advances), special revelation revealed in a God-breathed book is not only possible, logical, and probable, but a necessity.

The evidence shows that the Bible is unique and that God is its author. The evidence declares that "all Scripture is God breathed and profitable ..." (2 Timothy 3:16) and 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 Peter 1:20-21). In view of this, the logical question is:

> "Would it not be unreasonable for God to fail to providentially care for these inspired documents to preserve them from destruction and so guide in their collection and arrangement that they would all be present with none missing and none added that were not inspired?"

The logical answer is:

> "The God would definitely provide and preserve a canon of Scripture without addition or deletion."

## 6.3 Important Considerations

There are four important considerations that must be kept in mind when considering how the books of the Bible came to be recognized and held to be a part of the Bible:

1. Self-authentication;
2. Decisions of men;
3. Debates over canonicity; and

4. Completion of canon.

### *6.3.1 Self-authentication*

It is essential to remember that the Bible is self-authenticating since its books were breathed out by God (2 Timothy 3:16). In other words, the books were canonical the moment they were written. It was not necessary to wait until various councils could examine the books to determine if they were acceptable or not. Their canonicity was inherent within them, since they came from God. People and councils only recognized and acknowledged what is true because of the intrinsic inspiration of the books as they were written. No Bible book became canonical by action of some church council.

### *6.3.2 Decisions of men*

Nevertheless, men and councils did have to consider which books should be recognized as part of the canon, for there were some candidates that were not inspired. Some decisions and choices had to be made, and God guided groups of people to make correct choices (with guidelines) and to collect the various writings into the canons of the Old and New Testaments.

### *6.3.3 Debates over canonicity*

In the process of deciding and collecting, it would not be unexpected that some disputes would arise about some of the books. And such was the case. However, these debates in no way weaken the authenticity of the truly canonical books, nor do they give status to those which were not inspired by God.

### *6.3.4 Completion of canon*

Since A.D. 397 the Christian church has considered the canon of the Bible to be complete; if it is complete, then it must be closed. Therefore, we cannot expect any more books to be discovered or written that would open the canon again and add to its sixty-six books. Even if a letter of Paul were discovered, it would not be canonical. After all, Paul must have written many letters during his lifetime in addition to the ones that are in the New Testament; yet the church did not include them in the canon. Not everything an apostle wrote was inspired, for it was not the writer who was inspired but his writings, and not necessarily all of them.

The more recent books of the cults which are placed alongside the Bible are not inspired and have no claim to be part of the canon of Scripture. Certainly so-called prophetic utterances or visions that some claim to be from God today cannot be inspired and considered as part of God's revelation or as having any kind of authority like that of the canonical books.

## 6.4 Brief History of the Old Testament Books

The original copies of the Old Testament were written on leather or papyrus from the time of Moses (1450 B.C.) to the time of Malachi (400 B.C.). Until the sensational discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 we did not possess copies of the Old Testament earlier than A.D. 895. The reason for this is simply that the Jews had an almost superstitious veneration for the text which impelled them to bury copies that had become too old for use.

There are three families of the Old Testament texts:

1. the Masoretic;
2. the Septuagint; and
3. the Samaritans.

The above mentioned three main types of text existed in 200 BC. The question for us is, What is the original version of the Old Testament, in the light of these three "families" of texts to choose from?

### *6.4.1 The Masoretic*

There are no complete copies of the Hebrew Old Testament earlier than around AD 900, but it seems evident that the text was preserved very carefully and faithfully since at least AD 100 or 200. A check is provided by comparing some translations from the Hebrew into Latin and Greek at about this time. This comparison reveals the careful copying of the Hebrew text during this period. The text dating from around AD 900 is called the "**Masoretic Text**" because it was the product of Jewish scribes known as the "Masoretes." All of the present copies of the Hebrew text which come from this period are in remarkable agreement, attesting to the skill of the scribes in proof-reading.

Jews have always been a people of one book who have guarded it with extreme care and precision. From the time of Ezra and even before, there were priests (Deuteronomy 31:24-26) and later scribes called *sopherim* who were given the responsibility to copy and meticulously care for the sacred text so they could hand down the correct reading.

To ensure this accuracy, later scribes known as the Masoretes developed a number of strict measures to ensure that every fresh copy was an exact reproduction of the original. They established tedious procedures to protect the text against being changed. For instance:

1. When obvious errors were noted in the text, perhaps because a tired scribe nodded, the

text was still not changed. Instead, a correction was placed in the margin called *qere*, "to be read," and that which was written in the text was called, *kethibh*, "to be written."

2. When a word was considered textually, grammatically, or exegetically questionable, dots were placed above that word.

3. Minute statistics were also kept as a further means of guarding against errors: in the Hebrew Bible at Leviticus 8:8, the margin has a reference that this verse is the middle verse of the Torah. According to the note at Leviticus 10:16 the word *darash* is the middle word in the Torah, and at 11:42 we are assured that the *waw* in a Hebrew word there is the middle letter. At the end of each book are statistics as: the total number of verses in Deuteronomy is 955, the total in the entire Torah is 5,845; the total number of words is 97, 856, and the total number of letters is 400,945 (*Frederick W. Danker*, **Multipurpose Tools For Bible Study**, Concorida Publishing House, St. Louis, 1960, p. 57).

In this we see something of the painstaking procedures the Jews went through to assure the accurate transmission of the text. God made the Jews the custodians of the Old Testament record. Though their eyes may be blind to its truth (Isaiah 6:10; John 12:40; Romans 10:1-3; 11:7), they have guarded its transmission with great accuracy.

But how could we know about the accuracy and authenticity of the text in pre-Masoretic times?

### *6.4.2 The Septuagint*

Other ancient witnesses attest the accuracy of the copyists who ultimately gave us the Masoretic text. One of these is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the **Septuagint**. It is often referred to as the LXX because it was reputedly done by seventy Jewish scholars in Alexandria. The best estimate of its date seems to be about the 3rd century BC (approx. 250-160 BC). In the New Testament times, Israel was under the sovereignty of the Roman Empire, Greek was the official language at that time. As a result, it was common for the Jewish people to use the Septuagint for general reading and worshipping of God.

Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls there was a question, when the LXX was different from the Masoretic text, why the variations existed. It is now apparent that the Masoretic text has not changed significantly since around 200 BC. Other scrolls among those discovered show a type of Hebrew that is very similar to that from which the LXX was translated. The Samuel scroll especially resembles the reading of the LXX. The LXX appears to be a literal

translation, and our manuscripts are pretty good copies of the original translation.

### *6.4.3 The Samaritans*

Another ancient witness is the evidence for a third type of text similar to that which was preserved by the Samaritans. Copies of the old scrolls of the Pentateuch are extant today in Nablus (Shechem), Palestine.

### *6.4.4 The Dead Sea Scrolls - The Qumran Literature*

In 1947 the world learned about what has been called the greatest archeologic discovery of the century. In caves in the valley of the Dead Sea, ancient jars were discovered containing the now-famous Dead Sea Scrolls. From these scrolls, it is evident that a group of Jews lived at a place called Qumran from about 150 BC to AD 70.

Just west of the Dead Sea, near its northern end, was a community at the site of Khirbet Qumran. It was occupied either by people called Essenes, or a particular group like the Essenes. Theirs was a communal society, operated very much like a monastery. In addition to tilling the fields, they spent their time studying and copying the Scriptures. When the impending fall of Jerusalem became certain (AD 70), they realized that the Romans would soon be at their site. They hid a number of the manuscripts in the caves of the western hills surrounding Qumran, and then fled to safety.

In the providence of God the scrolls survived undisturbed until discovered accidentally by a wandering Bedouin goat herdsman in February or March of 1947. The accidental discovery was followed by careful exploration, and then several other caves containing scrolls were found. The find included the earliest manuscript copy yet known of the complete Book of Isaiah, and fragments of almost every book in the Old Testament. The story of the discovery of the first manuscript can be found at the book (*Geisler and Nix*, **From God to Us**, op. cit., pp. 142-43). In the period between 1947-1956, eleven caves yielded manuscripts wrapped in leather scrolls and hidden in jars.

From the first cave came seven scrolls, some complete and others less so. Included in this find is the earliest known complete book of Isaiah. There was also a commentary on Habakkuk, another incomplete text of Isaiah, the War Scroll and the Manual of Discipline for the community, and some 30 thanksgiving hymns. In the fourth cave, thousands of fragments were discovered, including a fragment of Samuel, which is possibly the oldest known piece of biblical Hebrew of the 4th century BC. Cave eleven was also productive, providing a preserved copy of some of the Psalms, including Psalm 151, which appears only in the Septuagint. In addition, there was a scroll of a portion of Leviticus, as well as a Targum, or

paraphrase of Job.

Altogether, some 600 manuscripts were collected from the eleven caves. The greatest contribution of the Qumran literature is the dating of the copies, about 200 BC to AD 100. Most scholars will settle for a date of about 100 BC, although some of the manuscripts are dated earlier.

The tremendous contribution of the scrolls of Qumran establishes the integrity of the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible. By comparing the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Masoretic text, we would get a clear indication of the accuracy, or lack of it, of transmission over the period of nearly a millennium. At least two-thirds of the scrolls reflect the Masoretic text, thereby establishing it as the more authoritative text. What is more, it compares favorably with the Hebrew biblical text already existing from the 10th century AD. The evidence for the Old Testament is now pushed back 1,000 years to establish its integrity, and the Septuagint is no longer regarded as the more acceptable text.

For more information relating to the History of the Bible, please study the course, **Apologetics**, Chapter 3.

### 6.5 Accuracy of the Old Testament Testament Text

In comparing the Qumran manuscript of Isaiah 38-66 with the one we had, scholars found that the text is extremely close to our Masoretic text. A comparison of Isaiah 53 shows that only seventeen letters differ from the Masoretic text. Ten of these are mere differences of spelling, like our "honor" or "honour" and produce no change in the meaning at all. Four more are very minor differences, such as the presence of the conjunction, which is often a matter of style. The other three letters are the Hebrew word for "light" which is added after "they shall see" in verse 11. Out of 166 words in this chapter, only this one word is really in question, and it does not at all change the sense of the passage. This is typical of the whole manuscript.

However, some critics are still not satisfied. They believe that a text from 100 BC is very much removed from the original manuscripts of Isaiah, about 700 BC, David, about 1,000 BC, and others even prior to these dates.

Do we have the means to discover what the original texts were? We obviously do not have the original manuscripts, but we do have evidence today that can substantiate from archaeology the historicity, culture, life-style, and geography to which the Old Testament refers. Chapter 4 of the course, **Apologetics**, will provide us with these materials, and further establish the integrity of the Old Testament.

## 6.6 The Three-fold Division of the Old Testament Books

### *6.6.1 The twenty-four book division of the Hebrew Bible*

The Masoretic text of the Hebrew Old Testament contains twenty-four books, beginning with Genesis and ending with 2 Chronicles. Though this arrangement of the Old Testament is in only twenty-four books, the subject matter is identical with the thirty-nine book division of our Protestant English Bible. The difference is in the *order* and *division* of the arrangement of the books. The reason for this is that the Protestant canon of the Old Testament has been influenced by the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX) made about 250-160 B.C.

The Septuagint divided the books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah each into two, which makes eight instead of four. The Twelve Minor Prophets were divided into twelve, instead of being counted as one book as in the twenty-four book division. This adds fifteen making a total of the thirty-nine books as in the Protestant English Bible.

Since the year 1517, modern Hebrew Bibles divided the books into thirty-nine, but kept the three-fold division including the arrangement of the books (Genesis through 2 Chronicles) as in the ancient Hebrew Bible.

This twenty-four book division in its three-fold division which became the thirty-nine book division is as follows:

**1. The Law** known also as the Torah or the Pentateuch (5 books): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

**2. The Prophets** (originally 8 books, then 21)

a. The Former Prophets (originally 4 books, then 6): Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1 & 2), Kings (1 & 2)
b. The Latter Prophets (originally 4 books, then 15): Major - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (3 books) & Minor - The 12 (originally 1 book, then 12)

**3. The Kethubhim or Writings** (originally 11 books, then 13)

a. Poetical (3 books): Psalms, Proverbs, Job
b. The Rolls (5 books): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther

c. Historical (originally 3 books, then 5): Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (2), Chronicles (1 & 2)

By the time of the New Testament this three-fold division was recognized (Luke 24:44). Other designations such as "The Scripture" (John 10:35) and "The Sacred Writings" (2 Timothy 3:15) suggest a generally accepted Old Testament canon. This three-fold division was also attested to by Josephus (A.D. 37-95), Bishop Melito of Sardis (ca. A.D. 170), Tertullian (A.D. 160-250), and others. The Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90 is generally considered the occasion whereby the Old Testament canon was publicly recognized (*Gleason L. Archer, Jr.*, **A Survey of Old Testament Introduction**, Moody, Chicago, 1964, pp. 62-65).

### *6.6.2 The apocryphal books*

The Protestant church accepts identically the same Old Testament books as the Jews had, and as Jesus and the apostles accepted. Augustine (AD 400) included the books of the Apocrypha. The Roman Catholic Church, since the Council of Trent in 1546, includes the books of the **Apocrypha** (*Charles C. Ryrie*, **Basic Theology**, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media).

The apocryphal books, it is important to note, were never received into the Jewish canon and were not considered as part of the inspired Scriptures by Jews or Christians in the early centuries of the Christian era. This is evident from a study of the writings of Josephus, the Jewish historian, and of Augustine, the great North African Bishop of Hippo. It is interesting that the New Testament writers rarely quote the Apocrypha.

The apocryphal books do not claim to be the Word of God or the work of prophets. They vary greatly in content and value. Some, like 1 Maccabees, were probably written around 100 BC and are valuable as historical background. Others are more characterized by legend and are of little value. The books of apocryphal contain historical and geographical errors. They seem to justify falsehood, prayers for the dead, and Salvation by good works, all very unscriptural concepts. Though not included at first, these books were later added to the LXX. In this way they came to be included by Jerome in the Latin Vulgate. Even Jerome, however, accepted only the books in the Hebrew Canon. He viewed the others as having ecclesiastical value only. He was in conflict with the later action of the Council of Trent, in Reformation times, which elevated the Apocrypha to canonical status.

## 6.7 The Process of Recognition of the Old Testament Canon (Canonization)

Simply stated, canonization was the process by which the Holy Spirit impressed upon the minds of God's people which writings were actually inspired by Him.

### *6.7.1 Recognition by Jews in the Old Testament Times*

The early Christians approved the books of the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, as Scripture, partly because Jesus and the apostles clearly treated them as such. A few verses in the Old Testament demonstrate how some of the thirty-nine books we have now were recognized as God's Word.

Deuteronomy 31:9-13 is particularly interesting. Here, Moses gave the "Law" to the priests with instructions to read it to the people every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 17:18-19). The priests and the people seem to have accepted it without question, both because of its own merits as well as Moses' authority. Verses 24-26 explain how they placed these books in a very sacred place - beside the ark of the covenant - for safekeeping. The laws issued by Moses and by the later prophets were intended to be respected as the decrees of God Himself. Jews were so regarded then and also by later generations. It was the recognition of this authority that shook the King Josiah when he realized how long the Law had been neglected (2 Kings 22:11).

When Joshua began leading Israel after the death of Moses, the Lord commanded him, saying, "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Joshua 1:8).

2 Kings 22:8 implies that these sacred books were kept in the Temple when it was finally completed. Even during the Captivity, when the temple was destroyed, men like Daniel recognized and kept safe new additions to the Scriptures, like the prophecy of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2-3).

### *6.7.2 Recognition by Jewish Scholars and Church Councils in the New Testament Times*

The canoncity of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon was not settled until the Council of Jamnia (AD 90), some maintain that the canon of the Old Testament was not closed until that time, or, since the discussion concerning them continued even after that date, not until about AD 200. With regard to the Old Testament as we have it today, we may accept the view of David Kimchi (1160-1232) and Elias Levita (1465-1549), two Jewish scholars, who held that the final collection of the Old Testament canon was completed by Ezra and the members of the Great Synagogue in the 5th century before Christ. Several things can be said which make this view possible. Josephus, who wrote near the end of the 1st century AD, included the same threefold division as did the Masoretic Canon. He further indicated that the canon was

completed in the reign of Artaxerxes, which corresponds to the lifetime of Ezra. It seems likely that Ezra was the one who finally organized the sacred books of the Old Testament, since he is called "the scribe" (Nehemiah 8:1; 12:36), "a scribe skilled in the law of Moses" (Ezra 7:6), and "the scribe, learned in the words of the commandments of the Lord and His statutes to Israel" (Ezra 7:11). Further, no more canonical writings were composed since the days of Artaxerxes, son of Xerxes, until New Testament times. The Apocrypha, though included in the Septuagint, was never accepted into the Hebrew canon.

### *6.7.3 Continuity of Recognition*

*Laird Harris*, traces the continuity of recognition: Moses was recognized as writing under the authority of God (Exodus 17:14; 34:27; cf. Joshua 8:31; 23:6). The criterion for acknowledging the Pentateuch was whether it was from God's servant, Moses. Following Moses, God raised up the institution of prophecy to continue revealing Himself to His people (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Jeremiah 26:8-15). The prophets to whom God spoke also recorded their revelation (cf. Joshua 24:26; 1 Samuel 10:25; Isaiah 8:1; Ezekiel 43:11). The law was accorded the respect of the author, and he was known as God's messenger. Similarly, succeeding prophets were received upon due authentication, and their written works were received with the same respect, being received therefore as the Word of God. As far as the witness contained in the books themselves is concerned, this reception was immediate. (*R. Laird Harris*, **Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible**, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1969, pp. 62-65)

## 6.8 The Tests for Canonicity

Specific tests to consider canonicity may be recognized:

1. Did the book indicate God was speaking through the writer and that it was considered authoritative?
2. Was the human author recognized as a spokesman of God, that is, was he a prophet or did he have the prophetic gift?
3. Was the book historically accurate? Did it reflect a record of actual facts?
4. Was the book quoted by the New Testament?

### *6.8.1 Did the book indicate God was speaking through the writer?*

God was speaking through the human author e.g. Exodus 20:1; Joshua 1:1; Isaiah 2:1; that the books were authoritative e.g. Joshua 1:7-8; 23:6; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; 23:25; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11; Malachi 4:4. Note also Joshua 6:26 compared with 1 Kings 16:34; Joshua 24:29-33 compared with Judges 2:8-9; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 compared with

Ezra 1:1-4; Daniel 9:2 compared with Jeremiah 25:11-12.

### *6.8.2 Was the human author was a prophet?*

Compare Deuteronomy 18:18; 31:24-26; 1 Samuel 10:25; Nehemiah 8:3.

### *6.8.3 Was the book historically accurate?*

There are a number of important historical evidences drawn from the ancient writings that give support to the Old Testament canon as we have it in our Protestant Bible:

1. *Prologue to Ecclesiasticus.* This non-canonical book refers to a threefold division of books (namely, the Law, the Prophets, and hymns and precepts for human conduct) which was known by the writer's grandfather (which would be around 200 B.C.).

2. *Philo.* Philo (around AD 40) referred to the same threefold division.

3. *Josephus.* Josephus (AD 37-100) said that the Jews held as sacred only twenty-two books (which include exactly the same as our present thirty-nine books of the Old Testament).

4. *Jamnia.* Jamnia (AD 90), was a teaching house of rabbis who discussed canonicity. Some questioned whether it was right to accept (as was being done) Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. These discussions concerned an existing canon.

5. *The church fathers.* The church fathers accepted the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. The only exception was Augustine (AD 400) who included the books of the Apocrypha (those "extra" books that some Bibles include between the books of the Old and New Testaments). However, he did acknowledge that they were not fully authoritative. The books of the Apocrypha were not officially recognized as part of the canon until the Council of Trent (A.D. 1546) and then only by the Roman Catholic church (*Charles C. Ryrie*, **Basic Theology**, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media).

### *6.8.4 Was the book quoted by the New Testament?*

Most of the Old Testament books are quoted:

1. in the New Testament; and
2. by Jesus Christ.

### *6.8.4.1 Old Testament quotations in the New Testament*

There are some 250 quotes from Old Testament books in the New Testament. None are from the Apocrypha. All Old Testament books are quoted except Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

### *6.8.4.2 Old Testament quotations by Jesus Christ*

In Matthew 5:17-18, the Lord declared that the Law and the Prophets, a reference that includes all of the Old Testament, then summarized as "the Law" in verse 18, would be fulfilled. This declared it was therefore God's authoritative Word. Christ's statement in Matthew 23:35 about the blood (murder) of Abel to the blood of Zechariah clearly defined what Jesus viewed as the Old Testament canon. It consisted of the entire Old Testament as we know it in our Protestant English Bible. This is particularly significant in view of the fact there other murders of God's messengers recorded in the Apocrypha, but the Lord excludes them suggesting He did not consider the books of the Apocrypha to belong in the Canon as with the books from Genesis to 2 Chronicles.

The above evidence shows the books of the Old Testament, as we have them in our Protestant Bible, were God breathed and therefore authoritative and profitable the very moment they were written.

## 7. THE CANONICITY OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

### 7.1 The Authenticity of the New Testament books

The authenticity of the New Testament books are established by the following sources:

1. the discovered New Testament manuscripts;
2. the testimony of the New Testament text by the early church fathers;
3. translation versions; and
4. dates of the New Testament documents.

### *7.1.1 The discovered New Testament manuscripts*

The New Testament was written in Greek. These are on different materials. There are two major types of materials, they are:

1. Parchment; and

2. Papyrus.

Parchment was one of the materials of which Greek manuscripts were made. This was the skin of sheep or goats, polished with pumice. It was used until the late Middle Ages, when paper began to replace it.

Papyrus was the common materials used for writing purposes at the beginning of the Christian era. It was made from reeds and was highly durable. In the last 500 years many remains of documents written on papyrus have been discovered, including fragments of manuscripts of the New Testament.

More than 6,000 manuscripts of the New Testament, or parts of it, have survived to our time. This means that no other document of antiquity even begins to approach such numbers and attestation. In comparison, the *Iliad* by Homer is second with only 643 manuscripts that still survive. The first complete preserved text of Homer dates from the 13th century (*Josh McDowell*, **Evidence That Demands A Verdict, Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith**, Revised Edition, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., San Bernardino, 1979, p. 39).

This contrast is startling and tremendously significant. The fact of the many documents plus the fact that many of the New Testament documents are very early (hundreds of parchment copies from the 4th and 5th centuries with some seventy-five papyri fragments dating from A.D. 135 to the 8th century) assures us we have a very accurate and reliable text in the New Testament.

### *7.1.2 The testimony of the New Testament text by the early church fathers*

The church Fathers most helpful for our purposes are the apostolic Fathers (AD 70-150), and the ante-Nicene Fathers (AD 150-300). By the time of the Council of Nicea in AD 325, nearly every verse of the New Testament had been cited by the apostolic and ante-Nicene Fathers over 36,000 times. These men either quoted directly, referred to a variant reading, provided a paraphrase, or perhaps even made an allusion. In spite of how the New Testament passage was handled, their testimony is the best evidence for the New Testament. The apostolic Fathers bring us so close to the New Testament writers that we are almost breathing down their necks!

From the chart in *Geisler and Nix*, **How We Got Our Bible - From God to Us**, *Chicago: Moody Press, 1974, p. 109*, we note that:

1. By the end of the 1st century, 14 books of the New Testament were cited by pseudo-Barnabas (around AD 70-130) and Clement of Rome (about AD 95-97);

2. By AD 110, some 19 books were cited by Ignatius (about AD 110), and Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John (about AD 110-150);

3. By AD 150, some 24 New Testament books were used, Hermas (about AD 115-140), Didache (about AD 120-150), Papias (about AD 130-140), Iraneus (about AD 130-202), and the rest were Diognetus, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian;

4. By AD 200, 26 books of the New Testament had been cited; and

5. Origen, shortly afterwards, mentioned the existence of 3 John.

These demonstrate a living history and testimony of the New Testament text.

### *7.1.3 Translation versions*

There are other sources of data for establishing the authenticity of the New Testament books. The first source is the versions. Versions are those manuscripts which were translated from the Greek into other languages. Three groups of these are of the most significance:

1. the Syriac (Aramaic) versions appeared around AD 150-200;
2. the Egyptian or Coptic versions by about AD 150; and
3. the Latin versions.

By careful study of the versions, important clues have been uncovered as to the original Greek manuscripts from which they were translated.

### *7.1.4 Dates of the New Testament documents*

The dates of the New Testament documents indicate that they were written the lifetime of contemporaries of Christ. People were still alive who could remember the things he said and did. Many of the Pauline letters are even earlier than some of the Gospels.

### *7.1.5 Conclusion - the New Testament Text is Reliable*

We can rest with the conclusion of the late *Sir Frederic Kenyon*, a world-renowned scholar of the ancient manuscripts. He said: "The interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.

## 7.2 Factors Leading to the Recognition of the New Testament Canon

What were the factors that led to the recognition of a New Testament canon as we have it today? For almost twenty years after the ascension of Christ none of the books of the New Testament were even written and about sixty-five years elapsed before the last New Testament book was written. James was undoubtedly the first, being written between 45-50 A.D., and Revelation was most surely the last, being written about 90 A.D. But several things began to happen that promoted the formation of the New Testament canon. *Enns* summarizes these:

1. Spurious writings as well as attacks on genuine writings were a factor.
2. The content of the New Testament writings testified to their authenticity and they naturally were collected, being recognized as canonical.
3. Apostolic writings were used in public worship, hence, it was necessary to determine which of those writings were canonical.
4. Ultimately, the edict by Emperor Diocletian in A.D. 303, demanding that all sacred books be burned, resulted in the New Testament collection.

## 7.3 The Process of Recognition of the New Testament Canon

Without a central place of worship like Israel had in the Old Testament, the early Christians were a bit slower in recognizing and collecting the letters and books of the New Testament. There writings had to be circulated (without the benefit of printing!) over the whole area of the Roman world. In his gospel, Luke mentions that there were other writings about Jesus which must have been circulating (Luke 1:1-4). In 1 Thessalonians 5:27, Paul commands his letter to be circulated "to all the brethren."

The process of recognition of the New Testament canon is divided into two eras:

1. the apostolic; and
2. the post-apostolic.

### *7.3.1 In the Apostolic Era*

Since the books were inspired when they were written, they were already canonical and possessed authority as being a part of God's Word. The responsibility of the church was simply to attest to the fact of their inspiration. This process began immediately with the writers recognizing that their own writings were the Word of God (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:15). But they also recognized that other writings of the New Testament were Scripture and on a par with the Old Testament. In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul quoted Deuteronomy

25:4 and Luke 10:7 and referred to both passages as Scripture. Peter likewise attested to Paul's writings as Scripture in 2 Peter 3:15-16. Furthermore, the New Testament epistles were being read and circulated among the churches as authoritative revelation from God (cf. Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27).

### *7.3.2 In the Post-Apostolic Era*

In the first century, Clement of Rome (c. A.D. 95) mentioned at least eight New Testament books in a letter.

In the second century, Ignatius of Antioch (c. A.D. 115) acknowledged about seven books; Polycarp, a disciple of John, (c. A.D. 108), acknowledged fifteen letters. That is not to say these men did not recognize more letters as canonical, but these are ones they mentioned in their correspondence. Later Irenaeus wrote (c. A.D. 185), acknowledging twenty-one books. Hippolytus (A.D. 170-235) recognized twenty-two books. The problematic books at this time were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John.

Even more important was the witness of the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170), which was a compilation of books recognized as canonical at that early date by the church. The Muratorian Canon included all the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and one epistle of John.

In the fourth century there was also prominent recognition of a New Testament canon. When Athanasius wrote in A.D. 367 he cited the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as being the only true books. In A.D. 363 the Council of Laodicea stated that only the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were to be read in the churches. The Damasine Council of Rome (A.D. 382), the North African cities of Hippo (A.D. 393) recognized the twenty-seven books, and the third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) affirmed that only those canonical books were to be read in the churches.

In the West, the question of canon was fixed by the decision of Carthage in A.D. 397. By the year A.D. 500, the whole Greek-speaking church seems also to have accepted all the books in our present New Testament. From that time on, the question was closed in the East also (*Paul Enns*, **The Moody Handbook of Theology**, Moody Press, Chicago, 1989, p. 172).

## 7.4 The Tests For Canonicity

The question naturally arises, what process and by what means did the early church recognize which books were canonical and which books were not? The following summarizes the tests used to discern which books were canonical:

1. Is it apostolic?
2. Is it truthful?
3. Was it written during a period of revelation?
4. Has it been universally recognized?

### *7.4.1 Is it apostolic?*

If a book is "apostolic" or "prophetic" it probably is inspired. This means that a book must be written by a recognized prophet or man of God, or an apostle or close associate of an apostle. The apostolic gift and prophetic gift was something the Fathers looked for; Jesus had promised to His apostles that the Holy Spirit would bring things to their remembrance and guide them into the truth (John 14:26; 16:13-14). Paul constantly used his apostleship to confirm the authority of his messages in the midst of an era of much heresy and false prophesying (e.g. Galatians 1:1-24).

By "close associate of an apostle," we mean writers like Luke or Mark. Both of these men were traveling companions of apostles and would have been thoroughly instructed in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and would had access to the first-hand accounts of the apostles.

### *7.4.2 Is it truthful?*

Did the book give internal evidence of inspiration, of being God breathed? Was it of proper spiritual character? Did it edify the church? Was it doctrinally accurate? A book will have the internal quality of truth if it is inspired. It will express accurately the things of God and will not contradict previously accepted Scripture. The book should bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit. The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were rejected as a result of not meeting this test.

The Bereans of Acts 17:11 were "examining the Scriptures daily" to see if Paul's preaching fell in line with what they already knew to be God's purposes and patterns. The apostle John commanded the same diligence to his readers in 1 John 4:1-6, where he tells them to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God."

### *7.4.3 Was it written during a period of revelation?*

If a book was written during a period of divine revelation it becomes a candidate for canonization. Some early believers and Jews, including Josephus, believed that between the time of Moses and the time of Malachi such a period occurred. God was speaking to His people through prophets in "exact succession" during these centuries. After Malachi, there was no more word until New Testament times. It is believed that from the death of John the Baptist

until the death of the apostle John another period occurred, in which the New Testament was written.

### *7.4.4 Has it been universally recognized?*

The test of universal acceptance by God's people was perhaps the final test in determining whether a book is actually inspired. This criterion stands apart from the rest in that it is a confirmation, and serves the obvious purpose of making final the decision and availability of the books. From its acceptance as God's Word by its original hearers (see 1 Thessalonians 2:13), to the agreement of the church counsels centuries later, the Scriptures as we have them have gained this recognition.

The strongest evidence that nothing should be added to the Bible is the simple fact that believers universally have never recognized any other writings. There is a completeness to Scripture. Jesus put His stamp of approval upon the Old Testament as we have it, and He promised guidance into truth to His apostles who gave us the New Testament. We value many other fine writings, but the Bible has qualities that set it apart from all else.

## 8. ILLUMINATION OF THE BIBLE

God has revealed Himself to us in His inspired Word that it might give light to our innate blindness. However, for the Scripture to give us light, it must be understood properly, then believed and applied in faith. But for man to understand the Bible properly, he must have two things:

1. he needs the illuminating work of the Spirit of God; and
2. he needs the proper method of interpretation for without the right method of interpretation, one is left on a sea of uncertainty.

## 8.1 The Need for Illumination

Though the Bible is a pure light that can direct our paths and bring us into an understanding of God and His Salvation in Christ, man needs special enablement from God due to the Bible's spiritual dimension that raises it above man's natural abilities. "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" (1 Corinthians 2:11). Furthermore, Adam's fall into sin and his consequent spiritual death rendered man incapable of comprehending the truth of Scripture. Simply put, the "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 Corinthians 2:14). This means a special work of God is needed to make the

Scripture understandable to both the natural man (unsaved) and to the saved. As seen in the way Jesus opened the eyes of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the work of **illumination** is necessary to enable us to comprehend the Word of God (cf. Luke 24:44-45).

### 8.2 Definition of Illumination

Illumination can be defined as "the special ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby He enlightens men so they can comprehend the written Word of God." Illumination begins with the pre-Salvation work of the Spirit to bring demonstrable proof of the claims of the gospel that people might trust in Christ (cf. John 1:9; 16:8-11; 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 6:4). Generally, illumination is used in reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to understand the Scripture (Ephesians 1:18; 3:9).

### 8.3 Explanation of Illumination

The doctrine of **illumination** must not be confused with **revelation** and **inspiration**. The following differences need to be understood (*Dan Wallace*, **The Holy Spirit and Hermeneutics**, Biblical Studies Foundation, 1998):

1. **Revelation** refers to the content of God's truth as it was revealed to the Old Testament and New Testament authors of Scripture.

2. **Inspiration** refers to the accurate transmission of that content to men, first verbally (as with the prophets) and then in written form.

3. **Canonization** refers to the recognition and collection of those inspired books into a canon, the Bible.

4. **Illumination** refers to understanding of the Bible's message to believers. Unbelievers can only experience this work as it pertains to His convicting ministry in relation to the gospel message (John 16:8-11).

As the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit is the believer's means of spiritual illumination. Four New Testament passages focus on this ministry of the Spirit; these are John 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:9-3:3; Ephesians 3:16-19; and 1 John 2:20 and 27. The essence of these passages is as follows:

1. As the Spirit of truth and God's special anointing, He is our Teacher. This is not a privilege for a select few, but is available to all believers since He indwells all believers. The teaching ministry of the Spirit is thus guaranteed to all believers.

2. Since indwelling is limited to believers, unbelievers can only experience the illuminating ministry of the Spirit in the matter of convicting and convincing them of the truth of the gospel message (John 16:8-11). This does not mean they cannot achieve a high level of understanding of the Bible, but its truth remains foolishness and they do not welcome it.

3. As the extent of the Spirit's illumination, it encompasses the whole council of the Bible, Genesis to Revelation and Salvation to things to come.

4. Several things can hamper the Spirit's ministry of illumination. Carnality (1 Corinthians 2:1-3), indifference (cf. Hebrews 5:1f with 1 Peter 2:2), tradition and preconceived ideas (Mark 7:7-13), ignorance (Mark 12:24; Luke 24:25-32; "foolish" in vs. 25 is the Greek, *anohtos*, "not understanding"), and poor methods of Bible study or interpretation (cf. Paul's exhortation in 2 Timothy 3:15).

5. The purpose of the Spirit's ministry is not to focus on Himself, but to disclose to us the glories and sufficiency of Christ and, as a result, to glorify Him (Ephesians 3:16f; John 16:12-15).

6. The Spirit uses those whom He has gifted with the gift of teaching in His ministry of illuminating others (Romans 12:7; 1 John 2:27). 1 John 2:27 does not mean we do not need teachers. Otherwise, why would the Spirit give this gift? In the context, John was speaking of discerning truth from error.

*Ryrie* adds an important note about illumination and revelation:

> The experience of illumination is not by "direct revelation." The canon is closed. The Spirit illumines the meaning of that closed canon, and He does so through study and meditation. Study employs all the proper tools for ascertaining the meaning of the text. Meditation thinks about the true facts of the text, putting them together into a harmonious whole and applying them to one's own life. The end result of the illumination ministry of the Spirit is to glorify Christ in the life, or to promote healthy doctrine¡Xteaching that brings spiritual health and wholeness to the believer's life. Illumination is not concerned merely with understanding facts but with using those facts to promote Christlikeness (*Charles C. Ryrie*, **Basic Theology**, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media).

Historically, Protestant evangelicalism has affirmed that the Bible is the canon of Scripture, that it is our supreme authority in matters of faith and practice, and that the canon is now closed, but that God is still speaking today and that He does so by means of the illuminating

work of the Holy Spirit through this completed canon. But a new proposition is being promoted today which states that God also speaks to His people today *apart* from the Bible. Most within the evangelical community would also add that, though He speaks *apart* from the Bible, He never *contradicts* what is in the Scriptures. But doesn't this new position threaten the sufficiency and finality of the Scripture? Many conservative scholars believe that it does (*Dan Wallace*, **Scripture Twisting**, Biblical Studies Foundation, 1998).

## 9. INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

**Interpretation** has been placed on the same level with **illumination**. This is because the illuminating work of the Spirit goes hand-in-hand with the interpretation of Scripture. Although illumination is assured for believers, it does not always guarantee accurate interpretation. And if the interpretation is wrong, so will be the understanding of the passage in question. Many people approach the Bible with a false mysticism. Their attitude is, "The Holy Spirit will show what this means." But then they proceed to butcher the text and come up with some off-the-wall idea that completely misses what the Spirit is saying based on solid principles of Bible study or exegesis. The word that comes to mind here is *abuse*. In a chapter entitled, "Handling the Scriptures Accurately," *Swindoll* writes:

> Ours is a day of abuse; sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse. But what about *biblical* abuse? By that I mean being deceived by the improper use of Scripture. Who of us has not witnessed someone twisting Scripture, forcing it to mean something it does not mean?[79] Those who don't know better start believing it with all their heart, only to discover later on that both the interpretation and the application were fallacious ... perhaps dangerous to their spiritual health and growth (*Charles R. Swindoll*, **Growing Deep In The Christian Life**, Multnomah Press, Portland, 1986, p. 69).

It is because of this very problem that the Apostle Paul, in a section where he was warning Timothy against false teaching that can lead to the ruin of the hearers, said, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, *handling accurately the word of truth"* (emphasis mine). Paul had in mind the important principle that we must correctly handle the Word of God in both its analysis (exegesis) and in its presentation (exposition) since Timothy was faced with the foolish interpretations of false teachers (as we often are). But the main emphasis is on the study and interpretation of the Word of God. What's involved here? Is this a matter of sincerity or of theology?

Now this has nothing to do with *sincerity*. Many, perhaps most, people who mishandle the Word are very sincere. And it really has little to do with *theology*. Some who have their

theology fairly well in place can still mishandle Scripture. It also has nothing to do with *personality*. There are gifted teachers dripping with charisma who can sway an audience and hold them in the palm of their hand, yet be guilty of mishandling Scripture.

Christians need to learn the basics of sound Bible study. Sound Bible study is that which is based on the fundamental principles of interpretation that will protect the student from Scripture abuse and that will provide a check on his or her own wild imagination. The following lists several important principles that are basic to the interpretation of Scripture.

## 9.1 The Plain or Normal Method of Interpretation

The word *literal* is avoided here since it often leads to wrong ideas that must be later corrected. Rather, I am using the terms *plain* or *normal* to express the proper method of interpretation. By plain or normal we mean the words of Scripture are to be understood in their normal meaning just as we normally understand words in our normal, everyday communication. When we read the newspaper or a recipe in a cookbook, how do we read those words? We understand them according to their literal or normal meaning. If the recipe says two cups of flower, you don't symbolize that to mean, a great quantity to be chosen at your discretion. If, however, it calls for a pinch of salt, you understand it to be somewhat symbolical of a very small amount.

## 9.2 Justification for the Plain, Normal Method of Interpretation

The justification for using the plain, normal method of interpretation includes:

1. the very purpose and nature of language supports this method;
2. the need of control and objectivity; and
3. the example of the Bible itself.

### *9.2.1 The very purpose and nature of language supports this method*

This is how we communicate in everyday life. God gave us language for the purpose of communicating with each other and with Him. Two ramifications flow from this idea. First, if God originated language for the purpose of communication, and if God is all-wise, then we may believe that He saw to it that the means (language) was sufficient to sustain the purpose (communication). Second, it follows that God would Himself use and expect man to use language in its normal sense. The Scriptures do not call for some special use of language, implying that they communicate on some "deeper" or special level unknown to other avenues of communication.

### *9.2.2 The need of control and objectivity*

Only the plain method of interpretation provides a check on the minds of men. The allegorical or spiritualizing method of interpretation leads to all kinds of abuse with one person seeing one kind of hidden meaning and another person seeing something entirely different. When interpreters disregard the normal meaning of words and look for supposedly hidden meanings, the true meaning of the Bible is lost; the Bible is abused; imagination and speculation go wild as the interpreter arbitrarily assigns this meaning and then that meaning to the text without any solid historical, grammatical, or lexical foundation for his interpretation.

### *9.2.3 The example of the Bible itself*

A precedence for interpreting the Bible in this manner can be seen in the way Old Testament prophecies like Psalm 22, Isaiah 7:14; 53:1-12; Micah 5:2 have all been fulfilled literally or according to their plain meaning. To this someone might argue, "Aren't some prophecies of the Old Testament fulfilled in a spiritual or typical sense in the New Testament?" To this question *Ryrie* says:

> To be sure some prophecies of the Old Testament are given a typical fulfillment, only seven are cited as examples of a non-literal hermeneutic. However, of the approximately twenty-four prophecies to which the New Testament gives a typical fulfillment, only seven are cited as examples of a non-literal hermeneutic (and, of course, not all agree that these seven prove this). The seven are Matthew 2:15, 18, 23; 11:10; Acts 2:17-21; Romans 9:24-26; and Galatians 4:21-31. Remember, however, that we are not just comparing seven out of a total of twenty-four, but seven out of a total of hundreds, for almost all Old Testament prophecies are clearly fulfilled literally in the New Testament. To be sure, the New Testament may use the Old Testament in ways other than fulfillment, but I am here speaking of prophecies and their fulfillments. This is a strong support for the literal hermeneutics (*Charles C. Ryrie*, **Basic Theology**, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media).

## 9.3 Principles of the Plain, Normal Method of Interpretation

There are five important principles of the plain, normal method of interpretation:

1. We must interpret the Bible grammatically.
2. We must study the Bible historically.
3. We must study the Bible contextually.
4. We must interpret according to the analogy of Scripture.

5. We need to recognize the progressive nature of God's revelation.

### *9.3.1 We must interpret the Bible grammatically*

This is in keeping with the fact of *verbal* (words) *plenary* (full) inspiration. Every word of the Bible is important and though some words will hold more importance than others, all the words and sentences are a part of God's communication to us. "Only grammatical interpretation fully honors the verbal inspiration of Scripture." Grammatical relationships are vital to sound interpretation because thoughts are expressed in words which stand in relationship to each other to express complete thoughts.

If we neglect the meanings of words and how they are used, we have no way of knowing whose interpretations are correct. The hallmark of the Reformation was a return to the historical, grammatical interpretation of Scripture. This was in direct opposition to the approach to the Bible that had been in vogue for hundreds of years - the view that ignored the normal meaning of words in their grammatical sense and let words and sentences mean whatever the readers wanted them to mean (*Roy B. Zuck*, **Basic Bible Interpretation**, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1991, p. 98-99).

So, what is grammatical interpretation? Grammatical interpretation is the process that studies the text of Scripture (*exegesis*, the critical analysis of the text) to determine four important things:

1. the meaning of words (lexicology);
2. the form of words (morphology);
3. the function of words (parts of speech); and
4. the relationship of words (syntax).

This means it is necessary to study the tenses of verbs, nouns and pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and the ways these words are structured.

### *9.3.2 We must study the Bible historically*

The historical context is important as a framework from which to interpret the Scriptures. Every book of Scripture was written in a historical context that should be understood in order to help interpret the book accurately.

### *9.3.3 We must study the Bible contextually*

Every passage and all the words and sentences in that passage have a context. Take the

passage out of the context, and you will miss its meaning and you may abuse the passage. Words and sentences do not stand in isolation; therefore, the context must be studied in order to see the relation that each verse sustains to that which precedes and to that which follows. Involved are the immediate context and the theme and scope of the whole book.

### *9.3.4 We must interpret according to the analogy of Scripture*

This simply means, while always keeping in mind the context, etc., we also need to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. If an interpretation of a passage contradicts other plain passages of the Bible, then something is wrong with the interpretation. Included here is a recognition of the dual authorship of the Bible.

The dual authorship of the Bible makes it necessary not only to know the human author's meaning but also God's. God's meaning may not be fully revealed in the original human author's writing but is revealed when Scripture is compared with Scripture. We must allow for a *sensus plenior* which allows for a fuller (though directly related) meaning in the mind of the divine Author of Scripture. We cannot say that the human authors of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words. When we compare Scripture with Scripture, we can discover the fuller intention of the divine Author.

### *9.3.5 We need to recognize the progressive nature of God's revelation*

God did not reveal Himself or His plan all at once. The promise of Salvation is revealed in seed form in Genesis 3:15, but it is expanded and developed throughout the Old Testament until we come to its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ and its full explanation in the New Testament.

To be able to interpret plainly and consistently, it is imperative to recognize that revelation was given progressively. This means that in the process of revealing His message to man, God may add or even change in one era what He had given in another. Obviously the New Testament adds much that was not revealed in the Old. What God revealed as obligatory at one time may be rescinded at another (as the prohibition of eating pork, once binding on God's people, now rescinded, 1 Timothy 4:3).

To fail to recognize this progressiveness in revelation will raise unresolvable contradictions between passages if taken literally. Notice the following pairs of passages which will contradict if understood plainly unless one recognizes changes due to the progress of revelation: Matthew 10:5-7 and 28:18-20, Luke 9:3 and 22:36, Genesis 17:10 and Galatians 5:2; Exodus 20:8 and Acts 20:7. Notice too the crucial changes indicated in John 1:17; 16:24; 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. Those who will not consistently apply this principle of progressive

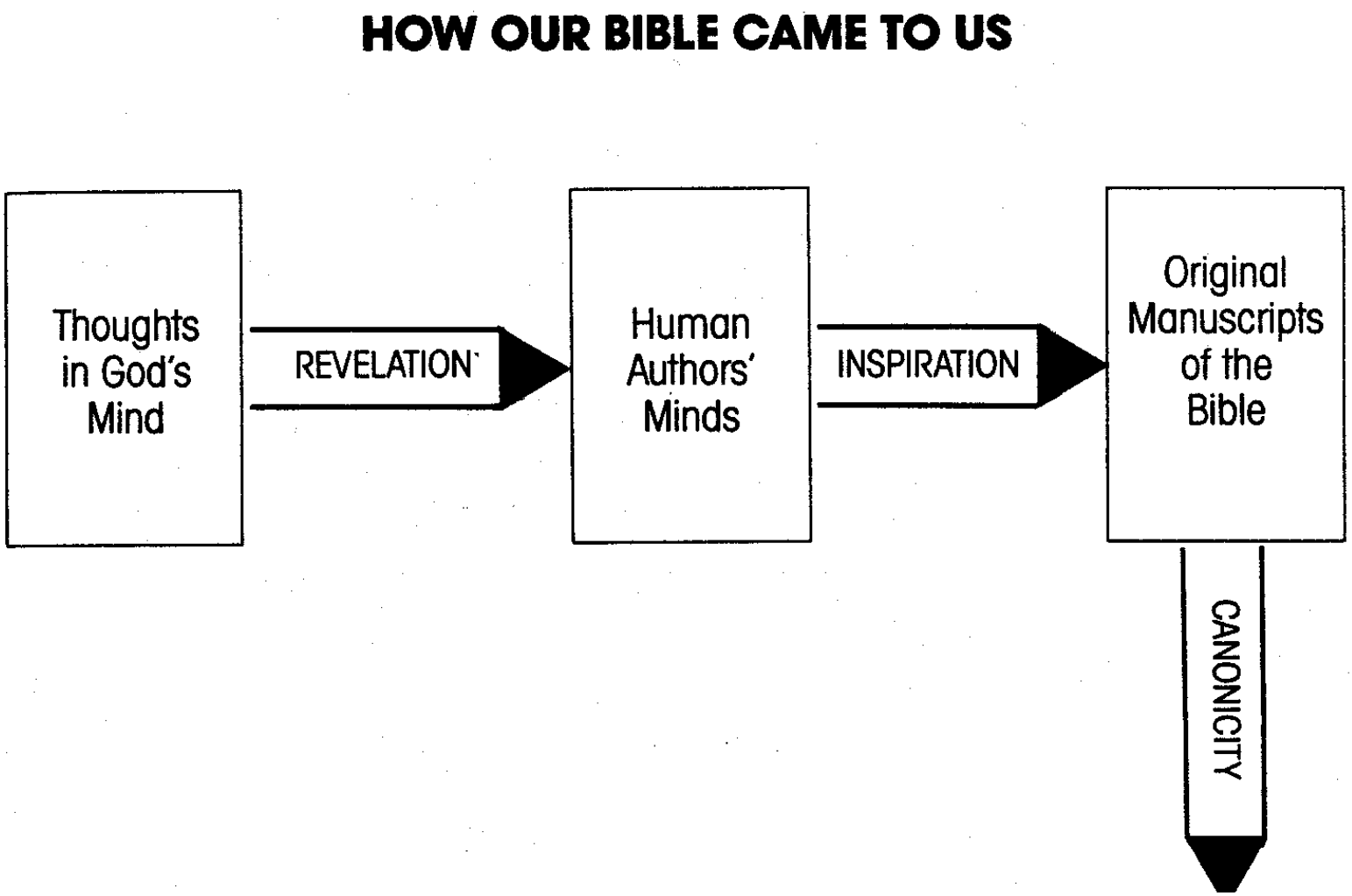
revelation in interpretation are forced to resort to figurative interpretation or sometimes simply to ignore the evidence (*Charles C. Ryrie*, **Basic Theology**, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media).

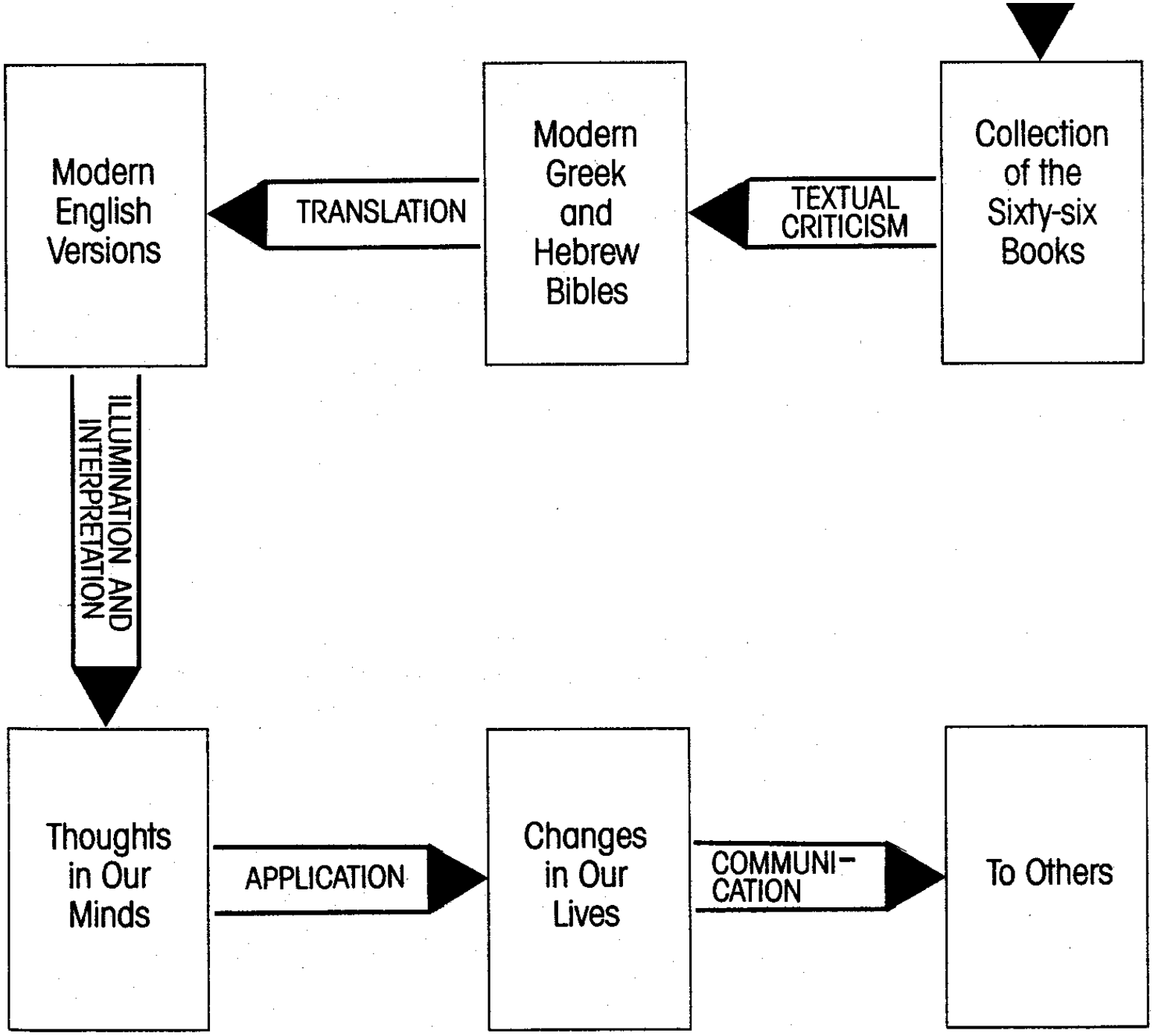
Since the whole area of biblical interpretation is such an important subject and so determinative on properly understanding the Word of God, a short bibliography is attached to encourage further study in this area.

### 9.4 Translations of the Bible

The original manuscripts of the Old Testament books were written in Hebrew while the New Testament books were written in Greek. Due to the differences between languages it is impossible to have a perfect translation. However, the translations we have are fully adequate for study and devotional reading. The **Authorized (King James) Version (KJV)** is satisfactory for Scripture memorizing and public speaking. For a closer study the student could use the **New American Standard Bible (NABS)** or the **New International Version (NIV)** , both careful, scholarly, and faithful versions.

What we have discussed so far can be visualized like this:






## 10. ANIMATION OF THE BIBLE (ALIVE AND POWERFUL)

Many theologies in discussing bibliology include a section called **Animation**. By animation we mean that quality of the Bible as it is expressed in passages like Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and 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." Another passage that speaks of the animating, life-giving, life-changing power of the Scripture is Psalm 19:7-9:

> "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the

heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether."

In addition, there is probably no passage that stresses the animating power and value of the Scripture like Psalm 119 which describes numerous attributes of God's Word as:

1. faithful (vs. 86);
2. exceedingly broad (vs. 96);
3. right (vs. 128);
4. wonderful (vs. 129);
5. pure (vs. 140);
6. truth (vs. 160);
7. verlasting (vs. 160); and
8. righteousness (vs. 172).

The doctrine of animation stresses the powerful and life-changing activity of the Scripture. Unlike any other book known to man, the Bible possesses a living quality that stems from its divine origin as the unique God-breathed book. This power is manifested in two primary ways.

First, the power of the Bible is seen in the way it reveals God and His glorious plan of Salvation in the person and work of Jesus Christ; it is the power of God unto Salvation (Romans 1:16). The stress here is on the power of the Bible on the unsaved. This truth is brought out for us in many ways, but the classic passage is 1 Peter 1:23, "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God." The Word of God combined with the ministry of the Holy Spirit work together to bring people to faith in Christ and into the new birth so they become the children of God (John 3:5; 2 Timothy 3:15; Titus 3:5; 2 Peter 1:1-4).

Second, the power of the Word is seen in the lives of the saved as God uses it along with the illuminating and empowering ministry of the Spirit to conform us into the image of the Lord Jesus. Our Lord had this in mind in His prayer in John 17:17 when He prayed, "Sanctify them through Your truth, Your Word is truth." God's Word is truly alive and powerful.

Another illustration of the animating power of the Word may be seen in the many pictures God gives us in the Bible of what His Word can do. It is pictured as a:

1. sword (Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17);
2. critic or judge (Hebrews 4:12);

3. lamp or light (Psalm 19:8b; 119:105, 130; Prov. 6:23);
4. mirror (1 Corinthians 3:18; James 22-25);
5. rain, snow, or water (Isaiah 55:10-11; Jeremiah 17:5-8; Ephesians 5:26);
6. food or bread from heaven (Deuteronomy 8:3; Job 23:12; Psalm 19:10b); and
7. gold (Psalm 19:10; 119:72, 127; Proverbs 8:10, 11; Isaiah 55:1-3; 1 Peter 2:18).

## 11. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As I sought to emphasize at the beginning of this study, nothing is more important to us than the Bible for all we believe basically hinges on its truth. The late *Francis A. Schaeffer* voiced concern over the growing tendency to elevate feelings - experience - to the throne of authority. In his book, **The New Superspirituality**, *Schaeffer* cautioned:

> "Beware! Neither experience nor emotion is the basis of faith. The basis for our faith is that certain things are true. The whole man, including the intellect, is to act upon the fact that certain things are true. That of course will lead to an experiential relationship with God, but the basis is content not experience."

For many of the present generation, experience has become more important than truth, but experience without truth is the menace and misery of a mindless Christianity, and one of the issues we face is that God's truth is found for us in the Bible. So not only have we been faced with a battle for the inerrancy of the Bible, but for the need to return to the Bible as God's Holy Word as the foundation of our faith and experience. Let me conclude with these words from the Savior:

> "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8: 31-32)

In praying for the disciples and for those who would believe after them (the church) He was praying that they might be protected from the evil influences of the world, the Savior said these vital words:

> "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." (John 17:16-17)

## 12. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

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# Chapter Thirteen - The Existence of God

This chapter is divided into three major areas:

1. We will provide arguments for the existence of God;
2. We will formulate the definition of God; and
3. We will examine and refute some of the non-Christian views of the existence of God.

## 1. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Is it possible to prove that God exists?

That depends on what you mean by "prove." Scientific proof or mathematical proof is not possible, but a high degree of probability is possible. This latter kind of proof is better termed "evidence," and it is convincing to those who have an inclination to believe, or at least to those who are not determined to disbelieve, that God exists.

Those who do not want to believe that God exists would probably reject any kind of evidence. Since they are unwilling to admit that God does exist, they prefer to say that He does not exist. This is itself a kind of "faith." For those of the "seeing-is-believing" mentality the arguments presented here may still not be satisfactory.

Our belief in God's existence, though reasonable and corroborated by a great deal of evidence, is still, in essence, a faith. We move now to the arguments for the existence of God. They fall into three broad groups:

1. Intuitive;
2. Biblical; and
3. Philosophical.

### 1.1 Intuitive

A belief is intuitive if it is universal and necessary. Paul writes, "That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them" (Romans 1:19). He goes on to say, "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen" (v. 20). This information leaves unbelievers

"without excuse" (v. 20). Even the most depraved know that those who live in sin are "worthy of death" (Romans 1:32) and that all men have "the work of the Law written in their hearts" (Romans 2:15).

History shows that the religious element of our nature is just as universal as the rational or social one. Religion or a belief system is categorized as one of the universals in culture (*Herskovits*, **Cultural Anthropology**, p. 117). There are in man's belief everywhere, various forms of religious phenomena and awareness of the supernatural.

Often man's religion has degenerated because of unbelief. Paul writes that when men rejected God, "they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (Romans 1:21-23).

### 1.2 Biblical

The Bible regards all men as believing in the existence of God. Throughout the Bible, the existence of God is taken for granted. Arguments for the existence of God are not found as such anywhere in the Bible. The closest we come to a biblical endorsement of them is in such places as:

1. Romans 1:20: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."

2. Psalm 19:1: "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."

3. The effect of such evidence is regarded by the psalmist as being so strong that he declares, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 14:1).

The Scriptures begin with the majestic statement, "In the beginning God" (Genesis 1:1), and they continue throughout to take His existence for granted. Such texts as Psalm 94:9f and Isaiah 40:12-31 are not proofs of God's existence, but rather analytical accounts of all that is involved in the idea of God, and admonitions to recognize Him in his character of deity. Man's consciousness is aware of the existence of God, and the writers of Scripture had minds filled and aglow with the thoughts and knowledge of Him.

The value, then, of the philosophical arguments that follow is that they help us realize that Christianity is rational; that

biblical faith is not blind, but based upon sound thinking. In evangelizing a world that believes Christianity is an escape from reality, it is important for us to know these arguments well.

### 1.3 Philosophical

The logic that lies behind each of these arguments is that of cause and effect. Each argument reasons from effects, or phenomena, to a sufficient cause, something that all human experience seems to support. In other words, a ball flying through the air required something or someone strong enough to put it into motion; a house on the corner must have been built by men with sufficient materials and time.

In the study of the philosophical arguments used for the existence of God, the following must be borne in mind:

1. since God is a spirit, we must not insist on the same type of proof that we demand for the existence of material things, but only on such evidence as is suitable to the object of proof; and

2. the evidence is cumulative, a single argument for the existence of God being inadequate, but a number of them together being sufficient to bind the conscience and compel belief.

#### *1.3.1 The cosmological argument*

The question behind the cosmological argument is:

> "How do we explain the existence of the *cosmos* (from Greek *cosmos* meaning "world" or "universe")? Everything begun must have an adequate cause. The universe was begun; therefore, the universe must have an adequate cause for its production. In other words, unless something comes from nothing, something eternal must exist; and that something eternal is the sufficient cause to which the universe owes its existence and greatness."

The argument is implied in Hebrews 3:4, "For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God."

Materialistic atheists once challenged this argument by affirming that the universe itself is eternal; that there is no evidence for the cosmos having a beginning. However, modern science suggests that the cosmos did have a beginning. For examples:

1. Physics (the second law of thermodynamics, or the law of entropy) teaches that energy becomes less available in a closed system; our world is "running down." Energy is becoming less available. If the universe is running down, then it is not self-sustaining; and if it is not self-sustaining, then it must have had a beginning. Since the universe is not constant and since it has a projected end, it cannot be eternal.

2. Astronomy shows that there have been great changes in the heavens. Astronomy is increasingly favorable toward the theory of an expanding universe (in which things are moving increasingly farther from each other) beginning with a primal explosion; thus, a beginning.

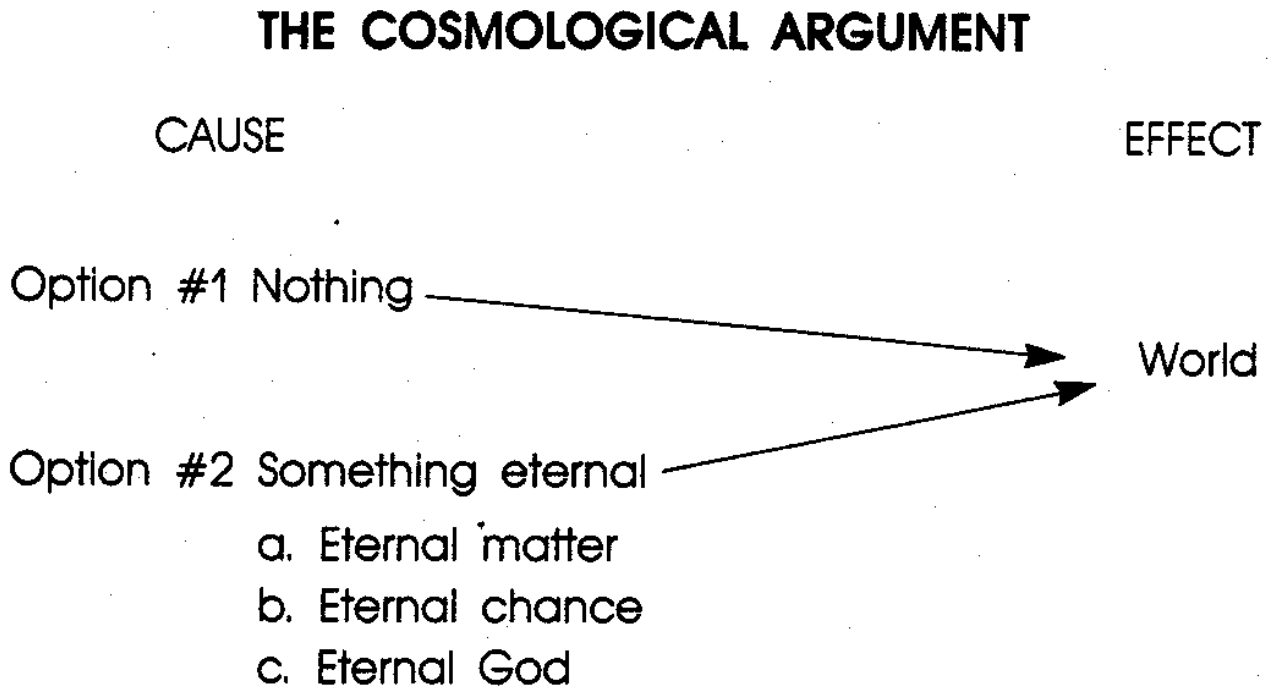
3. Geology that there have been great changes in the earth. Geology recognizes the disintegration of radioactive minerals and uses this information to date the universe. If something has an "age," it cannot be eternal.

4. Chemistry holds to a theory of the consumption of hydrogen which is the source of most energy; thus a beginning.

All this shows that the present order is not eternal. Furthermore, the existence of the world is dependent. Can the whole be self-existent when the several parts that make up the whole are dependent? There is also a succession in the effects. Causes produce effects, but the causes are themselves the effects of something else. There must, therefore, be a first cause.

The only alternative to materialistic atheism, other than believing in the existence of God, is the absurdity that something comes from nothing. It takes irrational faith to accept this as an explanation of the universe. The principle of cause and effect is built into our experience, and indeed is the foundation of science itself.

The cosmological argument strongly argues for a sufficient cause; however, it does not establish that this is an intelligent, personal, moral and perfect being.




### *1.3.2 The teleological argument*

The teleological argument (from Greek *telos* meaning "purpose") asks the question:

> "How do we account for the obvious purpose and design of our universe? The universe is characterized by order and useful arrangement; therefore, the universe has an intelligent cause. In everday observation this argument is illustrated by the fact that all objects that reveal design (e.g. automobiles, computers, watches) are assumed to have, as their ultimate cause, a designer. The universe itself is characterized by design and specific order; thus, a designer exists. On the basis of all observable data, that which has purpose or design implies an intelligent cause."

This argument is supported by Psalms:

1. "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?" (Psalm 8:3f)

2. "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the works of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (Psalm 19:1f).

3. "He who planted the ear, does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see?" (Psalm 94:9).

The structures and adaptations in the plant and animal world indicate order and design. The planets and stars are all kept in their courses in good order. We can see a relation between the animate and the inanimate world. Light, air, heat, water and soil are provided for the maintenance of plant and animal life.

It has been objected that both men and animals have useless organs, or vestigial structures, and that therefore the teleological argument is invalid. But science is again and again discovering that the so-called useless organs are after all not useless. It has also been objected that there may be order and useful arrangement without design, that things may be due to the operation of law or chance. But the dependent character of the laws of nature rules out the former idea. These laws are neither self-originating nor self-sustaining; they presuppose a lawgiver and a lawsustainer. Paul uses this argument in establishing the guilt of the infidel (Romans 1:18-23).

The teleological argument suggests not only that the first cause is intelligent, but that it is outside the universe, for design is seen to emanate not simply from within, but chiefly from without, by the adaptation of things external to the organisms and by the disposition and orderly arrangement of vast bodies of matter. Therefore, we conclude that the argument proves that the first cause is intelligent and extra-mundane.

Added to the first, this argument establishes that the sufficient cause is intelligent. But again, it has its limitations; we cannot yet say that our sufficient, intelligent cause is personal, moral and perfect. It does not prove that the intelligent cause was God. Further, the existence of physical evil and disorder limit the value of this argument. With the other arguments for the existence of God, it has value, but standing alone, it is of reduced value.

### *1.3.3 The Anthropological argument*

The anthropological argument (from Greek *anthropos* meaning "man") asks the question:

> "How do we explain man's personality? Reason tells us that something as complex and wonderful as "personality" could not arise out of nothing. Ultimately, its sufficient cause must be a greater personal being - God."

The Bible explains the sufficient cause of man's personality in Genesis 1:27: "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

The anthropological argument, combined with the previous arguments, leads us to the conclusion that our sufficient cause is intelligent, extra-mundane and personal.

### *1.3.4 The moral argument*

The moral argument is perhaps the most convincing of all arguments for God's existence. It asks the question:

> "How do we explain man's conscience? The logic is this: Man's consciousness of, or sensitivity to rightness and wrongness implies the existence of a fixed moral law, and therefore, a lawgiver."

*Herskovits* observes that "concepts of right and wrong can be found in the systems of belief of all groups" (*Herskovits*, **Cultural Anthropology**, p. 230). Every man has a sense of obligation, of what is right and wrong, together with an undeniable feeling of responsibility to do what is right and a sense of self-condemnation when he commits what is evil. There is in him a voice that will not be silenced, ever saying to his inner consciousness. This presupposes that there is a speaker, and moreover, one that is Lord and Sovereign. Man's knowledge of good and evil is from God, as is his sense of obligation. The Bible appeals to the moral argument in proof of the existence of God (Romans 1:19-32; 2:14-16).

Conscience insists that there is a fundamental moral law in the universe and that it is our duty to observe it. Further, known violations of this moral law are followed by feelings of ill-desert and fears of judgment. In the Bible David is a good example of this (Psalm 32:3f; 38:1-4). Our consciences cry out, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you ... ?" (Micah 6:8), and "God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

There is a permanent moral law and it has supreme authority over us. Evolutionists do not like to admit this. They like to think of everything as constantly changing. But that conscience is not self-imposed nor developed from our primitive instincts by our life in society, is evident from the fact that the sense of duty has no regard to our inclinations, pleasures, or fortunes, nor to the practices of society, but is often in conflict with them.

Some argue that this moral sensitivity is created by people for the sake of their own advantage or desires. It is merely

personal convenience. How do you explain, then, people who do something that is to their disadvantage because of a sense of "rightness"? For examples: I give money to support refugees; I return a lost wallet with cash in it; charities; etc. Where does the drive to abide by that rightness come from or the self-condemnation and rationalization when one doesn't abide by it?

Another objection is that moral sensitivity results from the consensus of the welfare of society; that is, it is the imposition of the majority rule upon an individual. Society, however, is only the aggregate of individual. Society, however, is only the aggregate of individuals (who apparently sense right and wrong). Further, it is beyond the cultural realm, for some morals are agreed upon by all societies (e.g. respect of property, punishment for crimes, etc.). These observations can only be explained by recognizing a consciousness of right and wrong within every man.

We must conclude that since this moral law is not self-imposed and these fears of judgment are not self-executing, there is a holy will that imposes this law and a punitive power that will execute the threats of our moral nature. Man's conscience testifies to the existence of a higher law, hence a lawgiver, outside of himself, outside of his society. This argument offers further support for the existence of God by saying that the sufficient, intelligent, personal cause, is a moral lawgiver.

### *1.3.5 The argument from congruity*

This argument is based on the belief that the postulate which best explains the related facts is probably true. As related to the present discussion, it runs as follows:

> "The belief in the existence of God best explains the facts of our moral, mental, and religious nature, as well as the facts of the material universe; therefore, God exists."

This principle may be illustrated from microscopic and telescopic studies. The particles that make up an atom are not discoverable by direct observation; they are inferred from the effects they produce and the combinations they enter into. Thus in science we assume that a postulate which explains and harmonizes the related facts is true. Should we not on this same principle conclude that there is a God, since the theistic postulate is in harmony with all the facts of our mental, moral, and religious nature, as well as with the facts of the material universe?

To believe in a personal, self-sufficient, and self-revealing God is in harmony with our moral and mental nature; history and natural law have an explanation; and the universal belief in a supreme being with its accompanying religious experiences can be accounted for. Atheism does not provide an adequate answer to satisfy the human heart.

### *1.3.6 The ontological argument*

The ontological (Greek for "existence") argument is perhaps the most debated of all the theistic arguments for God's existence. It asks the question:

> "Where did the idea of a perfect being come from? Since every idea in our human culture has some cause, the idea of a perfect being must have a cause. In an imperfect universe it is reasonable that a perfect being put such an idea into man's mind."

It has been argued that many ideas exist of beings which do not exist such as the imaginative creatures of the film world. However, each of these creatures are combinations of impressions of real things. The argument, after all, states that every idea has a cause, not necessarily an objective reality. What real things in man's environment could cause his idea of a perfect being? Only the existence of a real perfect being - God.

Thus, the arguments taken together reason that there is a sufficient, intelligent, extra-mundane, personal, moral and perfect being.

## 1.4 Conclusion

We may conclude from these arguments that there is a sufficient, personal, extra-mundane, intelligent, self-existent, moral and perfect being - that is, the God of the Bible. He is the incomprehensible (Job 11:7; Isaiah 40:18; Romans 11:33), yet knowable one (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20).

# 2. THE DEFINITION OF GOD

The term "God" has been so misused that we need to restore to it its original meaning in the Christian system.

## 2.1 The Biblical Names for God

### *2.1.1 Deity*

The biblical names of persons and places often carry great significance. This is true of the names for deity. One of the most

widely used terms for deity is *El*, with its derivations *Elim*, *Elohim*, and *Eloah*. It is similar to the Greek *theos*, the Latin *Deus*, and the English *God*. It is a general word to indicate deity, and is used to include all members of the class of deity. The plural *Elohim* is used regularly by the Old Testament writers with singular verbs to denote a singular idea. The compound *El-Elyon* designates Him as the highest, the most high (Psalm 78:35), and *El-Shaddai* as the Almighty God (Genesis 17:1).

### *2.1.2 Self-existent one*

*Jehovah* or *Yahweh* is the personal name of Israel's God. The term is connected with the Hebrew verb "to be," and means the "self-existent one," or the "one who causes to be" (Exodus 6:2f; cf. 3:13-16). This name occurs in a number of significant combinations:

1. Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will provide (Genesis 22:14);
2. Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord that heals (Exodus 15:26);
3. Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord our banner (Exodus 17:15);
4. Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord our peace (Judges 6:24);
5. Jehovah-Raah, the Lord my shepherd (Psalm 23:1);
6. Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6); and
7. Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is present (Ezekiel 48:35).

### *2.1.3 Presence with the hosts of angels*

*Adonai*, my Lord, is a title that appears frequently in the prophets, expressing dependence and submission, as of a servant to his master. The title, Lord of hosts, appears frequently in the prophetical and post-exilic literature (Isaiah 1:9; 6:3). The meaning of this term is God's presence with the hosts of angels (Psalm 89:6-8; cf. James 5:4).

### *2.1.4 Almighty*

In the New Testament the term *theos* takes the place of *El*, *Elohim* and *Elyon*. The names *Shaddai*, and *El-Shaddai* are rendered *pantokrator*, the almighty, and *thoes pantokrator*, God almighty.

### *2.1.5 The beginning and the end*

The Lord is also called the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 1:8), who is and who was and who is to come (Revelation 1:4), the first and the last (Revelation 2:8), and the beginning and the end (Revelation 21:6).

### 2.2 The Theological formulation of the definition

What is the definition of God?

Because God is infinite, a comprehensive definition giving a complete and exhaustive portrayal of God is impossible. However, we can give a definition of God insofar as we know Him and we can set forth the attributes of God as revealed to man.

God is:

1. one;
2. spirit;
3. infinite;
4. perfect;
5. eternal;
6. unchangeable;
7. wisdom;
8. power;
9. holiness;
10. righteousness;
11. justice;
12. goodness;
13. truth;
14. love;
15. grace;
16. mercy;
17. in whom all things have their source, support and end.

## 3. THE NON-CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Men as a whole have refused to have God in their knowledge (Romans 1:28). Sin has so distorted their vision and corrupted their hearts as to make them reject the evidence and go on without a God or set up gods of their own creation. We shall, therefore, briefly examine the leading non-Christian views and reply to them. They fall into six classes:

1. atheistic;
2. agnostic;
3. pantheistic;
4. polytheistic;
5. dualistic; and
6. deistic.

### 3.1 Atheistic

The term "atheism" refers to a failure to recognize the only true God. As such, it applies to all non-Christian religions. But in a more restricted sense, the term "atheism" applies to three distinct types:

1. practical atheism;
2. dogmatic atheism; and
3. virtual atheism.

Practical atheism is found among many people. Many have rashly decided that all religion is fake. People like this are usually not confirmed atheists; they merely are indifferent to God. While perhaps acknowledging a God somewhere, they live and act as if there is no God to whom they are responsible.

Dogmatic atheism is the type that openly professes atheism. Most people do not boldly flaunt their atheism before men, for the term is one of reproach; but there are some who do not shrink from declaring themselves atheists. Communism openly professes itself to be atheistic and religion to be the opiate of the people.

Virtual atheism is the kind that holds principles that are inconsistent with belief in God or that define Him in terms that do violence to the common meaning of the term "God." Those who define God in such abstractions as:

1. an active principle in nature,
2. the social consciousness,

3. the unknowable,
4. personified reality, or
5. energy,

are atheists of the second of these varieties.

The atheistic position is a very unsatisfactory, unstable and arrogant one. It is unsatisfactory because all atheists lack the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins; they all have a cold and empty life; and they know nothing of peace and fellowship with God. It is unstable because it is contrary to man's deepest convictions. Both Scripture and history show that man necessarily and universally believes in the existence of God. The virtual atheist adopts abstraction to account for the world and its life. It is arrogant because it really pretends to be omniscient. Limited knowledge can infer the existence of God, but exhaustive knowledge of all things, intelligences, and times is needed to state dogmatically that there is no God. The dogmatic atheist can be explained as being in an abnormal condition and their minds are full of false philosophy.

### 3.2 Agnostic

The term "agnostic" is the view which affirm that neither the existence nor the nature of God, nor yet the ultimate nature of the universe, is known or knowable.

The agnostic position, too, is highly unsatisfactory, unstable and often displays a false humility. It is unsatisfactory in that it suffers the same spiritual impoverishment as does the atheistic, but it is unsatisfactory also from the intellectual standpoint. It is unstable because it admits that it has not attained to absolute certainty. It often displays a false humility in that it claims to know so little. From the Christian standpoint, this is a false humility, for Christians regard the evidence for the existence of a personal, extra-mundane, almighty and holy God as ample and conclusive.

### 3.3 Pantheistic

Pantheism holds that all finite things are merely aspects, modifications or parts of one eternal and self-existent being. It regards God as one with the natural universe. God is all; all is God.

The errors and destructive character of the pantheistic view must be pointed out. Christians believe that there is a common originating cause, but they hold that it is outside the world as well as inside it. We affirm that we have the consciousness that we are free agents and that we are accountable for our conduct. If all things are necessitated, then error and sin are also

necessitated. But if that is true, then three other things follows:

1. Sin is not that which absolutely ought not to be, that which deserves condemnation.
2. We have no standard by which to distinguish between right and wrong.
3. God Himself is sinful, for if all things are necessitated by Him, then He must be ignorant or evil at heart.

Therefore, Pantheism destroy the foundations of morals.

True religion is possible only between persons who retain their distinct individualities, for true religion is the worship and service offered by a human being to the divine being. When these distinctions disappear, true religion becomes impossible. Therefore, Pantheism make all rational religion impossible.

If man is but a part of the infinite, he is also but a moment in the life of God, when the body perishes, the personality ceases. Thus, there is no conscious existence for man after death. But we are conscious that we stand in the relation of personal responsibility to God and that we shall be asked to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). We know that after death, as in this life, there will be a difference between the good and the bad, that is, that our identity and individuality will be preserved. Therefore, Pantheism deny personal and conscious immortality.

If everything that exists is but a manifestation of God, and if God does not come to consciousness except in man, then man is the highest manifestation of God in the world. The Hindu thinks that when he can say, "I am Brahman!" then the moment of his absorption into the infinite has arrived. Pantheism flatters man and encourages human pride, they deify man by making him a part of God.

### 3.4 Polytheistic

Monotheism was the original religion of mankind. The first departure from monotheism seems to have been in the direction of nature worship. Sun, moon, and stars, the great representatives of nature, and fire, air, and water, the great representatives of earth, became objects of popular worship. At first they were merely personified; then men came to believe that personal beings presided over them.

Polytheism has a strong affinity for fallen human nature. Men join themselves to idols (Hosea 4:17) and find it most difficult to break away. Idolatry not only leaves the heart empty, but also debases the mind. Paul speaks of how men

"professing to be wise, ... became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and fourfooted animals and crawling creatures" (Romans 1:22f). The Thessalonian believers are represented as having "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

In the Bible the gods of the heathen are sometimes declared to be of no account and futile (Isaiah 41:24; 44:9-20), and at other times, the representatives of demons (1 Corinthians 10:20). This seems to mean that the worship of idols is the worship of demons.

### 3.5 Dualistic

This theory assumes that there are two distinct and irreducible substances or principles:

1. good (God); and
2. evil (Satan).

Dualism originated from Persian Zoroastrianism in the last half of the first century. They tried to solve the problem of evil by postulating two gods:

1. a supreme God; and
2. a demiurge.

They hold that the God of the Old Testament is not the supreme God, for the supreme God is entirely good; he is the demiurge, who created the universe. There is a constant conflict between these two gods, a conflict between good and evil. They try to eliminate all Judaistic elements from Christianity and to substitute Zoroastrianism in its place. They say that God is limited in power and perhaps in knowledge, He is doing the best He can with the disobedient world and will ultimately triumph completely over it. Man ought to assist God in this struggle and hasten the complete overthrow of evil. God is considered as growing and as finite.

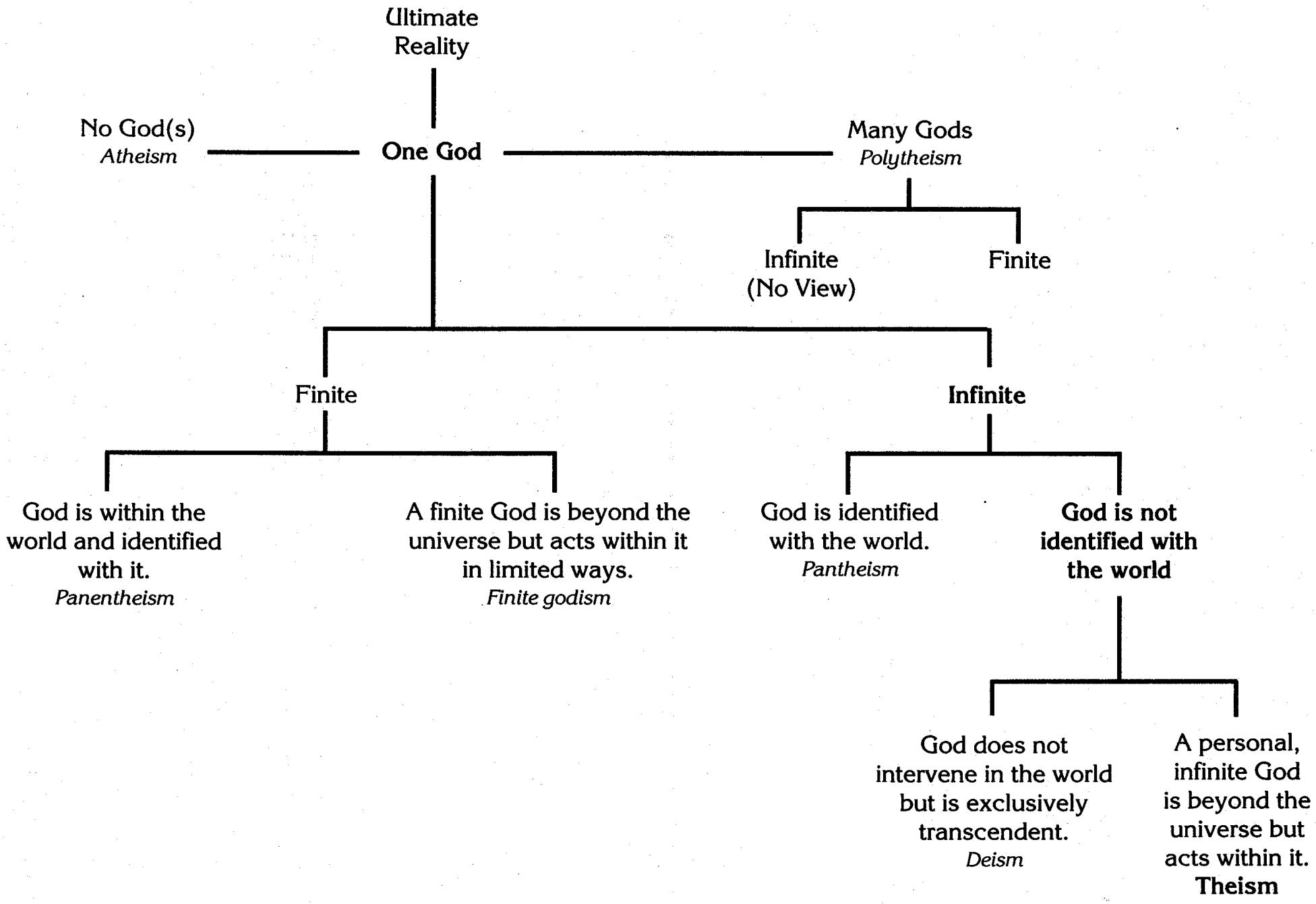
Surely, a finite God cannot satisfy the human heart, for what guarantee does such a God offer for the final triumph of good? Something unforeseen may come up at any time to frustrate all His good intentions; and how shall the believer keep up faith in prayer on such a theory? This theory clearly disregard of the many Biblical indications that God is perfect and unchangeable in His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and truth, and it does not satisfy our idea of God. Christians do not believe that Satan is co-eternal with God, but rather a creature of God and subject to Him.

### 3.6 Deistic

For deism, God is present in creation only by His power, not in His very nature and being. He has endowed creation with invariable laws over which He exercises a mere general oversight; He has imparted to His creatures certain properties, placed them under His invariable laws, and left them to work out their destiny by their own powers. Deism denies a special revelation, miracles and providence. It claims that all truths about God are discoverable by reason and that the Bible is merely a book on the principles of natural religion, which are ascertainable by the light of nature.

The Christian rejects deism because he believes that we have a special revelation of God in the Bible; that God is present in the universe in His being as well as in His power; that God exercises a constant providential control over all His creation; that He sometimes uses miracles in the accomplishment of His purposes; that God answers prayer.

Some of the major worldviews on the existence of God are illustrated in the following chart:




## 3.7 Conclusion

According to the above reasons, we conclude that only the Christian view on the existence of God is correct.

## 4. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


1. **Survey of Theology I**, Lesson 3, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
2. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapters III and IV, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.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# Chapter Fourteen - The Attributes and Nature of God

No man can see God and live (Exodus 33:20). No man has seen God at any time (John 1:18). Men have "seen" God partially at various times when He has appeared in various forms (see Exodus 24:9-11; 33:17-34:7; Isaiah 6:5). In every instance when God manifested Himself visibly to men, there is only a partial revelation of His glory, for man could no more look upon the full display of God's splendor than one can look directly into the sun. Even in the coming of our Lord, who manifested the Father to men (see John 1:18; 14:8-9; Hebrews 1:1-3), the full revelation of His glory was **"veiled"** with only an occasional glimpse of that glory, such as at His transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1-8).

We are among those who have not **"seen"** our Lord (John 20:29; 1 Peter 1:8). Our grasp of the nature of God as revealed in Jesus Christ must be limited to what the Scriptures teach concerning His teaching, ministry, and character. In other words, we can "see" and know God through the Scriptures as they reveal His character to us.

Men believe in the kind of God they wish to believe in and reject the kind of God they dislike. They seems to place little emphasis on the description of God found in the Holy Scriptures. I certainly do not agree with the views unbelievers hold of God. But even more distressing is the shallow, inaccurate view of God held by professing Christians. We need to radically revise our thinking about God. The purpose of this series (chapters 14-16) is to explore the excellencies of God, to realign our thinking about God with those divine characteristics revealed in the Scriptures. This chapter concerns the nature of God, with special reference to His essence and attributes. It is divided into four major areas:

1. We will demonstrate the importance of studying the attributes of God;
2. We will examine the nature of God;
3. We will examine the non-moral attributes of God; and
4. We will examine the moral attributes of God.

## 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Some people think that the study of God's character is a matter for preachers and theologians only. Does such a study really have any practical value? *J. I. Packer* raises this very question and promptly answers it:

> "Why need anyone take time off today for the kind of study you propose? The questioner clearly assumes that a study of the nature and character of God will be unpractical and irrelevant for life. In fact, however, it is the most practical project anyone can engage in. Knowing about God is crucially important for the living of our lives . . . Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfold[ed] as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul" (*J.I. Packer*, **Knowing God**, Part II, InterVarsity Press, 20th Anniversary Edition, 1993).

The study of the attributes of God can impact the life of the Christian in the following ways:

1. It is the basis and standard for all human morality.
2. Failure to think rightly about God is the sin of idolatry, and it leads to countless other sins.
3. It is our calling and destiny, our future hope, our great privilege and blessing, and thus it should be our great ambition.
4. It is the basis for our enjoyment of God and our spiritual growth.
5. It is foundational to our faith and hope.
6. It enhances our worship.
7. It enhances our prayer life.
8. It enhances our witness.
9. It enhances and enriches our study of the Scriptures.
10. When we focus on the attributes of God, we begin to view life from a new perspective¡Xfrom God's perspective.

**1.1 It is the basis and standard for all human morality**

The final verse of Judges reads:

> "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

One might think the solution to this dilemma was a human king, but it was not. The kind of "king" Israel wanted was in effect an idol. They wanted a king whom they could see, a man who would go before them into battle. They wanted a king like all the other nations (see Deuteronomy 17:14-17). When the people approached Samuel and demanded to have a king, God indicated they really were rejecting Him as their king:

> 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." But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them" (1 Samuel 8:5-7).

Thus when the Israelites demanded a human king, they were rejecting God as their king. When the Book of Judges informs us the Israelites had no king, it means the nation did not acknowledge and serve God as their King (Exodus 15:18; Psalm 10:16; 29:10). And it is without God as King that men set the standard for their own conduct; every man **"does what is right in his own eyes."**

God gave the Law to the nation Israel after He became their "King" at the exodus (Exodus 15:18). He demonstrated His power and sovereignty, even over Pharaoh. And as Israel's "King," God set down the constitution for the kingdom He was setting out to establish. The form of the Mosaic Covenant, as has been observed by scholars, was the same as other treaties of that day between kings (or suzerains) over their subjects (or vassals). God was the standard of morality, and God therefore set the standard for the conduct of His people. The laws God set down at Mount Sinai were those which proceeded from His own character. God said to His people, **"Be ye holy, for I am Holy"** (Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; see 1

Peter 1:16).

Is it any wonder **"every man does what is right in his own eyes"** today? Is it so difficult to explain why our culture rejects and abhors the thought of moral absolutes? Do we wonder why the church has become so wishy-washy about morality? The Bible tells us why. ***We have ceased to ponder and appreciate the moral perfection of God.*** And once our view of the holiness of God is diminished, our moral values decline proportionately. A study of the character of God will establish and undergird morality.

**1.2 Failure to think rightly about God is the sin of idolatry, and it leads to countless other sins**

Wrong thoughts about God were the root of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3, the character of God is first demeaned by Satan. By Satan's devious question and answer tactics, God is portrayed as a liar (**"Has God said ...?"** verse 1), (**"You surely shall not die!"** verse 4). Based upon the assumption that God was less than He first seemed to be (and was!), Eve acted independently of God, and she and her husband thus disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit.

Thinking wrongly of God is idolatry and is demeaning to Him because it always views God as being other (and less) than He is. But this idolatrous evil of thinking wrongly of God is also the root of many other evils. Thinking wrongly about God leads to sin. An inadequate view of God is at the root of many sins.

**1.3 It is our calling and destiny, our future hope, our great privilege and blessing, and thus it should be our great ambition.**

> "Thus says the LORD, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches' (Jeremiah 9:23)."
>
> "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12)."
>
> "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (Philippians 3:10)."
>
> "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is (1 John 3:2)."
>
> "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; [and] that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God (Ephesians 3:14-19)."

**1.4 It is the basis for our enjoyment of God and our spiritual growth**

A personal relationship with God requires that we know God personally, as a Person. The attributes of God are descriptions of the character of God, and it is through the knowledge of His characteristics that we come to intimately know and enjoy God as a Person.

By faith in Jesus Christ, we have been saved so **"we might become partakers of the divine nature"** (2 Peter 1:4). We have become a part of the church, the body of Christ, which is growing up **"to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ"** (Ephesians 4:13). By **"seeing Him as He is"** we become like Him (1 John 3:2); knowing God's character is therefore the basis for our own transformation into His likeness.

**1.5 It is foundational to our faith and hope**

Knowing the character of God assures us that He can and will do all that He purposes and promises. Faith in God is trusting in God, and His attributes are the basis for that trust because He is able and willing to do all that He has promised.

> "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23)."
>
> "And without faith it is impossible to please [Him], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and [that] He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6)."
>
> "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right (1 Peter 4:19)."
>
> "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)."

**1.6 It enhances our worship**

We worship God for who He is. *The attributes of God are a description of who He is.* When God is worshipped in the Bible, He is worshipped in response to His attributes. He is worshipped as the eternal One:

> "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 GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME" (Revelation 4:8).

Especially in the Psalms we find the worship of God linked to an acknowledgment of His attributes:

> "I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness, And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High" (Psalms 7:17).
>
> "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting" (Psalms 107:1).

### 1.7 It enhances our prayer life

Knowing God's character not only instructs us about what we should pray for¡Xthat which is in accord with His character¡Xbut it also assures us God is able and willing to answer our prayers. We do not pray to just anyone; we pray to Him who hears our prayers and is willing and able to answer them. Once again, in the Book of Psalms we see the petitions of men linked to the attributes of God.

> "(For the choir director; for flute accompaniment. A Psalm of David.) Give ear to my words, O LORD, Consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, For to Thee do I pray. In the morning, O LORD, Thou wilt hear my voice; In the morning I will order [my prayer] to Thee and [eagerly] watch. For Thou art not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with Thee. The boastful shall not stand before Thine eyes; Thou dost hate all who do iniquity" (Psalms 5:1-5).

### 1.8 It enhances our witness

Men can only be saved when they come to recognize they are lost, and *they will see their sin only when they begin to recognize God as the One who is holy and righteous and just.* Paul's conversion is a dramatic illustration of this recognition of human depravity in the light of God's glory (see Acts 9:1-22).

Our principle task is not the winning of souls, but the demonstration and promotion of God's glory:

> "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

> "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR [God's] OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

The attributes of God are both His characteristics and His **"excellencies."** His nature and character are His excellence, His perfection, His glory. Knowing God's excellence is the starting point for practicing and proclaiming it among men. In so doing, some will be saved, but God will be glorified whether or not men are saved. The elect will be saved to the glory of God (Romans 9:23), and the lost will glorify God in the day of His visitation (1 Peter 2:11-12).

### 1.9 It enhances and enriches our study of the Scriptures

The Scriptures are the primary source for our instruction concerning God's attributes. As we seek to learn the character of God, we will soon discover that we have a new outlook on the Scriptures. Even those texts we may have considered boring come to life as we begin to see God's character described therein. Imagine coming to the place where, like David, we could pray these words concerning the Old Testament law:

> "I will meditate on Thy precepts, And regard Thy ways. I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall

> not forget Thy word. Deal bountifully with Thy servant, That I may live and keep Thy word. Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Thy law" (Psalms 119:15-18).
>
> "O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalms 119:97).

Seemingly obscure and difficult to understand portions of the Bible come to life when we look to them for insight into the character of God. Prophetic texts (like the Book of Revelation) have much to tell us about God's character. Perhaps we spend too much time and effort trying to solve mysteries we were not intended to comprehend (see Deuteronomy 29:29) rather than focusing on the character of God, which is often quite clearly portrayed in highly symbolic or obscure texts. When we come to the Scriptures to learn what God is like, we shall not be disappointed.

**1.10 When we focus on the attributes of God, we begin to view life from a new perspective¡Xfrom God's perspective**

Nothing will more radically change the way we look at life and our circumstances. In Psalm 73, *Asaph* confesses that when he began to view his life from God's perspective he saw things in an entirely different light. When our desire is to know God, to know His nature and character, then we welcome those circumstances which facilitate a more intimate acquaintance with God. And so the apostle Paul tells us that he welcomes suffering when it facilitates knowing God:

> "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from [the] Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which [comes] from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:8-10).

A desire to know God intimately by the knowledge of His character puts our service into perspective and protects us from what some call "burn out." Think of the account of Mary and Martha in the Gospel of Luke:

> "Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord' word, seated at His feet. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up [to Him,] and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but [only] a few things are necessary, really [only] one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:38-42).

Mary chose the "one thing," the "better thing," to worship and adore the Lord, sitting at His feet, delighting in all that He is. Martha chose a lesser thing and became embittered that Mary was not working with her. When knowing God becomes our priority, serving Him becomes an outworking of our devotion, not a hindrance to it.

## 2. THE NATURE OF GOD

The nature of God includes:

1. Spirit;
2. Invisible;
3. Alive;
4. Personality;
5. Intellect;
6. Emotions
7. Will
8. Self-Existence;
9. Immensity; and
10. Eternity.

### 2.1 Spirit (Immaterial and Incorporeal)

When theologians describe God they make a distinction between His essential being, or nature, and His attributes. By "essential being" they mean that God is spirit and personality. Man is spirit and personality and body as well. One of the major errors of man-made religion has been the assumption that deity must have a physical appearance; hence the many forms of idols which are worshipped.

#### *2.1.1 God can be worshiped anywhere*

In John 4:24 Jesus teaches that "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The Samaritan woman thought of God as a local being who must be worshiped in some particular place. Jesus corrected her by implying that God can be worshiped anywhere.

The reason God specified a particular place in the Old Testament was to maintain control over the purity of His worship, especially the sacrifical system and priesthood. A centralized place of worship is no longer necessary since Jesus fulfilled the need for sacrifices in His death, and the need for a priesthood in His ascension to intercede for us. The practical significance is that if God is spirit, He must be worshiped "in spirit and truth"; that is, in an inward, genuine way as opposed to superficial ritual which merely involves ritualistic actions.

#### *2.1.2 God has not appeared in visible form*

The spiritual nature of God is implied by 1 John 4:12 which asserts that, since He is spirit, God has not appeared in visible form (a burning bush, a pillar of fire), but one was only viewing a finite manifestation of God, not God Himself.

#### *2.1.3 Making any visual representation of God is idolatry*

Jesus said, "A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). If God is spirit, He

is immaterial and incorporeal. Thus, the second commandment (Exodus 20:4-5) forbids making any image or visual representation of God, is based on the incorporeal nature of God, for this world severely restrict and even pervert the true worship He deserves "in spirit." There are numerous commands against idolatry (Leviticus 26:1; Deuteronomy 16:22).

An idol would imply, to some at least, that God is finite in some respects, or encompassed by the material object. Isaiah 40:18-24 expresses the preposterous nature of idols that men craft to represent God. "To whom then will you liken God? ... As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, a goldsmith plates it with gold ... Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the vault of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers ..."

### *2.1.4 Symbolic representations to express God's powers and activities*

But what about the expressions that represent God as having bodily parts:

1. hands (Isaiah 65:2; Hebrews 1:10);
2. feet (Genesis 3:8; Psalm 8:6);
3. eyes (1 Kings 8:29; 2 Chronicles 16:9); and
4. ears (Nehemiah 1:6; Psalm 34:15)?

They are anthropomorphic and symbolic representations which serve to make God real and to express His various interests, powers and activities. Man differs in that he has finite spirit, which is able to dwell in a material body (1 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). God is infinite spirit and as such is non-corporeal (Acts 7:48f).

## 2.2 Invisible

### *2.2.1 No man has seen God at any time*

The Israelites "did not see any form" when the Lord appeared to them in Horeb, and, therefore, they were prohibited from making any image of Him (Deuteronomy 4:15-19). God told Moses that no man could see Him and live (Exodus 33:20). John says, "No man has seen God at any time" (John 1:18). Paul calls Him "the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15; cf. Romans 1:20; 1 Timothy 1:17) and declares that no man has seen Him or can see Him (1 Timothy 6:16). Certain Scriptures, however, indicate that the redeemed will some day see Him (Psalm 17:15; Matthew 5:8; Hebrews 12:14; Revelation 22:4).

### *2.2.2 Men say the reflection and glory of God*

But how about the Scriptures that say men saw God, such as Genesis 32:30; Exodus 3:6; 24:9f; Numbers 12:6-8; Deuteronomy 34:10; and Isaiah 6:1? When one sees His face in a mirror, He in a sense sees Himself; yet, in another sense, He does not literally see Himself. So men saw the reflection of God's glory, but they did not see His essence (Hebrews 1:3). Then, too, spirit can be manifested in visible form (John 1:32; Hebrews 1:7).

When Moses saw the "back" of God (Exodus 33:23), it was in response to His request to see the glory of the Lord (v. 18). Rather than interpreting this as literally and visibly seeing God, which in the context is said to be impossible (v. 20), it is better to understand this as seeing the after-effects, or as *Driver* says, "the afterglow" of God (*Driver*, **The Book of Exodus**, p. 363).

### *2.2.3 Angels are manifestations of deity in visible form*

Angels are manifestations of deity in visible form. Jacob said, after he had wrestled with the man, "I have seen God face to face" (Genesis 32:30). "The angel of the Lord" was a visible manifestation of deity (Genesis 16:7-14; 18:13-33; 22:11-18; Exodus 3:2-5; Judges 6:11-23; 1 Kings 19:5-7; 2 Kings 19:35). It is to be noted that in certain of these passages "the angel of the Lord" is identified as "the Lord" (cf. Genesis 16:11; with v. 13; Exodus 3:2 with v. 4; Judges 6:12 with v. 16).

## 2.3 Alive

The idea of spirit excludes not only the idea of material substance, but also that of inanimate substance. It implies that God is alive. He is, therefore, called the "living" God (Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26; Psalm 84:2; Matthew 16:16; 1 Timothy 3:15; Revelation 7:2). Life implies feeling, power, and activity. God has all these (Psalm 115:3). He is also the source and support of all life:

1. plant;
2. animal;
3. human;
4. spiritual; and
5. eternal (Psalm 36:9; John 5:26).

The living God is often contrasted with dead idols (Psalm 115:3-9; Acts 14:15; 1 Thessalonians 1:9). Our God is alive; He sees, hears, and loves. The idols of the heathen are dead, incapable of seeing, hearing, and loving.

## 2.4 Personality

Man is created in the image of God and that man has personality imply that God, to an infinite degree, possesses personality. It may be true that the statement "God is a person" is theologically dangerous, because to many people the word "person" connotes an individual, finite human being. It is therefore better to say, "God has personality," or "God is personal."

### *2.4.1 Self-consciousness and self-determination*

Hegel and the idealistic philosophers are wrong in representing God as an impersonal spirit, for the very idea of spirit implies personality. The only way of determining what spirit is like, apart from the Scriptures, is by analogy with the human spirit. Since the human spirit is personal, the Divine Spirit must be personal as well, for otherwise He is of a lower order of being than man. In man, personality and corporeity are united in one individual for the period of this life. At death this relationship is severed; the body goes over into corruption, but the personality survives. At the resurrection the personality is again

embodied and the normal constitution of man is restored. But in God there is personality without corporeity. What then is the essence of personality? Self-consciousness and self-determination.

Self-consciousness is more than consciousness. As a conscious being, man at times has feelings and appetites which he does not relate to himself. He thinks spontaneously, but does not think of what he thinks. The brute probably has some degree of consciousness. But as a self-conscious being, man relates his feelings, appetites, and thoughts to himself. Likewise, self-determination is more than determination. The beast has determination, but it is mechanical. Man has the feeling of freedom and makes his choices from within, in view of motives and ends. The Scripture writers ascribe both self-consciousness (Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 45:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10) and self-determination (Job 23:13; Romans 9:11; Ephesians 1:9, 11; Hebrews 6:17) to God. He is a being who can say "I" and "me" (Exodus 20:2f) and can respond when addressed as "you" (Psalm 90:1ff). He is said to be the Creator (Acts 14:15), upholder (Nehemiah 9:6), ruler (Psalm 75:7; Daniel 4:32), and sustainer (Psalm 104:27-30; Matthew 6:26-30) of all things.

### *2.4.2 Characteristics of personality*

Scripture also represents God as possessing the characteristics of personality:

1. intellect (Genesis 18:19; Exodus 3:7; Acts 15:18);
2. sensibility (Genesis 6:6; Psalm 103:8-14; John 3:16);
3. volition (Genesis 3:15; Psalm 115:3; John 6:38);
4. speaking (Genesis 1:3);
5. seeing (Genesis 11:5);
6. hearing (Psalm 94:9);
7. grieving (Genesis 6:6);
8. repenting (Genesis 6:6);
9. being angry (Deuteronomy 1:37);
10. jealous (Exodus 20:5); and
11. compassionate (Psalm 111:4).

## 2.5 Intellect

Isaiah 40:13-14 attributes intellect to God: "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding?" Isaiah 55:8-9 declares, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts ... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are ... My thoughts [higher] than your thoughts." 1 John 3:20 states that God "knows all things."

## 2.6 Emotions

The prophetic books in the Old Testament express to us the whole range of God's emotions for His people: a broken heart over their disobedience, and a longing for their devotion (Hosea 11), astonishment over their disloyalty (Jeremiah 2:10-13; 5:30-31), and a hatred of their idolatrous and hypocritical practices (Isaiah 1:12-15). Emotions such as anger (Numbers 11:1) are attributed to God. "God is love," the apostle John says (1 John 4:8). Deuteronomy 28:63 informs us that God delights over His people, and Deuteronomy 5:9 says He has a jealous concern for them.

## 2.7 Will

Scripture refers to three ways in which the will of God is exerted:

1. His decretive will which involves the "decree" or eternal plan of God. "Surely just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand" (Isaiah 14:24);

2. His preceptive will which is set forth in His commandments in Scripture such as the Ten Commandments (Eoxdus 20:1-18), or Scripture as a whole; and

3. His permissive will which allows for men to disregard the preceptive will (to sin). "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways" (Acts 14:16).

## 2.8 Self-Existence

While man's ground of existence is outside of himself, God's existence is not dependent upon anything outside of himself. As Thomas Aquinas said, "He is the first cause; Himself uncaused." His self-existence is implied in His affirmation, "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14; cf. the "I am" of Christ's teaching concerning Himself, John 8:58, and Isaiah 41:4; Revelation 1:8), and as is usually held, in the name "Jehovah" (Exodus 6:3). Yet God's self-existence is not grounded in His will, but in His nature. He exists by the necessity of His nature as the uncaused being.

## 2.9 Immensity

God is infinite in relation to space. He is not limited or circumscribed by space; on the contrary, all finite space is dependent upon Him. He is, in fact, above space. Scripture clearly teaches God's immensity (1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 2:6; Psalm 113:4-6; 139:7f; Isaiah 66:1; Jeremiah 23:24; Acts 17:24-28). Due to the spirituality of His nature and our inability to think in spaceless terms, this is a difficult doctrine to apprehend. However, this much is clear: God is both immanent and transcendent, and He is everywhere present in essence as well as in knowledge and power. Whenever and wherever it is present, spiritual substance, like the soul, is a complete whole at every point.

## 2.10 Eternity

### *2.10.1 God had no beginning and will never have an end*

God is the uncaused cause of all things; He always has been and always will be; He had no beginning and will never have an end. The eternity of God is implied by the name Yahweh (usually translated "LORD," or "Jehovah" in an English Bible). Yahweh means "I am who I am," and comes from the Hebrew verb "to be." In Exodus 3:14 God calls Himself "I am who I am," which can just as correctly be translated, "I was who I was, I will be who I will be." This same idea is revealed to us in Revelation 1:8 where God calls Himself the one "who is and who was and who is to come" (Revelation 1:8).

God is sometimes referred to as the "Everlasting God" (Genesis 21:33). The Hebrew word translated

"everlasting" has a range of meaning all the way from the distant past or future eternity depending on its context. Here in Genesis 21:33 the meaning is clearly "eternal" when applied to God.

### *2.10.2 God is infinite in relation to time*

God is also infinite in relation to time. He is without beginning or end, he is free from all succession of time, and He is the cause of time. That He is without beginning or end may be inferred from the doctrine of His self-existence; He who exists by reason of His nature rather than His volition, must always have existed and must continue to exist forever. That God is eternal is abundantly taught in Scripture. He is called "the Everlasting God" (Genesis 21:33). The Psalmist say, "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God" (Psalm 90:2) and "Thou art the same, and Thy years will not come to an end" (Psalm 102:27). Isaiah represents God as "the high and exalted One Who lives forever" (Isaiah 57:15). Paul says that God "alone possesses immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16; cf. Habakkuk 1:12).

Time is, as commonly understood, duration measured by succession, but God is free from all succession of time. God has a simultaneous possession of His total duration. Eternity for God is one now, one eternal present. "He possesses the whole of His existence in one indivisible present. In Scripture this is referred to as "the day of eternity" (2 Peter 3:18) and "today" (Psalm 2:7; cf. 2 Peter 3:8). But one must not suppose that time has no objective reality for God, but rather that He sees the past and the future as vividly as He sees the present. A person may view a procession from the top of a high tower, where he can see the whole procession at one glance, or he may view it from the street corner, where only one part can be seen at a time. God sees the whole as one unit, although He is aware of the sequence in the procession.

### *2.10.3 God is the cause of time*

He is also the cause of time (Hebrews 1:2; 11:3). The reference to God in Isaiah 9:6 may be translated "Father of Eternity." Both time and space are among "all things" which "came into being through Him" (John 1:3). Time will some day merge into eternity (1 Corinthians 15:28). However, for the creature eternity will not be successionless existence, for every finite mind must think, feel and act in time.

## 3. THE NON-MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The attributes of God are the qualities that inhere in the substance and constitute an analytical and closer description of it. They are descriptions of the particular ways in which the divine nature exists and operates. It is the summation of God's attributes that explains to us who God is in relationship to His universe, and most importantly, in relationship to man.

The non-moral attributes are those necessary predicates of the divine essence that do not involve moral qualities, these are:

1. Omnipresent;
2. Omnipotent;
3. Omniscient;
4. Infinite; and
5. Immutable.

## 3.1 God Is Omnipresent

### *3.1.1 Definition*

These first three attributes are compound words using the Latin prefix **omni**, meaning "all." Thus omnipresent means "present everywhere at once." To be omnipresent is to penetrate and fill the entire universe with one's presence at all times.

### *3.1.2 God is present in all His creation, but in no manner limited by it*

God is present in all His creation, but in no manner limited by it. Whereas immensity emphasizes the transcendance of God in that He transcends all space and is not subject to the limitations of space, omnipresence has special reference to His presence within the universe (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7-10; Isaiah 66:1; Jeremiah 23:23f; Acts 7:48f; 17:24f; Romans 10:6-8). It must be remembered that the omnipresence of God is not a necessary part of His being, but is a free act of His will. If God should will to destroy the universe, His omnipresence would cease, but He himself would not cease to be. Pantheism binds God to the universe, but God is transcendent and not subject to it.

### *3.1.3 God is present everywhere in His total being*

God is present everywhere in His total being; He is not localized in heaven and merely "potentially" present elsewhere; omnipresence is a distinct reality from the indwelling God via the Holy Spirit in every believer; the difference is between presence and union. In the case of union, God works in and through us to accomplish His purpose. To illustrate: God is "in us," not merely as water in a bucket, but as a vital element of the bucket itself. Or, to put it another way, there is a difference in being in a store and being part of the management.

### *3.1.4 The doctrine of the omnipresence of God is both comforting and subduing*

The doctrine of the omnipresence of God is both comforting and subduing. It is a source of comfort to the believer, for God, the ever-present one, is always available to help us (Deuteronomy 4:7; Psalm 46:1; 145:18; Matthew 28:20). It is a source of warning and restraint to the believer. No matter how much he may try, the sinner cannot escape from God. Neither distance nor darkness hides from Him (Psalm 139:7-10). "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). This consciousness often checks the sinner in his evil ways and leads him to seek God. "Thou art a God who sees" (Genesis 16:13) becomes both a warning and a comfort to the child of God (Psalm 139:17f).

### *3.1.5 Biblical evidence*

One of the most striking passages of the Bible says, "Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Thy hand will lead me, and Thy right hand will lay hold of me" (Psalm 139:7-10).

## 3.2 God Is Omnipotent

### *3.2.1 Definition*

Omnipotence is the power to do all things which can be done. God is all-powerful, that His power is unlimited, that God has the ability to do whatever He pleases with or without secondary means (directly or indirectly), but what He pleases is always in harmony with God's perfections, nature, and Person. God can do everything that is in harmony with His perfections.

### *3.2.2 Can God create something too heavy for Him to lift?*

One would see the absurdity of asking, **"Can God create something too heavy for Him to lift?,"** if one realized that God is a purposeful being. God will not do things which are absurd or self-contradictory, such as make a material spirit, a sensitive stone, a square circle, or a wrong to be right. These are not objects of power and so denote no limitation of God's omnipotence.

Omnipotence does not imply the exercise of all His power. He has power over His power. Though His power is limitless, it is always under the control of His holy and wise will. God can do all He wishes to do, but He will not do all He could do. All things with God are possible; God can do anything, but He will only do what His infinite wisdom, holiness, and love dictate. Sin is imperfection and it would be contradictory to say that the perfect One could be imperfect. To say that the perfect One cannot be imperfect, is not really putting a limitation of God.

Omnipotence includes the power of self-limitation. God has limited Himself to some extent by giving free will to His rational creatures. That is why He did not keep sin out of the universe by a display of His power and why He does not save anyone by force.

God will not use His omnipotence to do something contrary to His other attributes, His own holy character or nature:

1. Though God can do all things, in His absolute truthfulness He cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18).
2. God's omnipotence is always under the control of His will. He "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11).
3. God's omnipotence can be self-limited such as in the incarnation of Jesus Christ "who emptied Himself" of divine privileges (Philippians 2:7).
4. God will not annihilate Himself because He is eternal and immutable (Genesis 21:33; Malachi 3:6).
5. God will not go back on His Word because He is faithful (2 Timothy 2:13).
6. God will not look with favor on iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13).
7. God will not tempt or be tempted to sin (James 1:13).

### *3.2.3 God's omnipotence may be divided into two areas: absolute power and ordained power*

God's omnipotence may be divided into two areas:

1. absolute power; and
2. ordained power.

**Absolute power** is God's power or ability to do what He will or may not do, but is possible for Him to do, "power to do all things" (Mark 10:27). It also means that God may work directly without secondary causes. Creation, miracles, immediate revelation, inspiration and regeneration are manifestations of His absolute power. Matthew 26:53 give an illustration of this.

> "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?"

**Ordained power** is the power exercised to do what He has decreed to do, that which His will and wisdom has directed and ordered. The works of providence would be illustrations of ordinate power whereby God uses second causes. Matthew 26:54 give an illustration of this.

> "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?"

God has the absolute power to perform any miracle in a person's life if He so chooses, but because of His wisdom, love, and purposes, He may choose not to do so. In the above illustration regarding the Savior, God could have easily destroyed Christ's enemies and delivered Him from the Cross, but in the wisdom and mercy of God, it was His will for Christ, His Son, to die on the Cross for the sin of the world to provide us with eternal life and fulfill the hope and promises of Scripture.

Whereas man needs matter or material to work with, God needs nothing. He can create out of nothing by the exercise of His will as He did in Genesis one, or He can create out of something as He did when He created man from the dust of the earth (cf. Hebrews 11:3; 1:3). God needs no blueprint to work from, no time to work in, and no instruments to work with. However, in connection with this, it is important to remember that God has chosen to use secondary causes or means. As Hebrews 11:3 asserts, creation was accomplished without means other than the voice of God, but our Salvation was accomplished through the instrumentation of the God-Man Savior's death on the Cross. Indeed, even the crucifixion was accomplished by human means.

> Acts 2:23 this *Man,* delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.

To the Christian the omnipotence of God is a source of great comfort and hope, but to the unbeliever so mighty a God is ever a warning and a source of fear (1 Peter 4:17; 2 Peter 3:10f; Revelation 19:15). Even the demons shudder (James 2:19), for they know that God has power over them (Matthew 8:29). Some day even the strongest and greatest will seek to hide from Him (Revelation 6:15-17; cf. Isaiah 2:10-21), and every knee will bow at the name of Jesus (Philippians 2:10).

### *3.2.4 Biblical evidence*

The omnipotence of God is seen throughout Scripture:

1. God calls Himself "God Almighty" (Genesis 17:1).
2. Jesus taught that "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).
3. An omnipotent Creator (Genesis 1:1-3; Psalm 33:6-9).
4. An omnipotent Sustainer (Colossians 1:17b; Hebrews 1:3).
5. An omnipotent Commander (Exodus 9:3-6, 23-26, 33; Psalm 107:25-29; Jonah 1:17; 4:6-8; Daniel 3:22-28).
6. The declaration of God's omnipotence (Genesis 18:14; Job 42:2; Numbers 11:23; Revelation 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 19:6).
7. Read also Psalm 68:14; 91:1-2; 115:3; 2 Corinthians 6:18.

## 3.3 God Is Omniscient

### *3.3.1 Definition*

God is infinite in knowledge. He knows Himself and all other things perfectly from all eternity, whether they be actual or merely possible, whether they be past, present or future. He knows things immediately, exhaustively and truly. God's knowledge is within Himself, not the result of observation. God's knowledge is simultaneous, not progressive. In other words, He is not gaining knowledge;

### *3.3.2 Foreknowledge and foreordination are not the same*

Foreknowledge, which is related to omniscience, is knowing in advance what is certain to occur, both good and evil. As Acts 2:23 puts it, Jesus was "delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God ..." For God, to "foreknow" evil is not to cause it, but to make it certain to occur by permission.

### *3.3.3 Evidences of design in creation prove God's omniscience*

Evidences of design in creation and of intelligence in man prove God's omniscience. These evidences are found in the animate world, the inanimate world, and in the relation between these two worlds. They find their highest expression in the intelligence of man. The omnipresence of God further proves His omniscience (Psalm 139:1-10; Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 23:23-25). Scripture declares that God's understanding is infinite (Isaiah 46:10), that nothing is hidden from Him (Psalm 147:5; Hebrews 4:13), and that even the hairs on our head are numbered (Matthew 10:30).

### *3.3.4 God's knowledge is not limited by time*

*C.S. Lewis* (**Mere Christianity**, p. 146-149) wrote:

A lot of people feel that "I can believe in God all right, but what I cannot swallow is the idea of Him attending to several hundred million human beings who are all addressing Him at the same moment."

Now, the first thing to notice is that the whole sting of it comes in the words at the same moment. Most of us can image God attending to any number of applicants if only they came one by one and He had an endless time to do it in. So what really at the back of this difficulty is the idea of God having to fit too many things into one moment of time.

Well that is of course what happens to us. Our life comes to us moment by moment. One moment disappears before the next comes along. That is what Time is like. We tend to assume that the whole universe and God Himself are always moving on from past to future just as we do. Certainly God is not in Time. His life does not consist of moments following one another. If a million people are praying to Him at ten-thirty tonight, He need not listen to them all in that one little snippet which we call ten-thirty. He has all eternity in which to listen to the split second of prayer put up by a pilot as his plane crashes in flames.

That is difficult, I know. Let me try to give an example to illustrate this point, not the same, but a bit like it. Suppose I am writing a novel. I write, "Mary laid down her work; next moment came a knock at the door!" For Mary who has to live in the imaginery time of my story there is no interval between putting down the work and hearing the knock. But I, who am Mary's maker, do not live in that imaginary time at all. Between writing the first half of that sentence and the second, I might sit down for three hours and think steadily about Mary. I could think about Mary as if she were the only character in the book and for as long as I pleased, and the hours I spent in doing so would not appear in Mary's time (the time inside the story) at all.

This is not a perfect illustration, of course. But it may give just a glimpse of what I believe to be the truth. God is not hurried along in the Time-stream of this universe any more than an author is hurried along in the imaginary time of his own novel. He has infinite attention to spare for each one of us. He does not have to deal with us in the mass.

The way in which my illustration breaks down is this. In it the author gets out of one Time-series (that of the novel) only by going into another Time-series (the real one). But God does not live in a Time-series at all.

If you picture Time as a straight line along which we have to travel, then you must picture God as the whole page on which the line is drawn. We come to the parts of the line one by one: we have to leave A behind before we get to B, and cannot reach C until we leave B behind. God, from above or outside or all round, contains the whole line, and sees it all.

### *3.3.5 If God knows I am going to do, how can I be free to do otherwise?*

If God knows all of our future actions then it would seem as though they are fixed, settled, and unalterable. If nothing can happen apart from God's knowledge then the very fact that He knows it will happen makes it certain to happen. Where then is human freedom? For example, if God knows that I am going to cut my grass tomorrow then I am certainly going to cut it, am I not? But suppose I don't want to cut my grass tomorrow! Do I have a choice?

The Bible teaches that God created us with volition. We make choices every day. We even have the privilege of choosing to obey God or disobey Him (cf. Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15). So we certainly

have the ability to act contrary to what God knows we will do. But we won't, because if we did, then that new act would have been the one known from eternity past.

This point is also difficult to understand. The difficulty comes from thinking that God is progressing along the Time-line like us: the only difference being that He can see ahead and we cannot. God is outside and above the Time-line. What we call "tomorrow" is visible to Him in just the same way as what we call "today." All the days are "Now" for Him. He does not remember you doing things yesterday; He simply sees you doing them: because, though you have lost yesterday, He has not. You never supposed that your actions at this moment were any less free because God knows what you are doing. Well, He knows your tomorrow's actions in just the same way - because He is already in tomorrow and can simply watch you. In a sense, He does not know your action till you have done it: but then the moment at which you have done it is already "Now" for Him.

### *3.3.6 The scope of God's knowledge is infinite*

The scope of God's knowledge is infinite:

1. He knows Himself perfectly. No created being has complete and perfect knowledge of himself.

2. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit know each other perfectly. They alone have such knowledge of each other. Jesus said, "No one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). Paul wrote, "The thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11; cf. Romans 8:27).

3. God knows things actually existing. This includes inanimate creation (Psalm 147:4), brute creation (Matthew 20:29), men and all their works (Psalm 33:13-15; Proverbs 5:21), men's thoughts and hearts (Psalm 139:1-4; Proverbs 15:3), and men's burdens and wants (Exodus 3:7; Matthew 6:8, 32).

4. He knows all things possible. He knew that Keilah would betray David to Saul if David remained in that vicinity (1 Samuel 23:11f). Jesus knew that Tyre and Sidon would have repented had they seen the miracles that were done in Bethsaida and Chorazin (Matthew 11:21). He also knew that Sodom and Gomorrah would have been spared had they seen the works that were done in Capernaum (Matthew 11:23f; cf. Isaiah 48:18). Certain idealists deny a distinction between knowledge and power, holding that knowledge and thought always mean the exertion of creative power. According to them, God creates by thinking and knowing. But the possession of a faculty and the exercise of it are two different things. Thus, God has knowledge of the possible as well as the actual. **Omniscience should not be confused with causation. Foreknowledge and foreordination are not necessarily the same**.

5. God knows the future. **From man's standpoint God's knowledge of the future is foreknowledge, but from God's standpoint it is not, since He knows all things by one simultaneous intuition**. He foreknew the future in general (Isaiah 46:9f; Daniel 2, 7; Matthew 24, 25; Acts 15:18), the evil course that Israel would take (Deuteronomy 31:20f), the rise of Cyrus (Isaiah 44:26-45:7), the coming of Christ (Micah 5:2), and His crucifixion at the hands of wicked men (Acts 2:23; 3:18). Two things must be noted at this point: **(a) The knowledge of the future is not itself causative. Free**

**actions do not take place because they are foreseen, but they are foreseen because they will take place. (b) Just because something morally evil has been predicted this prediction does not remove human responsibility from the perpetrator (Matthew 18:7; John 13:27; Acts 2:23; cf. the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, Exodus 4:21)**.

6. Wisdom is the intelligence of God displayed in the choice of the highest ends and of the fittest means for the accomplishment of those ends. Though God sincerely seeks to promote the happiness of His creatures and to perfect the saints in holiness, neither of these is the highest possible end. The end is His own glory. All His works in creation (Psalm 19:1-6; Proverbs 3:19), preservation (Nehemiah 9:6; Revelation 4:11), providence (Psalm 33:10f; Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11), and redemption (1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:10f) have this end in view.

### *3.3.7 Biblical evidence*

Isaiah 46:9-10 contains a clear statement of God's omniscience: "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." There is nothing that is hidden from God, nothing that He does not know about us as His creatures (Psalm 139:1-4; Hebrews 4:13).

## 3.4 God Is Infinite

### *3.4.1 Definition*

God has no limits or bounds. He is not limited by, nor confined to, the universe.

### *3.4.2 Biblical evidence*

In 1 Kings 8:27 Solomon says, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven [lit., "heaven of heavens"] cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built!" Solomon's temple was more of a memorial to God than a dwelling place for Him.

The question arises, Is the universe infinite? Evidently not, for God is greater than the universe. Several qualifications need to be made about God's relationship to the universe:

1. God is not in the universe as its sum total (pantheism), but He is distinct from it and greater than it.
2. Even space is finite, but God passes beyond all phenomena of the universe and is the basis or ground of all being.
3. Infinity should bring God closer to us, not take Him further away, for He is the God both of the minute things as well as the boundless.
4. Infinity characterizes all the rest of God's attributes.

## 3.5 God Is Immutable

### *3.5.1 Definition*

To be immutable is be never-changing. God is unchangeable in His essence, attributes, consciousness and will. God is immutable, but this does not mean that He is static; He is neither moving nor stationary. In His personality God relates in a living, dynamic way to His creatures, but in His essence He never changes.

Occasionally God is described as changing His mind, or "repenting" in dealing with mankind. However, God knows through His omniscience every thing man will do. When a person repents and God relents of the promised punishment, the change of relationship does not affect God's unchanging moral character; it is not as though God "changed His mind" in the human sense.

### *3.5.2 God cannot change to the better or the worse*

All change must be to the better or the worse, but God cannot change to the better, since He is absolutely perfect; neither can He change to the worse, for the same reason. He is exalted above all causes and above even the possibility of change. He can never be wiser, more holy, more just, more merciful, more truthful, nor less so. Nor do His plans and purposes change.

The immutability of God is due to the simplicity of His essence. Man has a soul and a body, two substances, immaterial and material. God is one; He does not change. God's immutability is due also to His necessary being and self-existence. That which exists uncaused, by the necessity of its nature, must exist as it does. It is due also to His absolute perfection. Neither improvement nor deterioration is possible. Any change in His attributes would make Him less than God; any change in His purposes and plans would make Him less wise, good, and holy.

### *3.5.3 There is no variation with God*

Scripture declares that there is no variation with God (James 1:17). He does not change with regard to His:

1. character (Psalm 102:26f; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 1:12);
2. power (Romans 4:20f);
3. plans and purposes (Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 46:10);
4. promises (1 Kings 8:56; 2 Corinthians 1:20);
5. love and mercy (Psalm 103:17); and
6. justice (Genesis 18:25; Isaiah 28:17).

### *3.5.4 God is active and enters into relationships with changing men*

Immutability is not to be confused with immobility. God is active and enters into relationships with changing men. In these relationships it is necessary for an unchangeable God to change in His dealings with changing men in order to remain unchangeable in His character and purposes. God deals differently with men before Salvation than after (Proverbs 11:20; 12:12; 1 Peter 3:12). The God who cannot repent (Numbers 23:19), repents (i.e. His dealings with man change) when man changes from evil to good, or good to evil (Genesis 6:6; Exodus 32:14; Jeremiah 18:7-11; Joel 2:13; Jonah 3:10).

God's immutability consists in His always doing the right and in adapting the treatment of His creatures to the variations in their character and conduct. His threats are sometimes conditional in nature, as when He

threatened to destroy Israel (Exodus 32:9-14) and Nineveh (Jonah 1:2; 3:4, 10).

### *3.5.6 Biblical evidence*

God Himself claims in Malachi 3:6, "I, the Lord, do not change." Referring to His goodness and faithfulness, James 1:17 tells us that in God "there is no variation, or shifting shadow." Perhaps broader, and including God's total being, are the sentiments of Psalm 102:25-26: "Of old Thou didst found the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure ... Thou art the same, and Thy years will not come to an end."

## 4. THE MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The moral attributes are those necessary predicates of the divine essence that involve moral qualities, these are:

1. Truth;
2. Good;
3. Holy; and
4. Righteousness.

## 4.1 God Is Truth

### *4.1.1 Definition*

*Charles Hodge* sets forth four propositions concerning the meaning of truth:

1. truth is that which is real. God is really God and man-made deities are false;
2. truth is that which completely conforms to the idea of what it claims to be. God is everything which His self-revelation - Scripture - says He is;
3. truth is that which in reality corresponds to what it manifests itself to be. God is everything His acts in human history imply Him to be; and
4. truth is that which can be depended upon. God is faithful to His promises.

### *4.1.2 God is the source of all truth*

God is truth. His knowledge, declarations and representations eternally conform to reality. The truth of God is not only the foundation of all religion, but also of all knowledge. God is true God in that He is genuine God as well as truthful God. He is the source of all truth. The conviction that the senses do not deceive, that consciousness is trustworthy, that things are what they appear to be, and that existence is not merely a dream, rests ultimately upon the truth of God. In other words, we live in a world that is true. Many ask with Pilate, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Ultimate truth or reality is God.

### *4.1.3 Both man's nature and the Scriptures teach that God is true*

Both man's nature and the Scriptures teach that God is true. One is forced to believe that natural law has a

personal lawmaker. Both the regularity of the laws of nature and their evident purposefulness testify to an intelligent author. Jesus affirmed that God is "the only true God" (John 17:3). John wrote, "We are in Him who is true" (1 John 5:20; cf. Jeremiah 10:10; John 3:33; Romans 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 3:7; 6:10). In His relationship to the creature, the truth of God is known as His veracity and faithfulness. His veracity relates to what He reveals of Himself and to what He says. His revelations of Himself in nature, consciousness, and Scripture are true and trustworthy (Psalm 31:5; Hebrews 6:17f). His faithfulness leads Him to fulfill all His promises, whether expressed in words or implied in the constitution He has given us (Deuteronomy 7:9; Isaiah 25:1). That God is faithful to:

1. Himself (2 Timothy 2:13);
2. His Word (Hebrews 11:11); and
3. His people (1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3).

It is an abiding source of encouragement and strength for the believer. In Joshua we read these amazing words, "Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:45).

### *4.1.4 How is the veracity (i.e. truthfulness) of God to be reconciled with the apparent non-performance of some of His threats?*

The promises and threats of God are always literally fulfilled if they are absolute; but if conditional, their fulfillment is dependent upon the obedience or repentance of the persons involved. The condition may be expressed or implied, and there is no breach in God's faithfulness if, because of disobedience and impenitence or obedience and penitence on the part of man, God does not carry out His promises (Jonah 3, 4).

### *4.1.5 Are the invitations and exhortations to sinners, who will ultimately be lost, sincere?*

Since the invitations are made on practical conditions and there is no obstacle to their acceptance, except man's unwillingness, one cannot question God's sincerity in extending them. God knew beforehand that Israel would refuse to enter Canaan from Kadesh-barnea, but that did not keep Him from sincerely urging His people to do so (Deuteronomy 1:19-33). Thus, the veracity and faithfulness of God remain unimpeached.

### *4.1.6 Biblical evidence*

2 Samuel 7:28 says, "Thou art God, and Thy words are truth." Psalm 31:5 states, "Thou hast ransomed one, O Lord, God of truth [or faithfulness]," John 1:14 calls Jesus Christ "the only begotten from the Father, full of [fully controlled and characterized by] grace and truth."

## 4.2 God Is Good

### *4.2.1 Definition*

Goodness is the attitude of God toward His creatures in which He seeks their good or welfare. It should not

be confused with moral goodness (which we will study under the attribute of holiness). In the larger sense of the term, the goodness of God includes all the qualities that answer to the conception of an ideal personage; that is, it includes such qualities as God's:

1. holiness;
2. righteousness;
3. truth;
4. love;
5. benevolence;
6. mercy; and
7. grace.

It is probably in this broad sense that Jesus said to the young ruler, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone" (Mark 10:18). In the narrower sense, however, the term is limited to the last four qualities named.

### *4.2.2 The love of God*

God's love is that perfection of the divine nature by which God is eternally moved to communicate Himself. It is not a mere emotional impulse, but a rational and voluntary affection, having its ground in truth and holiness and its exercise in free choice. This is not to deny feeling, for true love necessarily involves feeling. If there is no feeling in God, then there is no love in God. The fact that God grieves over the sins of His people implies that He loves His people (Isaiah 63:9f; Ephesians 4:30). God's love finds its primary objects in the several persons of the trinity. Thus, the universe and man are not necessary to the exercise of God's love.

The Scriptures frequently testify to the love of God. They speak of Him as "the God of love" (2 Corinthians 13:11) and declare Him to be "love" (1 John 4:8, 16). It is His nature to love. He initiates love (1 John 4:10). He is unlike the gods of the heathen, who hate and are angry, and the god of the philosopher, who is cold and indifferent. The Father loves the Son (Matthew 3:17), and the Son loves the Father (John 14:31). God loves:

1. the world (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4);
2. His ancient people Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6-8, 13; Jeremiah 31:3);
3. His true children (John 14:23);
4. righteousness (Psalm 11:7); and
5. justice (Isaiah 61:8).

The assurance of God's love is a source of comfort to the believer (Romans 8:35-39). A loving God is not unfeeling toward His own.

### *4.2.3 The benevolence of God*

Because of His goodness, God deals bountifully, tenderly, and kindly with all His creatures. "The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works ... The eyes of all look to Thee, and Thou dost give

them their food in due time. Thou dost open Thy hand, and dost satisfy the desire of every living thing" (Psalm 145:9, 15f). Creation is God's handiwork and declared to be very good (Genesis 1:31). God cannot hate what He has made (Job 10:3; 14:15). The benevolence of God is manifested in His concern for the welfare of the creature and is suited to the creature's needs and capacities (Job 38:41; Psalm 104:21; 145:15; Matthew 6:26). His benevolence is not restricted to believers, "for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45; cf. Acts 14:17).

### *4.2.4 The mercy of God*

God's mercy is His goodness manifested towards those who are in misery or distress. Compassion, pity and lovingkindness are other terms in Scripture that denote practically the same thing. Mercy is an eternal, necessary quality in God as an all-perfect being, but the exercise of it in a given case is optional. To deny the freeness of mercy is to annihilate it, for if it is a matter of debt, then it is no longer mercy. God is "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4), "is full of compassion and is merciful" (James 5:11), and has "great mercy" (1 Peter 1:3). He is said to be merciful:

1. toward Israel (Psalm 102:13);
2. the Gentiles (Romans 11:30f);
3. all that fear Him (Psalm 103:17; Luke 1:50); and
4. seek His Salvation (Isaiah 55:7).

The term is often used in salutations and benedictions (Galatians 6:16; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2 John 3; Jude 2).

### *4.2.5 The grace of God*

The grace of God is God's goodness manifested toward the ill-deserving. Grace has respect to sinful man as guilty, while mercy has respect to him as miserable and pitiful. Scripture speaks of the "glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:6), "surpassing riches of His grace" (Ephesians 2:7; cf. 1:7), "manifold grace" (1 Peter 4:10), and "true grace" (1 Peter 5:12).

The exercise of grace, like that of mercy, is optional with God. He must be holy in all His actions. He may or may not show grace to a guilty sinner. The Scriptures show that the grace of God is manifested toward the natural man in:

1. His forbearance and long-suffering delay of the punishment of sin (Exodus 34:6; Romans 2:4; 3:25; 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9, 15);
2. distribution of gifts and talents among men;
3. showering men with blessings instead of immediate judgment (Hebrews 6:7);
4. provision of Salvation (1 John 2:2);
5. the Word of God (Hosea 8:12);
6. the convicting work of the Spirit (John 16:8-11);
7. the influence of God's people (Matthew 5:13f); and
8. prevenient grace, that is, common grace (Titus 2:11).

Scripture also shows that His grace is uniquely manifested towards those who are His chosen ones in their:

1. election and foreordination (Ephesians 1:4-6);
2. redemption (Ephesians 1:7f);
3. salvation (Acts 18:27; Ephesians 2:7f);
4. sanctification (Romans 5:21; Titus 2:11f);
5. perseverance (2 Corinthians 12:9);
6. service (Romans 12:6; 1 Peter 4:10f); and
7. glorification (1 Peter 1:13).

This is God's special grace. Like mercy, this term is also often used in salutations and benedictions (1 Corinthians 1:3; 16:23; Ephesians 1:2; Philemon 25; Revelation 1:4; 22:21).

### *4.2.6 Biblical evidence*

The goodness of God is supremely seen in His plan of redemption which stretches from Genesis to Revelation. The psalmist expresses his reaction, "How great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast stored up for those who fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for those who take refuge in Thee ..." (Psalm 31:19). This goodness extends to the ungodly in giving them time to repent (2 Peter 3:9). To these Paul says, "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). Speaking more generally, Matthew 5:45 bears witness to the universal goodness of God toward all of mankind, "for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

## 4.3 God Is Holy

### *4.3.1 Definition*

Holiness is the purity of God; His separation from, and hatred of all evil. To clarify, God's holiness is the cause of His justice and righteousness. Justice and righteousness are the ways in which God acts as a result of His holiness. Specifically, justice means that God deals with men fairly. It is His holiness that requires Him to punish sin or bring wrath upon those who do not conform to His perfection. Out of God's holiness comes the doctrine of just retribution (punishment).

### *4.3.2 God is absolutely separate from all His creatures and all moral evil and sin*

God is absolutely separate from and exalted above all His creatures, and He is equally separate from all moral evil and sin. In the first sense, His holiness is not really an attribute that is coordinate with the other attributes, but is rather coextensive with them all. It denotes the perfection of God in all that He is. In the second sense, it is viewed as the eternal conformity of His being and His will. In God purity of being is before purity of willing or doing. God does not will the good because it is good, nor is the good good because God wills it; if such were the case, there would be a good above God or the good would be arbitrary and changeable. Instead, God's will is the expression of His nature, which is holy.

### *4.3.3 Holiness occupies the foremost rank among the attributes of God*

Holiness occupies the foremost rank among the attributes of God. It is the attribute by which God wanted to be especially known in Old Testament times (Leviticus 11:44f; Joshua 24:19; 1 Samuel 6:20; Psalm 22:3; Isaiah 40:25; Ezekiel 39:7; Habakkuk 1:12). It is emphasized by the bounds set about Mt. Sinai when God came down upon it (Exodus 19:12-15), the division of the tabernacle and temple into the holy and most holy places (Exodus 26:33; 1 Kings 6:16, 19), the prescribed offerings that must be brought if an Israelite would approach God (Leviticus 1-7), the special priesthood to mediate between God and the people (Leviticus 8-10), the many laws about impurity (Leviticus 11-15), the feasts of Israel (Leviticus 23), and the special position of Israel in Palestine (Numbers 23:9; Deuteronomy 33:28f). The Lord is called "the Holy One" some thirty times in Isaiah alone (cf. the use of "holy" with regard to the Son, Acts 3:14, and the Spirit, Ephesians 4:30).

In the New Testament, holiness is ascribed to God with less frequency than in the Old, but it is not wanting (John 17:11; Hebrews 12:10; 1 Peter 1:15f). John declares, "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). The angels round about the throne call out antiphonally, "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). Because of the fundamental character of this attribute, the holiness of God, rather than the love, the power, or the will of God, should be given first place. Holiness is the regulative principle of all three of them, for His throne is established on the basis of His holiness.

### *4.3.4 Three important things*

Three important things should be learned from the fact that God is holy:

1. There is a chasm between God and the sinner (Isaiah 59:1f; Habakkuk 1:13). Not only is the sinner estranged from God, but God is estranged from the sinner. Before sin came, man and God had fellowship with each other; now that fellowship is broken and impossible.

2. Man must approach God through the merits of another if he is to approach Him at all. Man neither possesses nor is able to acquire the sinlessness which is necessary for access to God. But Christ has made such access possible (Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 10:19f). In God's holiness lies the reason for the atonement; what His holiness demanded, His love provided (Romans 5:6-8; Ephesians 2:1-9; 1 Peter 3:18).

3. We should approach God "with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28). A correct view of the holiness of God leads to a proper view of the sinful self (Psalm 66:18; 1 John 1:5-7). Job (40:3-5), Isaiah (6:5-7) and Peter (Luke 5:8) are striking examples of the relation between the two. Humiliation, contrition, and confession flow from a scriptural view of God's holiness.

### *4.3.5 Biblical evidence*

The Psalmist calls us to worship God on the basis of His holiness: "For holy is the Lord our God" (Psalm 99:9). And Isaiah witnessed the angels worshiping God: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts ..." (Isaiah 6:3). The threefold reference to God's holiness is the Hebrew way of intensifying a statement of quality by repeating it three times. In other words, God is supremely and perfectly holy.

## 4.4 God is Righteousness and Justice

### *4.4.1 Definition*

The righteousness and justice of God is that aspect of God's holiness which is seen in His treatment of the creature. God has instituted a moral government in the world, imposed just laws upon the creatures, and attached sanctions thereto. Because of the latter, He executes His laws through the bestowal of rewards and punishments. The distribution of rewards is called remunerative justice (Deuteronomy 7:9-13; 2 Chronicles 6:15; Psalm 58:11; Matthew 25:21; Romans 2:7; Hebrews 11:26). Remunerative justice is based on divine love, not strict merit. The infliction of punishment is called punitive justice. It is the expression of divine wrath (Genesis 2:17; Exodus 34:7; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 1:32; 2:8f; 2 Thessalonians 1:8).

### *4.4.2 Justice demands punishment of the sinner*

God cannot make a law, establish a penalty, and then not follow through if the law is disobeyed. When the law is violated, punishment must be meted out, either personally or vicariously. In other words, justice demands punishment of the sinner, but it may also accept the vicarious sacrifice of another, as in the case of Christ (Isaiah 53:6; Mark 10:45; Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24). The righteousness of God is revealed in:

1. His punishing the wicked (Revelation 16:5-7);
2. vindicating His people from evildoers (Psalm 129:1ff);
3. forgiving the penitent of their sin (1 John 1:9);
4. keeping promises made to His children (Nehemiah 9:7ff); and
5. rewarding the faithful (Hebrews 6:10).

Some may suggest that the infliction of punishment is primarily for reformation or rehabilitation, but the chief end of punishment is the maintenance of justice. Punishment may serve a secondary purpose of reformation or deterrence (1 Timothy 5:20).

### *4.4.3 God's righteousness is an encouragement to the believer*

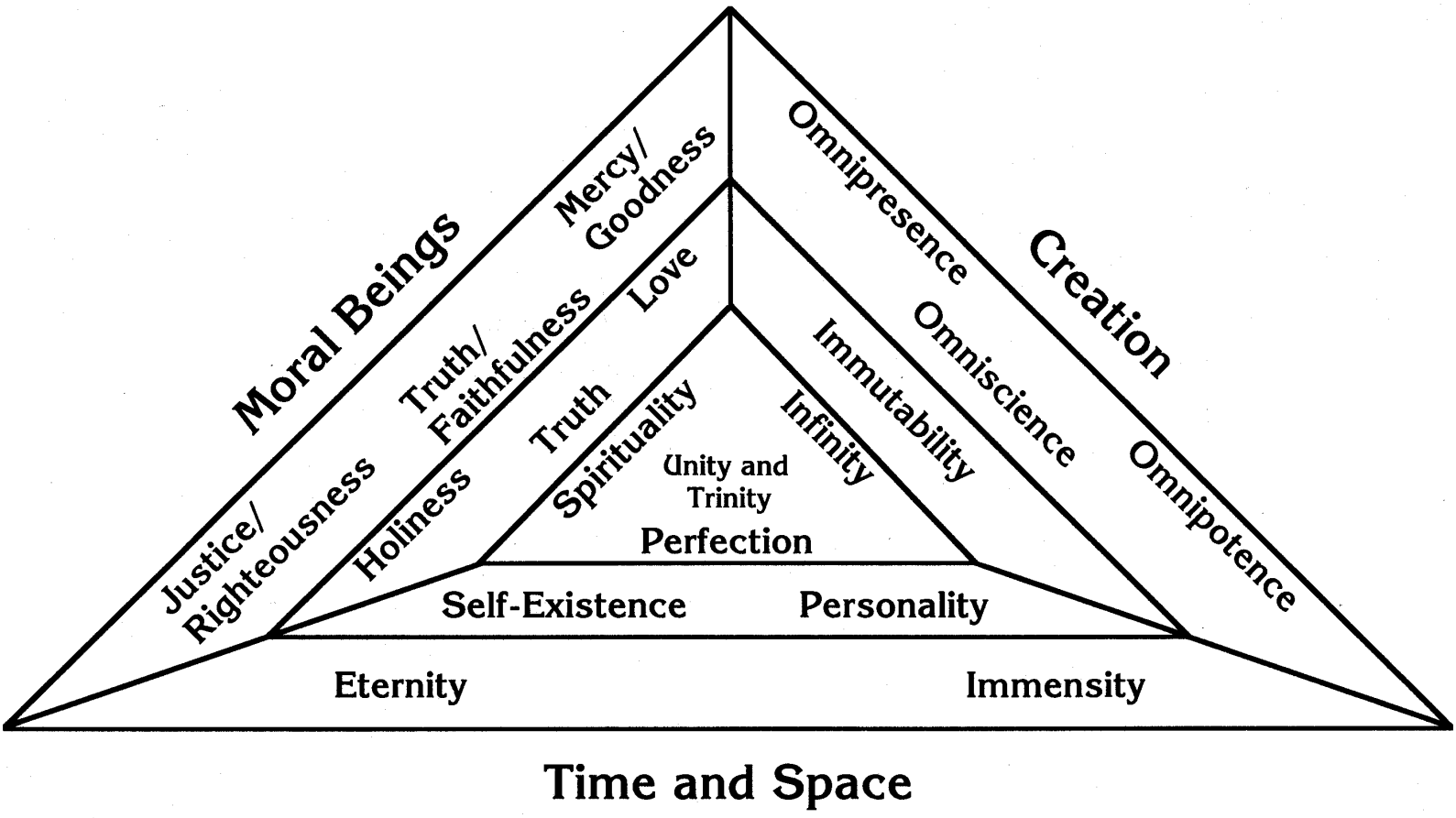
God's righteousness is an encouragement to the believer in that:

1. he knows that God judges righteously (Acts 17:31);
2. he is secure in the righteousness of Christ (John 17:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21); and
3. the righteous things he has done will not go unnoticed (Proverbs 19:17; Hebrews 6:10; Revelation 19:8).

### *4.4.4 Biblical evidence*

The righteousness and justice of God are ascribed to God (2 Chronicles 12:6; Ezra 9:15; Nehemiah 9:33; Isaiah 45:21; Daniel 9:14; John 17:25; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 16:5). Abraham ponders, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:25). The Psalmist declares that "Righteousness and Justice are the foundation of Thy throne" (Psalm 89:14; 97:2).

The attributes of God are illustrated in the following diagram:




### 4.5 Conclusion - our God is incomprehensible

Truly, our God is incomprehensible! Paul cries out, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ... For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:33; 36). In the presence of deity, the child of God falls down and worships. Omniscience is not ignorant; God knows. Love is not indifferent; He cares. Omnipotence is not powerless; He acts.

## 5. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY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# Chapter Fifteen - The Trinity and Uniqueness of God

The most baffling and mysterious thing about the biblical description of God is that, though the entire Bible is unequivocal in its declaration that there is one God, there are three distinct personalities to whom deity is ascribed. Orthodox believers are convinced that the only concept that is faithful to all the biblical evidence is what is known as the **Trinity** (or tri-unity) of God.

I have been very careful not to give analogies or illustrations of this concept from nature or psychology, because I believe that in doing so those illustrations would fall short and may imply something false about God. Instead I will simply point you to the Biblical data.

This chapter concerns the Trinity and Uniqueness of God. It is divided into seven major areas:

1. We will provide the definition;
2. We will examine the nature of this revelation about God;
3. We will examine the historical background;
4. We will examine the Biblical evidences;
5. We will consider and answer the difficulties;
6. We will examine the misconceptions; and
7. We will examine the uniqueness of the Biblical concept of God.

## 1. DEFINITION OF THE TRINITY OF GOD

### 1.1 The Importance of Understanding the Trinity of God

The **Trinity** is a basic tenet of orthodox Christianity, and it affects most other Biblical doctrines in one way or another. For example, it affects your understanding of the doctrine of Salvation:

1. If Jesus is not God Himself, how can His death atone for sins?
2. How can one who is not God forgive others for crimes against God?

For this and other reasons it is very important that we understand as much as we can about the trinity of God.

### 1.2 The Term "Trinity" Does Not Occur in the Bible

Because the term **trinity** does not occur in the Bible some wonder about whether this is a biblical doctrine or not, but the absence of a term used to describe a doctrine does not necessarily mean the term is not biblical. The issue is, does the term accurately reflect what the Scripture teaches? In reality, due to the incomprehensible nature of the truth this term reflects, some believe it is a poor word to describe exactly what the Bible teaches us about this truth concerning God.

### 1.3 Origin of the Term "Trinity"

Though the term **trinity** does not occur in the Bible, it had very early usage in the church. Its Greek form, *trias*, seems to have been first used by Theophilus of Antioch (AD 181), and its Latin form, *trinitas*, by Tertullian (AD 215).

### 1.4 Definition of the Trinity of God

Let's examine some of the available definitions of the Trinity of God provided by the following sources:

1. Webster's dictionary;
2. Athanasian Creed; and
3. Charles Ryrie.

#### *1.4.1 Webster's dictionary*

*Webster's* dictionary gives the following definition of trinity:

> "The union of three divine persons (or hypostases), the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in one divinity, so that all the three are one God as to substance, but three **persons** (or hypostases as to individuality). Synonyms sometimes used are triunity, trine, triality. The term **Trinity** is formed from *tri*, three, and *nity*, unity. **Triunity** is a better term than **Trinity** because it better expresses the idea of three in one. God is three in one. Hypostases is the plural of *hypostasis* which means the substance, the underlying reality, or **essence**."

***1.4.2 Athanasian Creed***

The *Athanasian Creed* expresses:

> "We worship one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity; we distinguish among the persons, but we do not divide the substance. The entire three persons are co-eternal and co-equal with one another, so that ... we worship complete unity in Trinity and Trinity in unity."

***1.4.3 Charles Ryrie***

*Charles Ryrie* has provided a definition:

> "There is one God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three co-eternal, co-equal Persons, the same substance but distinct in subsistence. " (*Charles Ryrie*, electronic media quoting *B.B. Warfield*, "Trinity," **The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia**, James Orr, ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930, 5:3012.)

**1.5 Meaning of the Term "Person"**

In speaking of the Triunity, the term **person** is not used in same way it is in ordinary usage in which it means an identity completely distinct from other persons. Actually the word **persons** tends to detract from the unity of the Trinity. According to the teaching of Scripture, the three Persons are inseparable, interdependent, and eternally united in one Divine Being.

It is evident that the word **person** is not ideal for the purpose. Orthodox writers have struggled over this term. Some have opted for the term **subsistence** (the mode or quality of existence), hence, God has three substances. Most have continued to use persons because we have not been able to find a better term. The word **substance** speaks of God's essential nature or being and **subsistence** describes His mode or quality of existence. (*Kenneth Boa*, **Unraveling the Big Questions About God**, Lamplighter Books, p. 46)

**1.6 Meaning of the Term "Essence"**

In its theological usage, essence refers to the intrinsic or indispensable, permanent, and inseparable qualities that characterize or identify the being of God. The doctrine of the trinity states that there is one God who is one in essence or substance, but three in personality. This does not mean three independent Gods existing as one, but three Persons who are co-equal, co-eternal, inseparable, interdependent, and eternally united in one absolute Divine Essence and Being.

**1.7 The Term "Trinity" Is Used to Help Us Express A Doctrine that Is Scriptural**

Typically, the word **trinity** is used to help us express a doctrine that is Scriptural, though replete with difficulties for the human mind. Again, it needs to be emphasized that this is a doctrine that is not explicitly stated either in the Old or New Testaments, but it is implicit in both. Note the following points:

1. Christianity has believed in the doctrine of the Trinity because of the teaching of the Bible as a whole (Old and New Testaments) and not because of one or two particular passages. As will be shown in below Section 4, the whole of Scripture gives testimony to this doctrine.

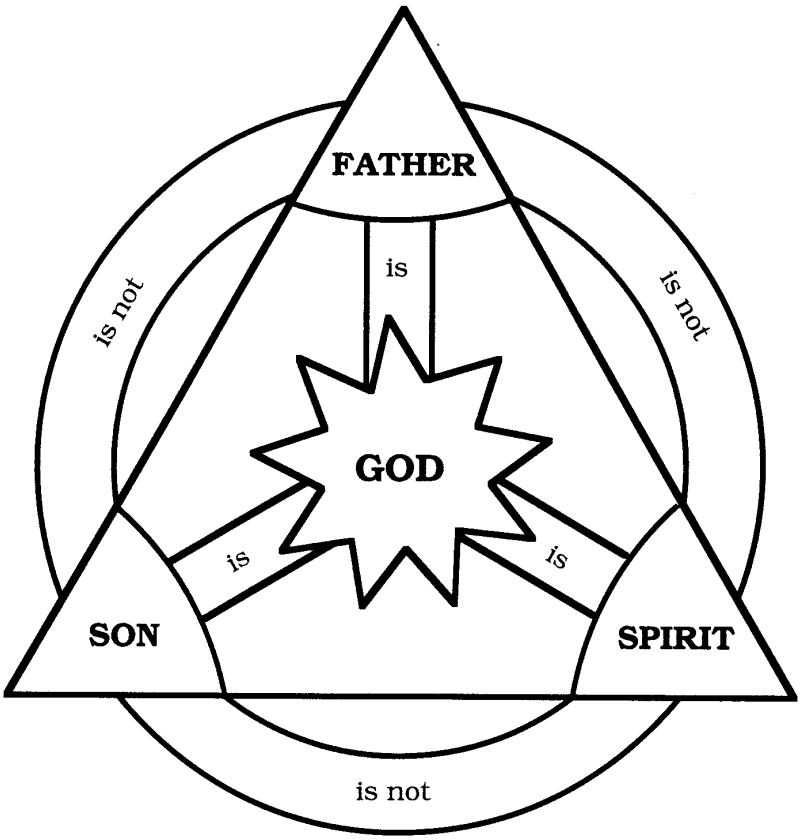
2. There are many specific passages which teach us there are three distinct Persons who possess deity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, but the Bible also teaches us with equal emphasis that there is but one true God or one Divine Essence or Substance and Being.

3. Taking the whole of Scripture, one can see that there is stress on: (a) the unity of God, one Divine Being and Essence, and (b) on the diversity of God in this unity, three Persons identified as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It speaks of these Persons in such a way that it

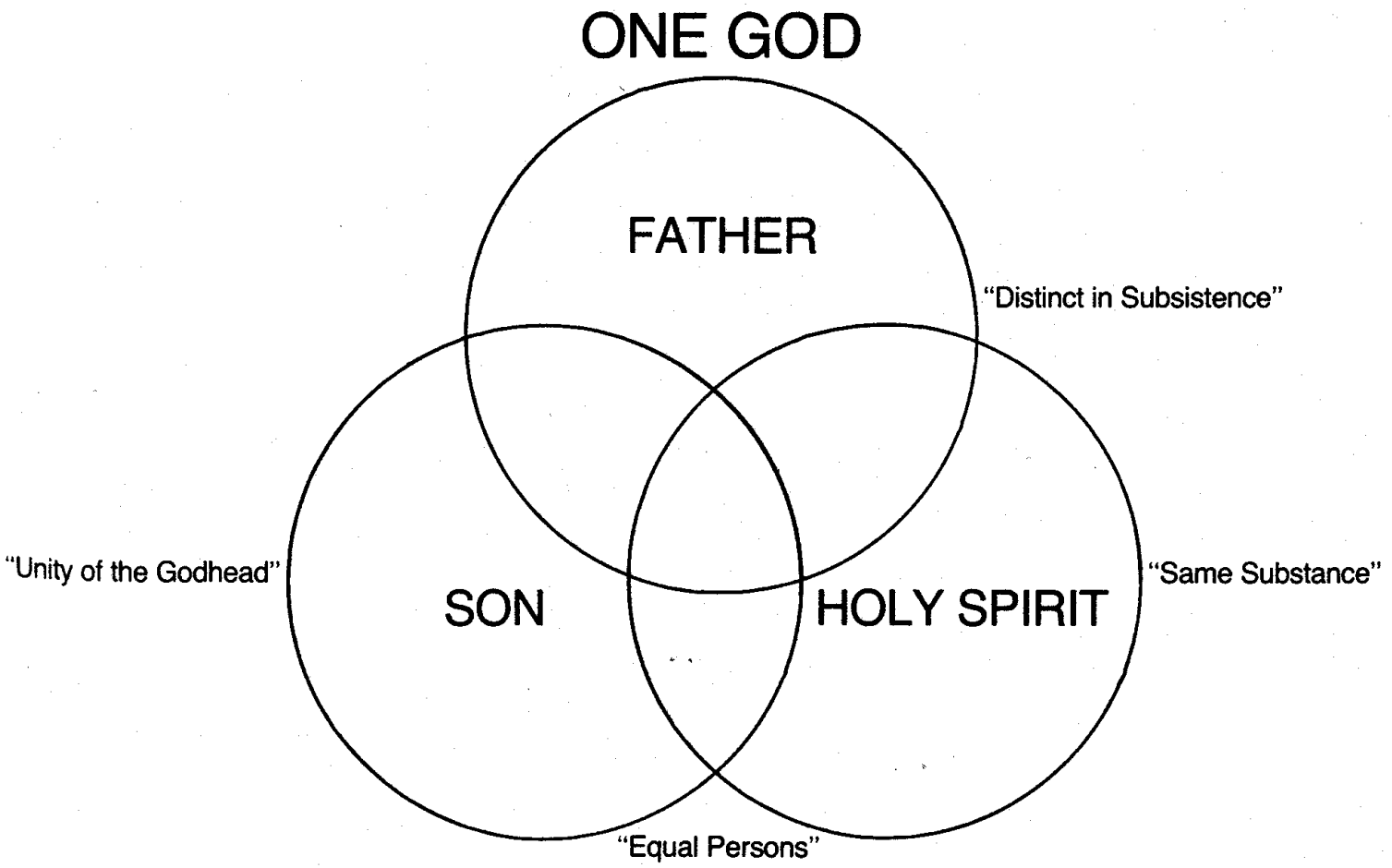
ascribes absolute deity and personality to each while stressing that there is one God in divine substance. The doctrine of the trinity harmonizes and explains these two thrusts of Scripture—oneness in three personalities.

The doctrine of the Trinity of God can be visualized in the following diagrams:

## Ancient Diagram of the Holy Trinity




## The Trinity of God




The three Persons are the same in substance, i.e., in essence or in their essential nature, but distinct in subsistence which describes God's mode or quality of existence in three Persons. By mode of existence we do not mean one God acting in three different ways, but one Divine Being existing in three distinct Persons within one Divine Substance or Essence. Again, this is not exactly three individuals as we think of three personal individuals, but one Divine Being who acts and thinks as one within a three-fold personality. This is incomprehensible to our finite minds, but it is the teaching of the Scripture.

**1.8 Recognizable and Important Distinctions**

**The New Bible Dictionary** has an excellent summary of this point. In the relationship between the Persons there are recognizable distinctions:

1. unity in diversity;
2. equality in dignity; and
3. diversity in operation.

***1.8.1 Unity in diversity***

In most formularies the doctrine is stated by saying that God is One in his essential being, but that in His being there are three Persons, yet so as not to form separate and distinct individuals. They are three modes or forms in which the divine essence exists. "Person" is, however, an imperfect expression of the truth inasmuch as the term denotes to us a separate rational and moral individual. **But in the being of God there are not three individuals, but three personal self-distinctions within the one divine essence.**

Then again, personality in man implies independence of will, actions and feelings leading to behavior peculiar to the person. This cannot be thought of in connection with the Trinity. Each Person is self-conscious and self-directing, yet never acting independently or in opposition. When we say that God is a Unity we mean that, though God is in Himself a threefold centre of life, His life is not split into three. He is one in essence, in personality and in will. When we say that God is a Trinity in Unity, we mean that there is a unity in diversity, and that the diversity manifests itself in Persons, in characteristics and in operations.

***1.8.2 Equality in dignity***

There is perfect equality in nature, honour and dignity between the Persons. Fatherhood belongs to the very essence of the first Person and it was so from all eternity. It is a personal property of God "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Ephesians 3:15).

The Son is called the "only begotten" perhaps to suggest uniqueness rather than derivation. Christ always claimed for Himself a unique relationship to God as Father, and the Jews who listened to Him apparently had no illusions about his claims. Indeed they sought to kill Him because He "called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18).

The Spirit is revealed as the One who alone knows the depths of God's nature: "For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10f.). This is saying that the Spirit is "just God Himself in the innermost essence of His being."

***1.8.3 Diversity in operation***

In the functions ascribed to each of the Persons in the Godhead, especially in man's redemption, it is clear that a certain degree of subordination is involved (in relation, though not in nature); the Father first, the Son second, the Spirit third. The Father works through the Son by the Spirit. Thus Christ can say: "My Father is greater than I." As the Son is sent by the Father, so the Spirit is sent by the Son. As it was the Son's office to reveal the Father, so it is the Spirit's office to reveal the Son, as Christ testified: "He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14).

It has to be recognized that the doctrine arose as the spontaneous expression of the Christian experience. The early Christians knew themselves to be reconciled to God the Father, and that the reconciliation was secured for them by the atoning work of the Son, and that it was mediated to them as an experience by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Trinity was to them a fact before it became a doctrine, but in order to preserve it in the credal faith of the church the doctrine had to be formulated.

## 2. THE NATURE OF THIS REVELATION ABOUT GOD

### 2.1 The Doctrine of Trinity Is A Truth of Direct Revelation From God

The doctrine of Trinity is not a truth of natural theology, but of direct revelation from God. Before we investigate the facts of Scripture, I would like to begin by pointing out that this is a doctrine beyond the scope of man's finite mind. It lies outside the realm of natural reason or human logic.

### 2.2 Opposition to the Doctrine of Trinity

Opponents of the doctrine argue that the idea of the Trinity must be rejected as untenable due to the following points:

1. Some consider the idea of the Trinity an absurdity because it appears to be a mathematical contradiction. In arithmetically addition under the Real Number System, 1 + 1 + 1 = 3. Due to their misunderstanding, they think that the Trinity represents the wrong addition of 1 + 1 + 1 = 1. Some mathematicians try to resolve such mathematical problem by defining that God is Infinity, therefore the addition of Infinity (Father) + Infinity (Jesus Christ) + Infinity (Holy Spirit) = Infinity (One God) or 1 x 1 x 1 = 1, for each of the Persons is fully God in the absolute sense, and the three together are the one self-same infinite God.

2. The idea of the Trinity is beyond logic. Therefore, it cannot be made subject to human reason or logic. No man can fully explain the Trinity. It is incomprehensible to the mind of man.

They try to show that it is really not taught by the Bible. But they cannot do this and be honest or normal in their interpretation of Scripture.

### 2.3 Reply to the Opponents

However, we disagree with the opponents due to the following reasons:

1. If biblical evidence supports the doctrine of the Trinity of God, we can know it is true. Comprehending it is another matter. *John Wesley* said, "Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the triune God." (*John Wesley*, **Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations**, Assurance Publishers, p. 504.)

2. We should expect God's revelation to contain an infinite depth that corresponds to His infinite mind. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

3. We should not expect to understand the Bible exhaustively. If we could, the Bible would not be divine but limited to human intelligence. Since the Bible is an infinite revelation, it often brings the reader beyond the limit of his intelligence. Until a person recognizes that his own wisdom is not enough, he is not ready to listen to God's greater wisdom. In Luke 10:21, Jesus alluded to this when He said to God, "you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children" (*Kenneth Boa*, **Unraveling the Big Questions About God**, Lamplighter Books, p. 12).

4. It is wrong to say that a doctrine cannot be true simply because it defies our human imagination or ability to comprehend it. It would be nothing short of human arrogance to say it was. We must recognize our need to simply trust in God's special revelation to us (i.e. the Bible). This does not mean we do not test the Scripture to make sure these things are truly taught, but once we are convinced that that is what the Bible says, we must lay hold of it by faith and wait on the eternal future for complete understanding.

5. Because of our limited capacity in this life, some of the revelations of God given to us in the Bible defy explanation and illustration. When seeking to explain those truths that fall into this category, our attempts to illustrate them must of necessity fall short of our ability to clarify and comprehend them.

6. Some of God's truth, though clearly revealed in the Bible, remains a mystery. God hasn't explained all the mysteries of His revelation to us undoubtedly because we simply cannot yet grasp them.

7. It is arrogant to insist that everything about an infinite God ought to be perfectly understandable to a finite human being. This is not to say that the idea of the Trinity is irrational or unreasonable. It is above reason and perfectly reasonable to the God who has thus revealed Himself to us in Scripture.

8. It would be the height of egotism for a person to say that because an idea in the Bible does not make sense (does not conform to his or her reasoning), it cannot be true and the Bible must be in error on this point (*John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck*, **The Bible Knowledge Commentary, NT**, Editors, Victor Books, Electronic Media. p.16).

9. Such thinking makes man's corrupted human reason the sole criterion for determining the truth of divine revelation (*Walter Martin*, **Essential Christianity**, Vision House, Santa Anna, 1975, p. 21).

**2.4 Why We Cannot Fully Understand the Doctrine of Trinity?**

*C.S. Lewis* (**Mere Christianity**, p. 141-145) explained:

> "You know that in space you can move in three ways - to left or right, backwards or forwards, up or down. Every direction is either one of these three or a compromise between them. They are called the three Dimensions. Now notice this. If you are using only one dimension, you could draw only a straight line. If you are using two, you could draw only a straight line. If you are using two, you could draw a figure: say, a square. And a square is made up of four straight lines. Now a step further. If you have three dimensions, you can then build what we call a solid body, say, a cube which is made up of six squares.
>
> Do you see the point? A world of one dimension would be a straight line. In a two-dimensional world, you still get straight lines, but many lines make one figure. In a three-dimensional world, you still get figures but many figures make one solid body. In other words, as you advance to higher levels, you do not leave behind you the things you found on the simpler levels: you still have them, but combined in new ways - in ways you could not imagine if you knew only the simpler levels.
>
> Now the Christian account of God involves just the same principle. The human level is a simple level. On the human level one person is one being, and any two persons are two separate beings - just as, in two dimensions (say on a flat sheet of paper) one square is one figure, and any two squares are two separate figures. On the Divine level you still find personalities; but up there you find them combined in new ways which we, who do not live on that level, cannot imagine.
>
> In God's dimension you find a being who is three Persons while remaining one Being, just as a cube is six squares while remaining one cube. Of course we cannot fully conceive a Being like that: just as, if we were so made that we perceived only two dimensions in space we could never properly imagine a cube. But we can get a sort of faint notion of it. And when we do, we are then, for the first time in our lives, getting some positive idea, however faint, of something super-personal - something more than a person."

**2.5 This Doctrine Is Not In Conflict with the Unity of God**

There are three persons in the one essence. Though there is no perfect analogy in human experience to explain or illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity, the analogy of the human mind does provide a suggestion. The human mind is able to dialogue with itself and at the same time is able to pass verdicts on its deliberations. The Trinity is faintly analogous to this.

**2.6 The Doctrine Has Great Practical Value**

It allows for eternal love. Love was before creation, yet love needs an object. Love is always flowing among the persons of the Trinity.

Only God can reveal God. By God the Father sending God the Son, God could be made manifest.

Only God can atone for sin. This is accomplished through the incarnation of God the Son.

It is hard to conceive of personality existing without society. The persons of the Godhead relate to another in perfect harmony, a perfect society. If there were no Trinity, there could be no incarnation, no objective redemption, and therefore no Salvation; for there would be no one capable of acting as Mediator between God and man.

**3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

As the New Testament was completed toward the close of the first century, the infant church was struggling for its life against old foes, persecution and doctrinal error. On the one hand were the Roman empire, orthodox Judaism, and hostile pagan religions, and on the other hand were heresies and divisive doctrines.

**3.1 The Rise of Heretical Groups Caused the Early Church to Formally Crystallize the Doctrine of Trinity**

Though the Bible taught truth of the Trinity of God implicitly in both Old and New Testaments, the development and delineation of this doctrine was brought about by the rise of heretical groups who either denied the deity of Christ or that of the Holy Spirit. This caused the early church to formally crystallize the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Gnostic heresy, for instance, (which permeated Christendom in the lifetime of the apostles) drew strong condemnation in Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and John's First Epistle. Denying the deity of Christ, the Gnostics taught that Jesus was inferior in nature to the Father, a type of super-angel of impersonal emanation from God.

Following the Gnostics came such speculative theologians as Origen, Lucian of Antioch, Paul of Samosota, Sabellius, and Arius of Alexandria. All of these propagated unbiblical views of the Trinity and of the divinity of our Lord.

But perhaps the most crucial test of Christian doctrine in the early church was the "Arian heresy." It was this heresy which stimulated the crystallization of thought regarding both the Trinity and the deity of Christ.

Today there are still remnants of the Gnostic heresy (Christian Science), the Arian heresy (Jehovah's Witnesses), and the Socinian heresy (Unitarianism) circulating in Christendom. All of these errors have one thing in common: they give Christ every title except the one which entitles Him to all the rest "the title of God and Savior."

**3.2 The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity Did not Derive from Pagan Influences**

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity did not "begin" at the Council of Nicea, nor was it derived from "pagan influences." While Egyptian, Chaldean, Hindu, and other pagan religions do incorporate so-called "trinities," these have no resemblance to the Christian doctrine, which is unique and free from any heathen cultural vagaries.

**3.3 The Development of this Doctrine Was Based on a Careful Study of Scripture**

While the term *Trinity* is never specifically used in Scripture, it is nevertheless implicitly stated. The church councils, in their fight against heresy, were forced to think through what the Bible says about how God exists. The result was the doctrine of the Trinity, but let it be emphasized, the development of this doctrine was based on a careful study of Scripture.

### 3.4 The Doctrine of the Trinity Is the Distinctive Mark of the Christian Religion

The doctrine of the Trinity is the distinctive mark of the Christian religion, setting it apart from all the other religions of the world. Working without the benefit of the revelations made in Scripture, men have arrived at some limited truths concerning the nature and Person of God. 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. In some systems we find monotheism with its belief in only one God. In others we find polytheism with its belief in many separate gods. But none of the pagan religions, nor any of the systems of speculative philosophy have ever arrived at a trinitarian conception of God. The fact of the matter is that apart from supernatural revelation there is nothing in human consciousness or experience which can give man the slightest clue to the distinctive God of the Christian faith, the triune, incarnate, redeeming, sanctifying God.

### 3.5 Christian Doctrine of the Trinity Is Superior than Other Pagan Religious Triads of Divinities

Some of the pagan religions have set forth triads of divinities, such as, for instance, the Egyptian triad of Osiris, Isis and Horus, which is somewhat analogous to the human family with father, mother and child; or the Hindu triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Schiva, which in the cycle of pantheistic evolution personifies the creative, preservative and destructive power of nature; or the triad set forth by Plato, of goodness, intellect and will which are not examples of true and proper tri-personality, not real persons who can be addressed and worshipped, but only personifications of the faculties or attributes of God. None of these systems have anything in common with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity except the notion of "threeness."

## 4. BIBLICAL EVIDENCES OF THE TRINITY

Since the Trinity involves the key aspects of oneness and threeness, support for this doctrine will be dependent on the discovery of these two aspects in Scripture as it reveals how God exists.

### 4.1 Scriptures on the Oneness of God

#### *4.1.1 Old Testament Scriptures*

The Old Testament Scriptures that support the oneness of God are:

1. ***Deuteronomy 6:4,*** *"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!"* There is also a secondary emphasis "The Lord's indivisibility." This confession clearly prepares the way for the later revelation of the Trinity, but how? God, *Elohim* (note: this is the transliteration of Hebrew alphabet into English pronunciation) is a plural word, and the word *one* (the Hebrew, *echad*) refers to one in *a collective sense*. As such, it is used of the union of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:24) to describe two persons in one flesh. Further, it is used in a *collective sense*, like one cluster of grapes rather than in an *absolute sense* as in Numbers 13:23 when the spies brought back a single cluster of grapes. Furthermore, the oneness of God is implied in those Old Testament passages that declare that there is no other God beside Yahweh, the God of Israel.

2. ***Deuteronomy 4:35,*** *"To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him."*

3. ***Isaiah 43:10,*** *"You are My witnesses, declares the LORD, And My servant whom I have chosen, In order 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."*

4. ***Isaiah 46:9,*** *"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."*

#### *4.1.2 New Testament Scriptures*

1. ***1 Corinthians 8:4-6,*** *"Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 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."*

2. ***Ephesians 4:4-6,*** *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."*

3. ***James 2:19,*** *"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder."*

**4.2 Scriptures Demonstrating God, Who is One, is Also Three**

***4.2.1 The Old Testament Seems to Imply It***

While there is no explicit statement in the Old Testament affirming the Triunity, we can confidently say that the Old Testament not only allows for the Tri-unity, but also implies that God is a triune Being in a number of ways:

1. The name for God is *Elohim* (note: this is the transliteration of Hebrew alphabet into English pronunciation). **The name for God is the plural form** of *El*. Linguists explain it as the Hebrew "plural of power and majesty" when it is applied to the one true God (Genesis 1:1). We can say that *Elohim* certainly allows for the New Testament revelation of the Triunity of God.

2. There are many instances where God uses the **plural pronoun** to describe Himself (see Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8). In Genesis the dialogue attributed to God is often plural - "*us*" (Genesis 1:26); and in Isaiah 6:8 God says, "Who will go for *us*?" This may imply a plurality in the Godhead.

3. In the creation account, **both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are seen in the work of creation**. It is stated that God created heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1), but that it was the Holy Spirit who moved over the earth to infuse it with life in the sense of protecting and participating in the work of creation (Genesis 1:2). Note also the quotation, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever" (Genesis 6:3; cf. Numbers 27:18; Psalm 51:11; Isaiah 40:13; Haggai 2:4f).

4. The **triple use of "holy"** in Isaiah 6:3 may imply a trinity (cf. Revelation 4:8), as well as the triple benediction of Numbers 6:24-26.

5. Writing about the **Messiah**, Isaiah reveals Him to be equal with God, calling Him the "Mighty God," "Eternal Father" and "Prince of Peace."(Isaiah 9:6). In Isaiah 7:14, God made it clear that the One who would be born of the virgin (i.e. Jesus Christ) would also be Immanuel, God with us.

6. Two other passages which imply the Trinity are Isaiah 48:16 and 61:1. In Isaiah 48:16 **all three Persons are mentioned and yet seen as distinct from each other**. See also Genesis 22:15-16.

7. Another phenomenon in the Old Testament is the apparent ascription of deity to someone who is distinct from *Elohim* or *Yahweh*. For example, many passages describe the **"angel of Yahweh" or "angel of the Lord"** being spoken of as though He were deity. This may be Christ Himself, pre-incarnate (before He was born as man). He appeared to Hagar (Genesis 16:7-14), Abraham (Genesis 22:11-18), Jacob (Genesis 31:11-13), Moses (Exodus 3:2-5), Israel (Exodus 14:19), Balaam (Numbers 22:22-35), Gideon (Judges 6:11-23), Manoah (Judges 13:2-25), Elijah (1 Kings 19:5-7), and David (1 Chronicles 21:15-17). The angel of the Lord slew 185,000 Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35), stood among the myrtle trees in Zechariah's vision (Zechariah 1:11), defended Joshua the high priest against Satan (Zechariah 3:1f), and was one of the three men who appeared to Abraham (Genesis 18).

8. In Psalm 110:1, **David demonstrates there is a distinction of Persons between "LORD,"** the one speaking, and the one addressed called by David, "my Lord." David was indicating the Messiah was no ordinary king, but his own Lord, *Adoni* (my Lord), one who was God Himself. So God the first Person addresses God the second Person. This is precisely Peter's point when He quotes this Psalm to show the resurrection of the Messiah was anticipated in the Old Testament.

9. The **Redeemer** (who must be divine, Isaiah 7:14; 9:6) is distinguished from the Lord (Isaiah 59:20).

10. The **Lord is distinguished from the Lord** in Hosea 1:6-7. The one speaking here is *Yahweh*, the Lord, yet, note the statement in verse 7, "I will have compassion and deliver them by the Lord their God."

11. The **Spirit** is distinguished from the Lord in a number of passages (Isaiah 48:16; 59:21; 63:9-10).

***4.2.2 The New Testament Teaches It***

The New Testament is explicit about the elements of a tri-unity in the Godhead. This teaching is based on the attributes and behavior ascribed to each personality which can only be said of God. We can see that:

1. all three personalities appear as equal;

2. each personality is called God; and
3. each personality is distinct.

#### *4.2.2.1 All three personalities appear as equal*

In the great commission of Matthew 28:19 **the command to baptize** contains the singular "name" before the names Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the Hebrew culture a person's name described, or stood for his attributes; in most cases, a person was in reality just what he was named. "Name" probably means "person" in this verse, and suggests an equality among the persons mentioned.

Also, **the apostolic benediction** of 2 Corinthians 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all," implies the equality of the personalities mentioned.

#### *4.2.2.2 Each personality is called God*

**(A) The Father is called God.** His deity is shown in the following Scriptures:

1. Jesus explains to His disciples that the seal of "the Father, even God" is upon Him (John 6:27).

2. Paul, as he begins his epistle to the Romans calls God "our Father" (Romans 1:7).

3. See also John 20:17; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 4:6; Philippians 2:11 and 1 Peter 1:2.

**(B) Jesus Christ, the Son is declared to be God**. The doctrine of the deity of Christ is crucial to the Christian faith. "What think you of Christ?" is the paramount question of life (cf. Matthew 16:15; 22:42). It can be demonstrated that He is God in several ways:

1. ***His divine names.*** He was given the name **Immanuel**, meaning God with us (cf. Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22f). The term **Word** (Logos) is used to emphasize His deity (John 1:1-14; Revelation 19:13). As the **Son of Man**, He has authority on earth to interpret the sabbath law (Matthew 12:8), to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28), will send His angels to gather out the tares (Matthew 13:41), will sit upon the throne of His glory (Matthew 19:28; 25:31), will come again in great power (Matthew 24:44; 26:64; 26:63f; cf. Daniel 7:13). Christ is identified with the **Jehovah** of the Old Testament (cf. John 12:40f; Romans 10:9, 13; and 1 Peter 3:15 with Isaiah 6:1ff; Joel 2:32; and Isaiah 8:13 respectively). As the **Son of God** (Luke 1:32, 35; John 1:14), He is said to have life in Himself and to quicken whom He will (John 5:21, 26), and to give eternal life (John 10:10). Jesus is also called **Lord** (Matthew 7:21f; Luke 1:43; 2:11; John 20:28; Acts 16:31; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:11), the **Messiah** (John 1:49; 11:27), **only begotten Son** (John 3:16, 18), and **God** (John 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20; cf. Romans 9:5).

2. ***His divine attributes.*** **Eternality:** He was before the world came into being (John 17:5, 24), the firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15), being in existence "in the beginning" (John 1:1; cf. 1 John 1:1), and continues forever (Hebrews 1:11f; 13:8). **Omnipresence:** He fills all (Ephesians 1:23), He was in Heaven while on earth (John 3:13) and is on earth while He is in Heaven (Matthew 18:20; 28:20). **Omnipotence:** He has power over demons (Mark 5:11-15), the elements of nature (Matthew 21:19; John 2:3-11), all things (Matthew 28:18), to perform miracles (John 5:36; 10:25, 38; 20:30f), and to uphold all things (Hebrews 1:3). **Omniscience:** He knows all things (Matthew 11:27; John 16:30; 21:17; Colossians 2:3), the history of the Samaritan woman (John 4:29), the thoughts of men (Luke 6:8; 11:17), the time and manner of His exit out of this world (Matthew 16:21; John 12:33; 13:1), the one who would betray Him (John 6:70f), and the character and termination of the present age (Matthew 24, 25). He is **Immutable** (Hebrews 1:12; 13:8).

3. ***His works that only God could do.*** He is the **creator** (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:10) and the **upholder of all things** (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3). He **forgave sins** (Matthew 9:2, 6; Luke 7:47f). He **raised dead men** (Luke 7:12-16; Mark 5:35-43; John 11:38-44) and will **raise His saints in the future resurrection** (John 5:25-29; 6:39f,; 54; 11:25). He will **execute judgment** (John 5:22), that of believers (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10), of the beast and his followers (Revelation 19:15), of the nations (Matthew 25:31f; Acts 17:31), of Satan (Genesis 3:15), and of the wicked dead (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5).

4. ***His acceptance of divine worship.*** Since the Old Testament (Exodus 34:14) and Christ Himself (Matthew 4:10) declare that God only is to be worshipped, and both ordinary men and angels refused the worship which was offered them (Acts 10:25f; Revelation 19:10; 22:8f), for Christ to accept it, if He were not God, would be blasphemy. The Scriptures not only inform us that Christ was worshipped, but they ask us to worship Him (John 5:23; Hebrews 1:6).

5. ***Some explicit statements declaring His deity.*** Thomas addressed Christ, "**My Lord and my God**" (John 20:28). Peter said, "**Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God**" (Matthew 16:16). See also John 1:1; 20:28; Titus 2:13 and Hebrews 1:1-8.

**(C) The Holy Spirit is recognized as God**. His deity is evident by:

1. ***His divine names.*** He is expressly called **God** (Acts 5:3f.; 2 Corinthians 3:17f.), the **Spirit of our God** (1 Corinthians 6:11), and other divine names (cf. Exodus 17:7 with Hebrews 3:7-9; and 2 Timothy 3:16 with 2 Peter 1:21). Comparing Peter's comments in Acts 5:3 and 4, we see that in **lying to the Holy Spirit** (v. 3), Ananias **was lying to God** (v. 4).

2. ***His divine attributes.*** He is **eternal** (Hebrews 9:14), **omniscient** (1 Corinthians 2:10f.; John 14:26; 16:12f.), **omnipotent** (Luke 1:35), and **omnipresent** (1 Corinthians 6:19).

3. ***His works that only God could do.*** He **regenerates** people to new life (John 3:5-6, 8; Titus 3:5) which must of necessity be a work of God for only God has the power of life. The **words and works of the Holy Spirit** are considered as the **words and works of God** (cf. Isaiah 6:9f. with John 12:39-41 and Acts 28:25-27; Exodus 16:7 with Psalm 95:8-11; Isaiah 63:9f. with Hebrews 3:7-9). Other works, such as: **inspiration of the Scriptures** (2 Peter 1:21; cf. Acts 1:16; 28:25), and **raising of the dead** (Romans 8:11).

4. ***He is susceptible of personal treatment.*** He can be tempted (Acts 5:9), lied to (Acts 5:3), grieved (Ephesians 4:30; Isaiah 63:10), resisted (Acts 7:51), insulted (Hebrews 10:29), and blasphemed (Matthew 12:31f.).

5. ***He is distinguished from His own power*** (Acts 10:38; Romans 15:13; 1 Corinthians 2:4).

6. ***He relates to the Father and the Son as a person.*** This is the case in the baptismal formula (Matthew 28:19), in the apostolic benediction (2 Corinthians 13:14), and in His office as administrator of the church (1 Corinthians 12:4-6; cf. also 1 Peter 1:1f; Jude 20f.).

#### *4.2.2.3 Each personality is distinct*

Some have argued that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are merely **modes** by which the one personal God functions or manifests Himself. But there is evidence that they are distinct personalities.

The Father is distinct from the Son according to John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." The term "only begotten" suggests, that two distinct personalities are involved (as a father and his son are distinct), and that they are each of the same nature or substance (just as a child is as much a human being as his father).

Some theologians regard the Holy Spirit as a **power** or **force** of God, not a distinct personality. But clear evidence of the Holy Spirit's personality occurs in John 16:14. The word "spirit" literally means "wind," and as a neuter noun it requires a neuter pronoun, a peculiarity of the Greek language. But in this verse, John deliberately violates this rule and uses the masculine pronouns "He" and "Him," referring to the Holy Spirit. The only conclusion is that John regarded the Holy Spirit as a distinct person.

Lastly, Jesus said, "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever" (John 14:16). In this case all three are seen as distinct personalities carrying out co-operative roles: the **Son** requests that the **Father** send the **Holy Spirit** to become the helper to believers.

### 4.3 Conclusion

From the above evidence, it should be clear that the Scripture teaches God is one and three.

## 5. DIFFICULTIES WITH THE TRINITY CONSIDERED AND ANSWERED

It is true that there are certain Biblical statements and terms which seem to indicate that the Lord Jesus Christ is inferior to the Father God, for examples:

1. Less than omniscience;
2. Only-begotten; and
3. First-born.

### 5.1 Christ Is Not Less Than Omniscience

Statements which seem to indicate something less than omniscience are as follows:

1. Jesus was ignorant of the date of His return (Mark 13:32);
2. marveled at the people's unbelief (Mark 6:6); and
3. went to the fig tree expecting perhaps to find figs (Mark 11:13).

During Christ's ministry on earth, He subjected Himself to the will of God. It must be recognized that in the days of His **humiliation**, Jesus surrendered the independent exercise of His divine attributes. The Father did not permit the use of His omniscience in these cases. It is a matter of **self-restriction**, therefore it doesn't mean that Christ is less than omniscience.

**5.2 The Meaning of "Only-begotten"**

> "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the **only begotten** from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)
>
> "No man has seen God at any time; the **only begotten** God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." (John 1:18)

Because to our mind the words **only begotten** suggest birth or beginning, some have tried to take the use of this designation of Jesus Christ to mean that Christ had a beginning, that He only *became* the Son of God. Such an understanding denies His eternality and also the concept of the trinity. So what does John mean by the term **only begotten**?

***5.2.1 It means "unique" grammatically***

**Only begotten** is the Greek *monogenes*, a compound of *monos*, used as an adjective or adverb meaning "alone, only." In compounds with *genes*, adverbs describe the *nature* rather than the *source of derivation* (emphasis mine). Hence *monogenes* is used for the only child. More generally it means "unique" or "incomparable. (*Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors,* **The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume**, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985).

In the New Testament the term occurs only in Luke, John, and Hebrews, but an instructive use is found for us in Hebrews 11:17 where it is used of Isaac as the *monogenes* of Abraham. Isaac was not the only Son of the Patriarch, but he was the unique son of the promise of God. The emphasis is not on derivation but on his uniqueness and special place in the heart of Abraham.

***5.2.2 It does not imply a beginning of Christ's Sonship***

With reference to Christ, the phrase "the only begotten from the Father," (John 1:14), indicates that as the Son of God He was the sole representative of the Being and character of the One who sent Him. In the original the definite article is omitted both before "only begotten" and before "Father," and its absence in each case serves to lay stress upon the characteristics referred to in the terms used. The Apostle's object is to demonstrate what sort of glory it was that he and his fellow Apostles had seen. That he is not merely making a comparison with earthly relationships is indicated by *para*, "from." The glory was that of a unique relationship and the word "begotten" does not imply a beginning of His Sonship. It suggests relationship indeed, but must be distinguished from generation as applied to man.

***5.2.3 It is in the sense of unoriginated relationship***

We can only rightly understand the term the **only begotten** when used of the Son, in the sense of unoriginated relationship. The begetting is not an event of time, however remote, but a fact irrespective of time. The Christ did not *become*, but necessarily and eternally *is* the Son. He, a Person, possesses every attribute of pure Godhood. This necessitates eternity, absolute being; in this respect He is not "after the Father."

***5.2.4 It expresses eternal union and love***

In John 1:18 the clause "The Only Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," expresses both His eternal union with the Father in the Godhead and the ineffable intimacy and love between them, the Son sharing all the Father's counsels and enjoying all His affections.

***5.2.5 It emphasizes the greatness of the gift***

Another reading is *monogenes Theos*, "God only-begotten." In John 3:16 the statement, "God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son," must not be taken to mean that Christ became the Only Begotten Son by Incarnation. God so loved the world that He gave a **special** gift (i.e. Christ, the Saviour) to the world. The term "Only Begotten Son" emphasizes the value and the greatness of the gift lay in the Sonship of

Him. His Sonship was not the effect of His being given.

***5.2.6 It stresses God's love as conveyed in the name***

In John 3:18 the phrase "the Name of the Only Begotten Son of God" lays stress upon the full revelation of God's character and will, His love and grace, as conveyed in the Name of One who, being in a unique relationship to Him, was provided by Him as the Object of faith.

***5.2.7 It could not mean birth***

In 1 John 4:9 the statement: "God hath sent His Only Begotten Son into the world" does not mean that God sent out into the world one who at His birth in Bethlehem had become His Son. Compare the parallel statement, "God sent forth the Spirit of His Son," Galatians 4:6, which could not mean that God sent forth One who became His Spirit when He sent Him.

**5.3 The Meaning of "First-born"**

> "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation." (Colossians 1:15)
>
> "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 by Him and for Him." (Colossians 1:16)
>
> "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything." (Colossians 1:18)
>
> "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;" (Romans 8:29)
>
> "And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth ..." (Revelation 1:5)

Another term that has been misinterpreted by some as it is used of Christ is the term **firstborn**. It is used of Christ in Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15, 18; Hebrews 1:6; and Revelation 1:5. Again, because of the thought of birth that this word denotes in our minds, this passage has been used to teach that Christ was not the eternal second Person of the Trinity because He had a beginning as the firstborn of God. So what does the Apostles mean by the term **firstborn**?

***5.3.1 It may mean "first in time" or "first in priority" grammatically***

**Firstborn** is the Greek *prototokos* (from *protos,* first, and *tikto,* to beget), but this word may mean:

1. first in time; or
2. first in priority.

The point and focus of the word must be taken from the context in which it is used.

***5.3.2 It is declaring Christ's sovereignty as the Creator***

In Colossians 1:15, as verse 16 makes clear, it refers to Christ's sovereignty expressing His priority to and pre-eminence over creation, not in the sense of time, the first to be born, but in the sense of:

1. being the sovereign Creator, the One in Whom were the plans of creation as architect ("by Him all things were created" can also mean, "in Him …");
2. by Whom all things were created as the builder ("all things were created by Him"); and
3. for Whom all things were created as the owner ("and for Him").

Colossians 1:15 is declaring Christ's sovereignty as the Creator.

We can see this meaning of *prototokos* to express sovereignty or priority in the Septuagint's use of this word in Psalm 89:27 where the clause that follows explains the meaning of "firstborn" or *prototokos*. Psalm 89:27 reads, "I also shall make him *My* first-born, The highest of the kings of the earth." Who is the firstborn? He is "the highest of the kings of the earth," the sovereign Lord.

***5.3.3 It means the first one to rise in an immortal and glorified body***

In the words of Colossians 1:18, "and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead," it means first in time, the first one to rise in an immortal and glorified body. But even here, He is the first-born of the dead so that He might come to be pre-eminent in all things as the head of the body, the church (Colossians 1:18b). The point is that *prototokos* can mean either first in time or first in priority and it is the context which determines the meaning.

As the second Person of the Trinity, Christ is God and sovereign, but as the God-Man who died for our sins and was raised from the dead, He is the pre-eminent head of the body of Christ, the church. In Colossians 2:9, the Apostle confirmed this meaning when he wrote, "For in Him all the fulness of deity dwells in bodily form."

**5.4 Conclusion**

According to the above clarifications, we conclude that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father God are equal and co-exist.

**6. MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING THE TRINITY**

During the history of the church, especially the earlier centuries, the church struggle to define the mystery of the Trinity in a way that was wholly faithful to Scripture. We should be aware of the following misconceptions regarding the doctrine of the Trinity:

1. the problem of the two extremes; and
2. the heresy concepts.

**6.1 The Problem of the Two Extremes**

Any time man elevates his own reason above the clear revelation of Scripture and he is faced with those truths in Scripture that defy his human logic, he usually goes in one of two extremes. For instance, when faced with two truths which seem to contradict each other:

1. God's sovereignty and man's volition;
2. Christ's undiminished deity and true humanity in one Person; or
3. God is One and Three.

In his attempt to make the truth harmonize with his reason, he will inevitably move to one extreme or the other. He will accept one (truth A, God is one) either to the neglect of the other or reject it completely (truth B, God a tri-personality), or he will swing to the other side and either minimize or reject truth A and emphasize truth B. In an effort to water down the doctrine of the triune God many false cults have fallen into error, for examples:

1. Unitarianism;
2. Jehovah's Witnesses; and
3. Tri-theism.

***6.1.1 Unitarianism***

This view regards God as only one Person. Since, for most this Person is God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are stripped of their genuine deity. Jesus is reduced to a mere man (i.e. the humble teacher from Nazareth), and the Holy Spirit is turned into an impersonal force or fluid that emanates from God. The Unitarian-Universalist Church is an example of this extreme.

***6.1.2 Jehovah's Witnesses***

Jehovah's Witnesses are essentially unitarian because they deny the deity of Jesus Christ and view the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force (*Walter Martin*, **The Kingdom of the Cults**, Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1965, p. 47). This false cult repudiates the Trinity because it holds it to be unreasonable.

***6.1.3 Tri-theism***

The second extreme is tri-theism. This is the teaching that there are three Gods who are sometimes related, but only in a loose association. Such an approach, abandons the biblical oneness of God and the unity within the Trinity.

This is a variation of polytheism because the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are regarded as three separate Gods. Sometimes this is carried a step further into the idea that there are many different gods, some perhaps associated with other worlds or realms. Mormonism is an example of tritheism, for it speaks of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three distinct Gods. Mormonism is actually polytheistic since it indicates that there are other gods besides these three.

**6.2 Heresy Concepts**

The following is a brief overview of the major heresy concepts that contradicted the total biblical revelation:

1. Sabellianism;
2. Dynamic Monarchianism;
3. Arianism; and
4. Socinianism.

They were finally rejected by the vast majority of believers and officially condemned as heresies by the Councils of Nicea (AD 325), Constantinople (AD 381) and Chalcedon (AD 451). Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) probably gave the most complete formulation of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Most of the modern non-biblical views are rehashes of the ancient heresies described below, or similar in part to one of them.

***6.2.1 Sabellianism (third century)***

*Sabellius* (AD 200) is the originator of this viewpoint. His teaching came to be known as modalism because it views one God who variously manifests Himself in three modes of existence: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Sabellianism contradicted the biblical teaching of three distinct personalities in the Godhead by teaching that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are merely **modes** of expression by one God. Sometimes this is called "modalistic monarchianism."

***6.2.2 Dynamic Monarchianism (third century)***

This view held that the divine power, or Logos, penetrated the humanity of Jesus and gradually made Him divine but not fully God in the strict sense. The Logos and the Holy Spirit are merely impersonal attributes of the Godhead. This was a forerunner of Socinianism and modern Unitarianism.

***6.2.3 Arianism (fourth century)***

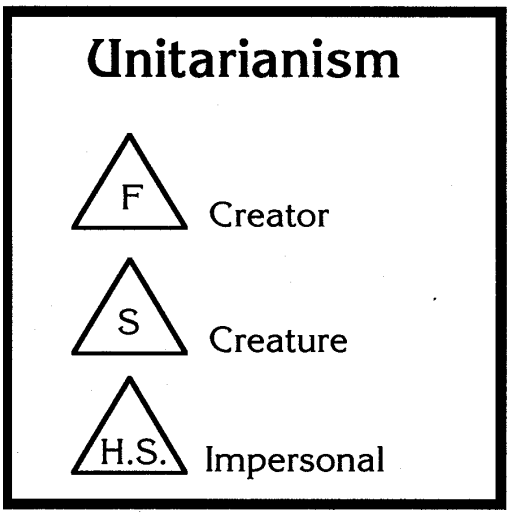
Arianism taught that Christ existed before creation and was the agent of creation, but also that He was a created being Himself and, in turn, created the Holy Spirit.

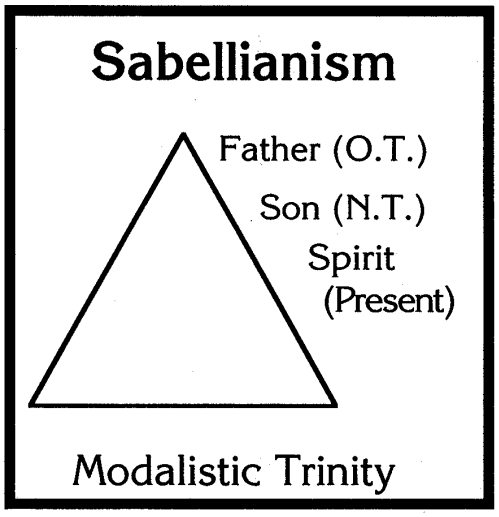
This doctrine had it roots in *Tertullian,* who made the Son subordinate to the Father. *Origen* took this further by teaching that the Son was subordinate to the Father "in respect to essence." The result was ultimately Arianism which denied the deity of Christ. *Arius* taught that only God was the uncreated One; because Christ was begotten of the Father it meant Christ was created by the Father. *Arius* believed there was a time when Christ did not exist. *Arius* and his teaching was condemned at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325.

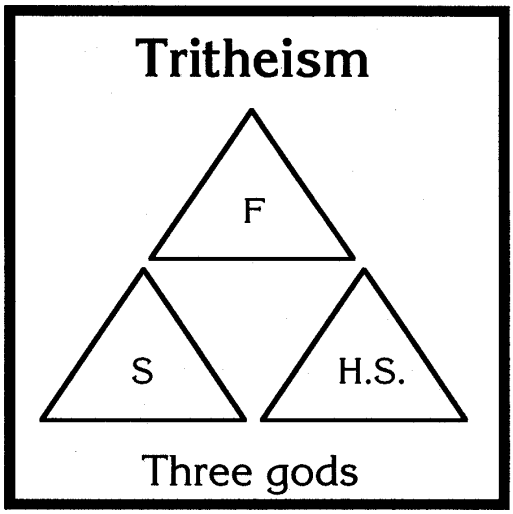
***6.2.4 Socinianism (sixteenth century)***

The Socinians held to the views of modalists and emphasized God's unity. They were the precursors of modern Unitarianism.

Some of the false views of the Trinity can be illustrated in the following diagrams:




**6.3 Conclusions**

The doctrine of the trinity is truly beyond human comprehension or the limits of our finite minds, but it is nevertheless a vital truth of the Bible. It is a doctrine that is closely connected to other key doctrines like the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In fact, our Salvation is rooted in the mysterious nature of the Godhead who coexists as three distinct Persons all of whom are involved in our Salvation in all its aspects, past, present, and future. It encompasses everything we know and practice as Christians, including our:

1. sanctification;
2. fellowship;
3. prayer life;
4. Bible study; and
5. corporate worship.

The only way to avoid the above mentioned extremes and heresy concepts is to accept all the biblical facts in a balanced way. The Trinity cannot be comprehended by the human mind because it is super-rational. Nevertheless, when anyone places his faith in God and the truth of His Word, he finds a satisfaction in this and other difficult areas of revealed truth. There is no need for a continual struggle.

May the Lord bless you in your study of His precious Word and in your walk with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**7. UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF GOD**

One reason we are convinced that the God of the Bible is the only true God is that, in comparison to every non-Christian religion or philosophy, He is totally unique. And it is a matter of superiority, both in feeling and intellect. The uniqueness of the Biblical concept of God is summarized by the following points:

1. He is unlike all other human concoctions;
2. He is sovereign, yet not the cause of evil and sin;
3. He is creator and sustainer, yet transcendent over creation;
4. He has uniquely revealed Himself; and
5. He is uniquely incarnate in Jesus Christ.

**7.1 He Is Unlike All Other Human Concoctions**

The God of the Bible is completely devoid of the human imperfections that creep into many pagan concepts of God or gods. The Greek gods and goddesses were often fickle, selfish, corrupt and expressed the flaws of human character.

Our God is infinite yet personal. His feelings are free from selfish interests and have an infinite dimension to them.

**7.2 He Is Sovereign, Yet Not the Cause of Evil and Sin**

The persistence and frequent dominance of evil in this world is explained in a dualistic way by some religions. Good and evil are considered equal forces in the universe, neither necessarily having the upper hand.

In the Bible, however, God creates Satan and men as free agents *capable* of sinning. Because they are not forced to sin, evil ultimately falls under God's judgment, and He is vindicated. The existence and tolerance of evil remains a mystery, but we don't have to wonder if there is a "dark side" to the Biblical God; His character is completely free of evil.

**7.3 He Is Creator and Sustainer, Yet Transcendent Over Creation**

Trying to explain God as Creator, some resort to two false extremes:

1. God has created everything, but is uninvolved. Like a person who has constructed and wound up a clock, God is removed from the ongoing operation of the universe (this is called "deism"); or

2. God is thoroughly and indistinguishably identified with creation - creation and God are the same (this is called "pantheism").

Deism tries to explain evil by saying that God is not involved; pantheism fails to explain evil adequately, so that God is both good and evil, or evil is merely a figment of human imagination.

But the Biblical God is immanent (with His universe) and transcendent (above His universe). Through the fall of man evil has corrupted our universe; ultimately it will be purged (Romans 8:20-22).

**7.4 He Has Uniquely Revealed Himself**

The Bible itself is a unique phenomenon. It was written over a period of 1,500 years by several dozen authors, yet exhibits a remarkable unity of thought on every subject, especially on the subject of God.

It is revelation from the lives of credible people who encountered God in many ways and wrote that which no human being would likely have written on his own. For example, Scripture readily admits the evil within man and his inability to save himself (Jeremiah 17:9; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8-9); it prophesies events with meticulous detail, and then records the fulfillment of them centuries later (Micah 5:2; and Luke 2:4-7; Psalm 22:7-8 and Matthew 27:39-44; Psalm 22:18 and Matthew 27:35).

**7.5 He Is Uniquely Incarnate In Jesus Christ**

The personality of Jesus Christ is absolutely unparalleled. The description of Him in the gospels is a delicate balance of all that God is and all that man is. Nowhere in human thinking is there such a doctrine of redemption with its excruciating death and triumphant resurrection. None of the gods of false religions come close to the real, personal and attractive Biblical God in Jesus Christ.

**8. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY**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# Chapter Sixteen - The Plan, Creation and Sovereignty of God

The Bible contains evidence that God eternally purposed all things to happen. By "eternally" we mean that, according to God's eternal nature and omniscience, His plans and purposes have always existed; they are and have always been in His mind. This may confuse our minds because we are incapable of imagining things that are not sequential, things that are beyond time.

Further, this particular subject may be frustrating because it involves some inscrutable ideas and apparent contradictions regarding the omnipotence and omniscience of God. It is one thing to agree intellectually to the validity of these attributes; it is another to understand how they affect the experience of man.

Please approach this study with as few preconceived opinions as possible, and with an open mind to what Scripture says. Be prepared to admit that it contains mysteries beyond finite understanding.

This chapter is divided into five major parts, they are:

1. We will provide the definition of the decree of God;
2. We will examine the content and order of the decree;
3. We will provide the definition of the creation of God;
4. We will examine the works of God: creation; and
5. We will examine the works of God: His sovereign rule.

## 1. THE DEFINITION OF THE DECREE OF GOD

### 1.1 General Definition

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* states that:

> "The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

This general definition is based solidly on Ephesians 1:11 which says, "We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will."

When referring to the "eternal purpose" of God, theologians often use the term "**decree**." God "decreed," for instance:

1. to create the universe;
2. to create man;
3. to allow man to sin;
4. to redeem man; and
5. to conform redeemed man to the image of Jesus Christ.

There are no verses that list these, or even call them "decrees." Given God's omniscience and omnipotence, the fact that these things have occurred (or that the Bible promises they will occur) is sufficient evidence that they have always been and are a part of God's plan. In the broadest sense, everything that has happened or will happen is part of the "decree of God."

**1.2 Implications of the Decree of God**

The context of Ephesians 1:11 qualifies God's purpose and provides the important insights:

1. it is eternal;
2. it is called Predestination;
3. it is comprehensive;
4. it includes human choices and faith;
5. it involves a "choosing" of those that are and will be saved; and
6. its ultimate goal is to glorify God.

***1.2.1 It is eternal (Ephesians 1:4)***

Paul is specifically discussing Salvation in Ephesians 1, but his statement in 1:11 implies that what is said here is true of God's purpose as a whole. "Before the foundation of the world" is a way of saying, "eternally." God's purpose is not a development in God's thinking. Because He is eternal and His knowledge is eternal, His purpose also is eternal.

***1.2.2 It is called Predestination (Ephesians 1:5, 11)***

In these verses Paul tells us that it is God's "will" or "purpose" that certain things occur. He says that God "predestined" them; He has made them certain to happen. Thus, predestination is equated with the "purposing" or "decreeing" of God.

***1.2.3 It is comprehensive (Ephesians 1:11)***

Paul says that God "works all things after the counsel of His will." The context, especially 1:10, supports the idea that God's will is comprehensive; it includes "things in the heavens and things upon the earth." Thus, God is sovereign; nothing happens that is not part of His decree. Note the following things Scripture says are decreed by God:

1. the stability of the physical universe (Psalm 119:89-91);
2. the existence of nations (Acts 17:26);
3. the length of human life (Job 14:5); and
4. the "free" actions of men (Acts 2:23; Romans 9:17).

***1.2.4 It includes human choices and faith (Ephesians 1:13)***

Are human choices genuine, or does the eternal purpose of God "program" us like computers or robots?

The fact that God punishes and rewards human decisions argues that man's choices are genuine, while the decree of God argues that those choices were and are already a part of God's plan.

We know by experience that human beings choose what they want to choose. No compulsion is exerted by the decree of God. People listening to the gospel must make the choice to believe or not. This involves what we call the "permissive" decree of God, a concept which we will examine later.

### *1.2.5 It involves a "choosing" of those that are and will be saved (Ephesians 1:4)*

The word "chose" in this verse means "elect." In Romans 9:6-13 it has a corporate aspect; Israel is a chosen nation, the nation God would use to bless all nations through Christ (Christians too are called a "chosen race" - 1 Peter 2:9 - but this differs from the election of Israel in that *all* the members of the chosen race of Christians are redeemed spiritually, while not all the individual members of Israel are redeemed).

The word also has an individual aspect; Isaac was chosen instead of Ishmael; Jacob was chosen instead of Esau. In Ephesians 1:4-7 believers are chosen to be "holy and blameless," "adopted" as sons, and redeemed through His blood. This is individual election.

This "choosing" raises some questions that are better answered in the doctrine of Salvation.

### *1.2.6 Its ultimate goal is to glorify God (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14)*

God wants His creatures to appreciate, and thereby enjoy Him; thus He "glorifies" Himself. This is not vanity. To seek for glory is wrong only when it exceeds reality (as it does in the case of human beings), or when it usurps a position that belongs only to God. In reality, God's glory is for our own best good.

## 1.3 The Bases of the Decree

The decree of God is based on His most wise and holy counsel. Being all-wise, knowing the end from the beginning, knowing that sin would come, knowing what would be the nature of sin and how He would have to deal with it if He was to save anyone, He based His plans on all His knowledge and understanding. Being perfectly holy, and incapable of unfairness, He made His plans according to that which is absolutely right. He can save the sinner only if in doing so He can remain absolutely just (Romans 3:25). In this manner God can be both loving and just (Psalm 85:10).

## 1.4 The Purpose of the Decree

The highest aim of the decree is the glory of God. Creation glorifies Him, according to the following Scriptures:

1. David says, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1).

2. Paul explains that God delays judgment "in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory" (Romans 9:23), and that He has foreordained believers "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:6; cf. 1:12, 14; 2:8-10).

3. The twenty-four elders say, "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

Thus, the end of all things is the glory of God; and only as we also adopt this as our real goal in life are we living on

the highest plane and in full harmony with the purposes of God.

In man it would be selfishness to seek for his own glory, but that is because man is sinful and imperfect. To seek for his own glory, would be to seek to glorify sinfulness and imperfection. But this is not the case with God. He is absolutely sinless and perfect in holiness. For Him to aim at His own glory is, therefore, merely to seek the glory of absolute holiness and sinless perfection. We must aim in everything at the glory of Him who is the manifestation of all goodness, purity, wisdom and truth.

### 1.5 Problem of Evil Within the Decree of God

Perhaps in this life there will never be a fully satisfying explanation of why God has allowed evil to enter this world. Attempts at explaining it are called "theodicies," vindications of divine justice in allowing evil to exist.

The fact that God has "permitted" evil seems to be implied by the fact that He clearly sets forth His righteous requirements in the Bible, identifies Himself with them, and repudiates evil, all the while asserting that He is in absolute control of the universe.

This problem can be illustrated by what, in earlier Christian history, was known as the "lapsarian" debate ("lapse" is a reference to man's temptation and fall in Genesis 3). It concerned whether the decree to elect some to Salvation went before or after the decree to permit man to sin. Some took the view that election occurred *before* the decree to permit the Fall, while others opted for the reverse. The latter believed their view made God less directly responsible for the Fall. The debate was very academic in nature, and hair-splitting to say the least!

Some believe that the problem of evil can be partially explained by the fact that God is required to permit evil since He created Satan and man with the power of choice (and there can be no "choosing" if choices don't exist, i.e., good v. evil). This, however, opens its own can of worms, for if God has decreed all things to happen, how are we to understand "choice"?

### 1.6 Relation of Foreknowledge to the Decree of God

Foreknowledge means that God, who is omniscient, knows in advance all that will occur (see Acts 2:33 where it pertains to the death of Christ). Some have tried to equate predestination with foreknowledge to escape its difficult implications. They argue that God merely knows (rather than causes) things that will happen. It is better to recognize the permissive element in God's decree.

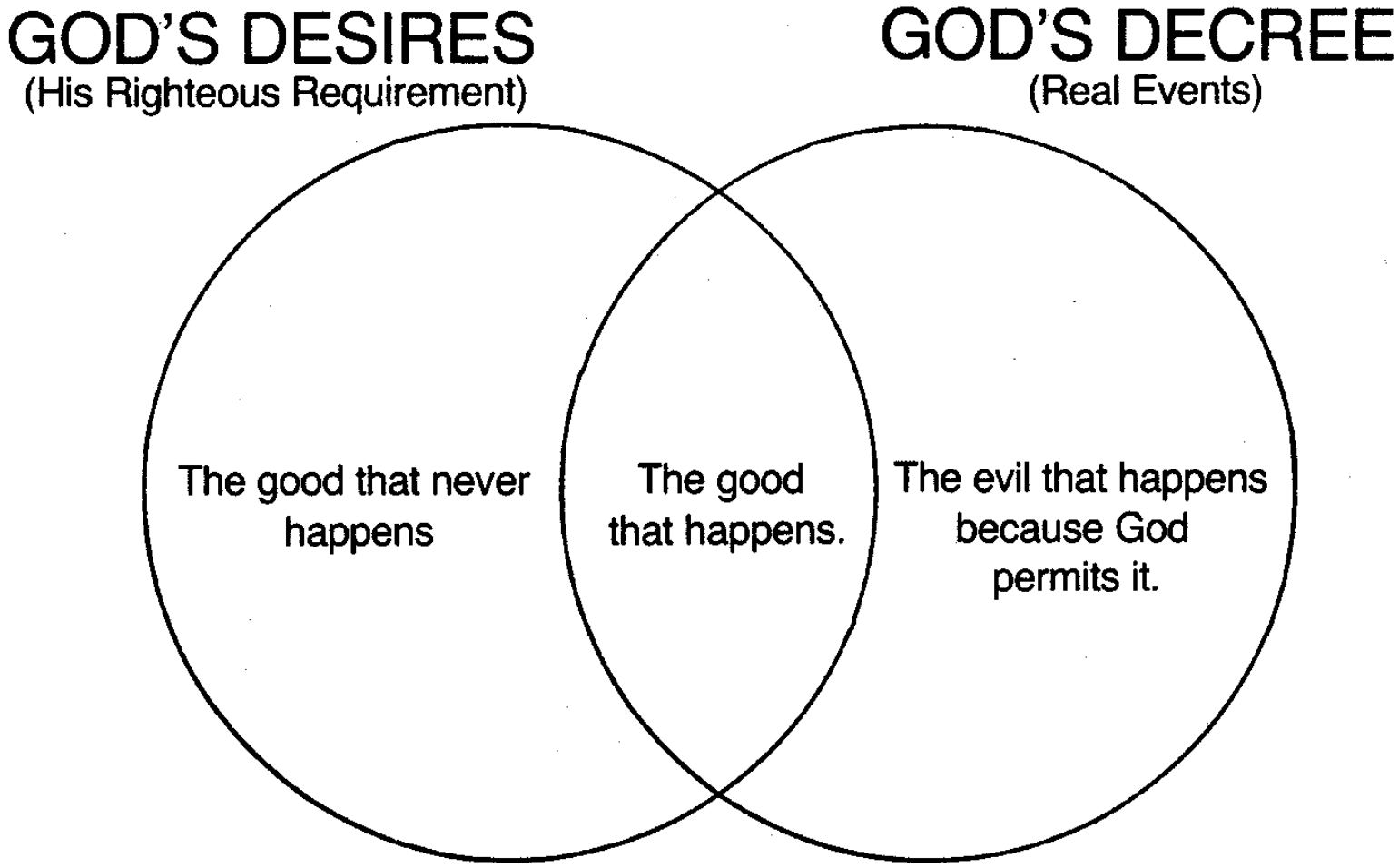
### 1.7 Means and Ends in the Decree of God

We should not think of predetermined events (ends) apart from the processes which lead to those events (means). For example, Christ's death was "by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23); but the means, "the hands of godless men," is not any less certain. Several Old Testament prophecies foretold the means by which the Savior would be put to death (e.g. Psalm 22).

Likewise, the elect are certain to be saved, but the means by which this comes about, evangelism, is equally certain. Thus, no one can Biblically shirk his duty to spread the gospel on the grounds that "God will save them regardless of my involvement." We have been commanded by God to be instruments in the Salvation of the elect.

### 1.8 Summary

Study the following chart illustrating the decree of God:




Our lesson has focused on the content of the sphere on the right. Within its circumference are all the events, great and small, of human history. This is the sphere of God's decree or eternal purpose. It contains things God **causes** and any other good man or angels do through obedience; this is called "the good that happens." The sphere also contains the evil God **permits**, both man's sin and Satan's opposition to God.

The sphere on the left pertains to all the righteous requirements of God, and all the good He **desires** to happen. Only where this sphere converges with the sphere of God's decree or purpose do we find those good things actually happening.

For example, the Bible teaches that God desires "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4), but not all obey the invitation to "come." Thus, this desire is not realized and is not within the sphere on the right. God desires men to be righteous always, but men disobey; thus, this desire is never fully realized and is represented by "the good that never happens."

**2. THE CONTENT AND ORDER OF THE DECREE**

God has decreed all that comes to pass. This can be divided into three broad categories:

1. in the material and physical realm;
2. in the moral and spiritual realm; and
3. in the social and political realm.

**2.1 In the Material and Physical Realm**

God decreed:

1. to create the universe and man (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 33:6-11; Proverbs 8:22-31; Isaiah 45:18).
2. to establish the earth (Psalm 119:90f) and seasons of the year (Genesis 8:22).
3. never again to destroy the population of the earth by means of a flood (Genesis 9:8-17).
4. the distribution of the nations (Deuteronomy 32:8), their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitation (Acts 17:26).
5. the length of human life (Job 14:5) and the manner of our exit from this life (John 21:19; 1 Corinthians 15:51f; 2 Timothy 4:6-8).

All events have been decreed in His plan and purpose (Psalm 104:3f., 14-23; 107:25, 29; Isaiah 14:26f.).

**2.2 In the Moral and Spiritual Realm**

As we relate the decree of God to this realm, we are faced with two basic problems: the existence of evil in the world; and the freedom of man.

*How can a holy God allow moral evil, and how can a sovereign God permit man to be free?*

Certain presuppositions must be made:

1. God is not the author of sin;
2. God must take the initiative in Salvation;
3. Man is responsible for his actions; and
4. God's actions are based upon His holy and wise counsel.

As to the logical order of the decrees and how sin fits into the permissive will of God, theologians differ. We have the following three different views:

1. **Supralapsarianism.** God decreed to:
    - save certain men and reprobate others;
    - create both;
    - permit the fall of both;
    - send Christ to redeem the elect; and
    - send the Holy Spirit to apply this redemption to the elect.

    We reject supralapsarianism, for surely God did not decree to save or to reprobate before He decreed to create.

2. **Sublapsarianism.** God decreed to:
    - create man;
    - permit the fall;
    - elect some of the fallen to be saved and leave others as they are;
    - provide a redeemer for the elect; and
    - send the Spirit to apply this redemption to the elect.

    This view teaches limited atonement. It has a basic drawback in that it does not allow for unlimited atonement.

3. **Infralapsarianism.** A variation of the above, which allows for unlimited atonement, is the following: God decreed to:
    - create man;
    - permit the fall;
    - provide in Christ redemption sufficient for all;
    - elect some to Salvation and leave others as they are; and
    - send the Spirit to secure the acceptance of redemption on the part of the elect.

This last order of the decree seems to be most in harmony with Scripture in that it allows for election and unlimited atonement (1 Timothy 2:6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:2), while acknowledging its special efficacy for the elect (John 17:9, 20, 24; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:29f.; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9f.; 1 Peter 1:1f.). In order to understand more fully the place of sin and the provision of Salvation to the sinner, four things must be noted:

1. God determined to permit sin;
2. God determined to overrule sin for the good;
3. God determined to save from sin;
4. God determined to reward His servants; and
5. God determined to punish the disobedient.

### *2.2.1 God determined to permit sin*

Though God is not the author of sin (James 1:13f.), He did decree to permit the fall and sin to come. He did this in the light of what He knew would be the nature of sin, of what He knew sin would do to the creature, and of what He knew He would have to do if He was to save anyone. God could have prevented sin's coming. If He had decided to preserve the will of the angels and of man from lapsing, they would have persevered in holiness. But for wise and holy reasons, which we may not be able entirely to fathom (Romans 11:33), He decided to permit sin. That sin is thus permitted, though not necessitated, appears:

1. from all the threatenings of punishment for sin (Genesis 2:17; Exodus 34:7; Ecclesiastes 11:9; Ezekiel 18:20; 2 Thessalonians 1:7f.);

2. from Psalmists, "their desire He gave to them" (Psalm 78:29), and "He gave them their request, but sent a wasting disease among them" (Psalm 106:15); and

3. from Paul, "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways" (Acts 14:16; cf. 17:30).

### *2.2.2 God determined to overrule sin for the good*

This determination is inseparable from the one to pemit sin. He decreed to permit it, but also to overrule it for the good. Several things may be mentioned in proof of this point:

1. Joseph said to his brothers, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

2. The Psalmists say, "The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever" (Psalm 33:10f.).

3. Nebuchadnezzar's attempted destruction of the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace resulted in the royal recognition of the God of the Hebrews and the promotion of the three youths (Daniel 3:19-30).

4. Paul expressed his confidence that the experiences in the Roman prison would result in his deliverance (Philippians 1:19f.).

Furthermore, He has a resentment against sin (Jeremiah 44:4; Amos 5:21-24; Zechariah 8:17; Revelation 2:6); he cannot permit it to thwart His purposes of holiness; it must be overruled for the good. Paul resented the slander that taught, "Let us do evil that good may come" (Romans 3:8; cf. 6:1). God did not permit sin in order to bring about good; rather, God has permitted sin to come for other reasons, and He has decreed to overrule it for the good. Finally, He has the knowledge and the understanding to overrule for good. He knows just how far to allow it to go, how much of it to prevent, and how to make it all work out for His own holy purposes.

### *2.2.3 God determined to save from sin*

All Christians are agreed that God has decreed to save men, but not all are agreed as to how He does this. We must remember that:

1. God must take the initiative in Salvation;
2. Man even in his present helphess state, is really responsible for his actions; and
3. God's actions are not based on arbitrary will, but on His holy and wise counsel.

Acknowledging these three presuppositions, evangelicals interpret this matter in one of two primary ways:

1. some see election as dependent upon divine foreknowledge; and
2. others see election and foreknowledge are inseparable and essentially the same.

These two approaches deserve analysis:

#### *2.2.3.1 <u>Election solely dependent upon divine foreknowledge</u>*

Election is seen as that gracious act of God whereby He chose in Christ for Salvation all those whom He foreknew would respond positively to prevenient grace. Originally man had freedom in two senses of the term:

1. freedom to carry out the dictates of his nature; and
2. freedom to act contrary to his nature.

Man had the ability to sin and the ability not to sin. In the fall he lost his ability not to sin (Genesis 6:5; Job 14:14; Jeremiah 13:23; 17:9; Romans 3:10-18; 8:5-8). Now he is free only in the sense that he is able to do so as his fallen nature suggests. Because man is without any ability to change, God provided prevenient grace (or called common or universal grace) in order to restore the sinner the ability to make a favorable response to God (Romans 2:4; Titus 2:11). This fact is implied in God's dealing with Adam and Eve after the fall (Genesis 3:8f.) and in the many exhortations to sinners:

1. to turn to God (Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 31:6; Ezekiel 14:6; 18:32; Joel 2:13f.; Matthew 18:3; Acts 3:19);
2. to repent (1 Kings 8:47; Matthew 3:2; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30); and
3. to believe (2 Chronicles 20:20; Isaiah 43:10; John 6:29; 14:1; Acts 16:31; Philippians 1:29; 1 John 3:23).

Because of prevenient grace man is able to make an initial response to God, and God will then give to him repentance and faith (Jeremiah 31:18; Acts 5:31; 11:18; Romans 12:3; 2 Timothy 2:25; 2 Peter 1:1). God in His foreknowledge knows what men will do in response to His prevenient grace, whether or not they will "receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1). Foreknowledge is not itself causative. God foresees what men will do without causing them to do so. God elected those whom He foresaw would respond positively. In this way election follows foreknowledge.

In election God determines:

1. to save those whom He has foreknown would respond (1 Peter 1:1f.);
2. to give them life (Acts 13:48);
3. to place them in the position of sons (Galatians 4:5f.; Ephesians 1:5); and
4. to conform them to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29f.).

In summary, God through prevenient grace, provides everyone with the ability to respond to Him if they so choose. God, foreknowing those who will respond, elects them to Salvation.

### *2.2.3.2 Election and foreknowledge are inseparable and essentially the same*

In this approach, election is interpreted as that act of God by which He graciously and on account of no foreseen merit chooses out from among sinful men certain ones to be the recipients of His special saving grace. This position does not consider prevenient grace to be a part of common grace, nor foreknowledge to be merely prescience.

Granted, common grace comes to all (Acts 14:17), God is not wishing for any to perish (2 Peter 3:9), the atonement is unlimited (1 John 2:2), and the call for Salvation is universal (Romans 10:13); nonetheless, the Scriptures are abundantly clear that only those who are the elect shall be saved. The reasonableness of this can be shown in several ways:

1. God can show grace on whom He wills (Matthew 20:12-15; John 15:16; Romans 9:20f.).

2. He does elect some to Salvation (Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

3. Foreknowledge is not mere prescience, but includes also a kindly selection and relationship (Romans 8:27-30; 1 Peter 1:1f.; cf. the use of "know" in Scripture: Exodus 2:25; Psalm 1:6; Matthew 7:23; Romans 11:2; Galatians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 2:3, 13).

4. Election was done in eternity past (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9).

5. God gave the elect to His Son (John 6:37; 17:2, 6, 9; 1 Peter 2:9).

6. Salvation is because of God's will, not man's (John 1:13; 1 John 4:10).

7. Repentance, faith, and holiness are all gifts of God (John 6:65; Acts 5:31; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Ephesians 2:8f.; 2 Timothy 2:25).

Arguments against this approach to election must be examined:

1. It could be argued that this is unjust to the non-elect. But there is no injustice with God in condemning; Salvation is a matter of pure grace. God is to be praised for saving the few, rather than accused of condemning the masses (Psalm 44:3; Luke 4:25-27; 1 Corinthians 4:7).

2. It is also charged that this presents God as arbitrary. But God's choice is not arbitrary; it is the free choice of a wise, holy and loving God.

3. Does this imply reprobation? No, God simply permits the sinner to pursue his self-chosen rebellion, resulting in eternal punishment (Hosea 4:17; Romans 9:22f.; 1 Peter 2:8).

The doctrine of election, properly understood, drives the believer to:

1. admiration (Deuteronomy 32:4);
2. reverence (Jeremiah 10:7);
3. humility (Romans 11:33);
4. submissiveness (Daniel 4:35); and
5. worship (Romans 11:33-36).

#### *2.2.3.3 **My comments***

In my opinion, I believe that the logical steps in the God's election is as follows:

1. In the first beginning, the God has provided all men the sufficient ability (i.e. prevenient grace) to accept the Gospel.
2. And then, some men will accept the Gospel while other men will reject the Gospel by their own free will.
3. In general, God elected all those whom He foresaw would respond favorably (i.e. election dependent upon divine foreknowledge).
4. God has entered a personal relationship with the elect and has provided personal care and eternal security to them.
5. In some cases, God still has the sovereignty to elect the other sinful men in order to achieve His Eternal Plan (i.e. election is of no foreseen merit).

Therefore, based on God's wise and holy counsel, the whole election process is both "man is choosing God" and "God is choosing man."

### *2.2.4 God determined to reward His servants*

In his goodness God has not merely decreed to save some, but also to reward those who serve Him (Isaiah 62:11; Matthew 6:4, 19f.; 10:41f.; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 1 Timothy 5:18). Fundamentally, this decree originates in His grace. Man can do no more than his duty (see Luke 17:10). In other words, God is entitled to absolute obedience in all things and at all times, and is under no obligation to reward even the most perfect and constant observance of His commandments. But in His great goodness, He has decreed to reward those of His children who serve Him. This decree of rewards is due to His goodness and not to His justice.

### *2.2.5 God determined to punish the disobedient*

By contrast, because of his absolute holiness and justice, God has decreed to punish the wicked and disobedient. This applies to Satan and His hosts (Genesis 3:15; Matthew 25:41; Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:1-3, 10), and to men (Psalm 37:20; Ezekiel 18:4; Nahum 1:3). To some extent this punishment is meted out to wicked men during their lifetime (Numbers 16:26; Psalm 11:6; 37:28; Isaiah 5:20f.; Jeremiah 25:31), but the real punishment is postponed until the day of judgment (Psalm 9:17; Isaiah 3:11; Matthew 13:49f.; 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8f.; Revelation 20:11-15).

## 2.3 In the Social and Political Realm

### *2.3.1 The family*

In the beginning God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). By the fact that He made but one man and one woman, He indicated that marriage:

1. was to be monogamous and indissoluble (Matthew 19:3-9);
2. must be sanctified (2 Samuel 12:1-15; Matthew 14:3f.; John 2:1f.; Ephesians 5:22-33; Hebrews 13:4);
3. implies to have children (Genesis 1:27f.; 9:1, 7; Psalm 127:3-5); and
4. to establish a home (Deuteronomy 24:5; John 19:27; 1 Timothy 5:4; Titus 2:5).

### *2.3.2 The human government*

Closely connected with the decree of marriage is the decree of human government (Genesis 9:5f.). God has by decree determined the:

1. location;
2. seasons;
3. boundaries (Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26); and
4. rulers of nations (Daniel 4:34f.; Romans 13:1f.).

All rulers are to recognize the sovereign rule of God and to seek and carry out His will (Psalm 2:10-12). If a ruler fails to do so, and the requirements of his government conflict with the commandments of God, the subjects are to obey God rather than man (Acts 4:19f.; 5:29).

### *2.3.3 The call and mission of Israel*

God chose Abraham to be the head of a special people (Genesis 12:1-3). He limited the line after him to:

1. Isaac (Genesis 17:21);
2. Jacob (Genesis 25:23; 27:27-29); and
3. the twelve sons of Jacob (Genesis 49).

He chose Israel for:

1. Himself;
2. to make them a kingdom of priests; and
3. a holy nation (Exodus 19:4-6).

It was not a decree to Salvation in the first place, but to outward standing and privilege. This outward standing and privilege was, however, by means of His holy law and divine institutions to lead them to Salvation and acceptable service. Included in the latter was the solemn responsibility to be a spiritual blessing to the surrounding nations (Genesis 12:2).

But Israel miserably failed God. God sought for grapes, but the nation yielded only wild grapes (Isaiah 5:1-7). Indeed, they mistreated and killed God's representatives that demanded spiritual fruit of the nation. As a result, the kingdom was temporarily withdrawn from them as a nation (Matthew 21:33-43). The natural branches have been broken off and the Gentiles, the branches of a wild olive tree, have been grafted into the stem (Romans 11:11-22). Some day God will graft in again the natural branches (Romans 11:23-27; cf. Ezekiel 37:1-23; Hosea 2:14-23). In the meantime, there is even today a remnant according to the election of grace (Romans 11:1-10). All these details are embraced in the original decree of God.

### *2.3.4 The founding and mission of the church*

From all eternity God has decreed the founding and building of the church, although this fact was not fully revealed until the time of Jesus and the apostles. The fact that Jesus declared that He would build His church (Matthew 16:18) indicates that it was not yet in existence at that time. Paul declared that while the church was included in God's eternal purpose, the nature of it was not fully revealed until His day (Ephesians 3:1-13).

The church is not an improved Judaism (Matthew 9:14-17), but a perfectly new creation. In the church, God made of the two, Jew and Gentile, one new man (Ephesians 2:11-15). God's present purpose is to call out a people from the Gentiles and the remnant of Israel, according to the election of grace, for His name (Acts 15:13-18; Romans 11:1, 30f.).

The Holy Spirit and the church are the media through which He seeks to accomplish this purpose (Matthew 28:19f.; Acts 1:8). When this purpose has been accomplished, the following events will happen:

1. Christ will return in order to take His people to Himself (John 14:3; Romans 11:25; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18);
2. present the church to Himself (Ephesians 5:25-27); and
3. return to bless and save Israel (Zechariah 12:10-13:1; Romans 11:25-27).

### *2.3.5 The final triumph of God*

God has decreed to give all the kingdoms of the world to Christ (Psalm 2:6-9; Daniel 7:13f.; Luke 1:31-33;

Revelation 11:15-17; 19:11-20:6). In connection with His taking over these kingdoms, there will be the "regeneration" of nature (Matthew 19:27-30; Romans 8:19-22; cf. Isaiah 35:1-10). His rule will be characterized by peace and righteousness (Psalm 2:8f.; 72:1-19; Isaiah 9:6f.). This first phase of God's triumph on the earth will last for a period of a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-6). After Satan's final revolt and the great white throne judgment (Revelation 20:7-15), there will come the new heavens, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-22:5). Then Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:23-28). All of these things were decreed by God and they will most surely come to pass.

## 3. THE DEFINITION OF CREATION

The term "create" is used in two senses in Scripture:

1. immediate creation; and
2. mediate creation.

### 3.1 Immediate Creation

Immediate creation is the free act of God, without the use of pre-existing materials or secondary causes, He brought into being, immediately and instantaneously, the whole visible and invisible universe. It was an act in which the whole trinity had a part, involving the equality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; it was the first act of God; it was effected for the glory of God; it was not a reshaping of pre-existing materials or the work of secondary causes; it was all-embracing in its scope, including not only all material existences, but also all immaterial existences.

### 3.2 Mediate Creation

Mediate creation, on the other hand, is those act of God which do not originate things; they, instead, shape, adapt, combine, or transform existing materials. God may Himself directly shape, adapt, combine or transform the existing materials, or He may indirectly do this through the operation of secondary causes.

### 3.3 The Bible Provides a Solution to the Issues of Origins

From ancient times men have been trying to find out the origin of the universe.

*Did the universe always exist or has it had a beginning? If it has had a beginning, how and when did it come into being?*

Science, philosophy or other world religious systems cannot solve the problem. Science may seek to find an answer to the problem of origins, but because it must work in the area of empirical knowledge, the study of origins and first causes is necessarily outside its domain. Philosophy and other world religious systems have given no adequate solution to the problem. They either deny creation altogether, or they explain it in such a way as virtually to deny it.

A solution to the issues of origins must come from Scripture and be accepted by faith (Hebrews 11:3). Scripture declares the how and why of physical and spiritual existence.

## 4. THE WORKS OF GOD: CREATION

This is recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. These Scriptures record the immediate and the mediate creation of the universe and of man.

### 4.1 The Immediate Creation of the Universe

The opening statement of the Bible declares that "in the beginning God created the heavens and earth" (Genesis 1:1). According to these words, the universe is neither eternal, nor formed out of pre-existing things, nor sprung from necessity, but due to the immediate creative act of God. It was created out of nothing.

The Hebrew verb *bara* (to create) expresses better than any other verb the idea of an absolute creation. The qal stem of this verb is employed exclusively in the Old Testament for God's activity; the subject of the verb is never man. Men can "make" (Hebrew, *asah*) things, but they cannot create things out of nothing. God is said to create:

1. the wind (Amos 4:13);
2. a clean heart (Psalm 51:10); and
3. new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17).

Genesis 1 emphasizes three great beginnings, each initiated by God (cf. 1:1, 21, 27). The creative act of God reflected in verse 1, therefore, involved no pre-existing material; a sovereign, all-powerful God created the heavens and the earth from nothing (*John Davis*, **Paradise to Prison**, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975, pp. 40, 41).

### 4.2 The Mediate Creation of the Present Universe

Whether due to deliberate incompleteness in the original act of creation, or to some catastrophe that befell the original creation, we find in Genesis 1:2 that the earth was "formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep." Then there follows the formation of the present order. Therefore, certain questions are raised:

1. Was the creation immediate, mediate, or a combination of both?
2. What was included in the immediate creation of God?
3. Does Genesis 1:2 represent the original condition of the earth or a condition due to some great cataclysm?
4. Are the six days of creation to be thought of as six revelatory days, long periods of time, or six literal days?
5. What is the age of the earth?

### 4.3 Was the creation immediate, mediate, or a combination of both?

Some limit immediate creation to the act described in Genesis 1:1 and regard the rest of the chapter as mediate creation. Others see a combination of immediate and mediate creation throughout the entire chapter.

#### *4.3.1 Creation of light*

We have two interpretations here:

1. The sun may have been included in the original creation, and the light (Genesis 1:3-5) may have come from the sun.
2. God probably created light apart from the sun (note: I agree with this position.).

Some people criticize the Bible because of the late creation of the sun. They say that the God should create the sun on the first day otherwise the story of creation mentioned in the Bible must be false and illogical because it is impossible to distinguish between the evening and the morning in the first 3 days. However, God Himself is the source of light (John 1:1-14; Revelation 21:23; 22:5, 16). He can provide temporary light energy to the universe in the first 3 days of creation.

### *4.3.2 Creation of vegetables*

We have two interpretations here:

1. The germs of vegetable life may have survived from a primitive condition, so that God needed merely to command the earth to "sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, with seed in them" (Genesis 1:11-13).

2. It seems more probable that vegetation was directly created by God on the third day (note: I agree with this position.).

### *4.3.3 Creation of animals*

In Genesis 2:19, we read, "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky." This would seem to teach the mediate creation of all animals, fish, fowl, reptiles, etc. (Genesis 1:20-25), though surely animal life itself was directly created by God.

### *4.3.4 Creation of man*

We are informed that "God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7). This would show that man, too, was created mediately, as far as his body is concerned. Though man and animals were made of dust and return to dust, the soul of man was surely immediately created by God.

### 4.4 What was included in the immediate creation of God?

The followings may be included in the immediate creation of God:

1. the heavens,
2. the angelic inhabitants of heaven (Job 38:7; Nehemiah 9:6);
3. the earth; and
4. all the waters and gases of the earth (Isaiah 42:5; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

Some have suggested that possibly some of the angelic beings, under the headship of him who turned out to be Satan, were assigned to this earth (cf. Luke 4:5-8). This is a plausible supposition, but there is no positive Scripture to support it, unless Ezekiel 28:12-19 is to be interpreted in that way (cf. also Isaiah 14:9-14).

**4.5 Does Genesis 1:2 represent the original condition of the earth or a condition due to some great cataclysm?**

This is answered in three ways:

1. restoration theory, or gap theory;
2. recreation theory; and
3. traditional orthodox view.

***4.5.1 Gap theory or Restoration theory***

The gap theory, or restoration theory, proposes that after the original creation (Genesis 1:1), Satan fell, resulting in divine judgment upon the earth (Genesis 1:2). What follows are six days of recreating the earth. This view holds that "was" (Genesis 1:2) should better be translated "became." It further argues that the picture of formlessness, emptiness, and darkness (Genesis 1:2) is chiefly a picture of divine judgment, for God could not have created the earth this way (Isaiah 34:11; 45:18; Jeremiah 4:23; 1 John 1:5). Further, this position provides a time framework in which the fall of Satan may have taken place (Isaiah 14:9-14; Ezekiel 28:12-19).

Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, the theory goes, there was a gap of time during which a great catastrophe destroyed the world. These creatures, created in 1:1, became extinct or were destroyed during the gap between 1:1 and 1:2. This time span is usually considered to be quite large (millions of years) and is also reputed to encompass the so-called "geologic ages."

The gap theory can be traced back to the early 19th century when the new discipline of geology was breaking upon the scientific scene. Theologians were in no intellectual position to argue with the geologists. Rather than accept the accusation that the Biblical record was no longer valid in the light of "scientific" claims, they chose to accommodate the Scriptural presentation to these new geological theories. A place had to be found for the vast ages of the past, well beyond the accounts of the first man and his environment as recorded in the Bible, and the most accommodating place was between the two aforementioned verses of Genesis.

I disagree with this theory due to the following reasons (for detailed discussion, please read *Henry M. Morris*, **The Genesis Record**, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976, pp. 37-48):

1. ***The Hebrew construction of verses 1 and 2 links the two together in a circumstantial clause.***

2. ***The context of Genesis 1:1 did not indicate any creative act of God.*** It is clear that creation began with Genesis 1:2 instead of Genesis 1:1.

3. ***There is no valid evidence to support that there was a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.*** It is significant that every verse in the first chapter of Genesis (except Genesis 1:1) begins with the conjunction "And" (Hebrew, *waw*). This structure clearly means that each statement is sequentially and chronologically connected to the verses before and after. There is no room for a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The condition described in Genesis 1:2 follows immediately upon the creative act of Genesis 1:1. The gap is nowhere mentioned in Scripture and is thus based entirely on human interpretation. Such proposed time gap is purely an imagination of some theologians.

4. ***The context of Genesis 1 did not suggest that the Hebrew word (hayetha) should be translated "became."*** The gap theory proposes that the word translated "was" (Hebrew, *hayetha*) should be translated "became,"

thus suggesting a change of state from the original perfect creation to the chaotic condition inferred from 1:2. However, the verb is the regular Hebrew verb of being (*hayetha*), not the word normally used to denote a change of state (*haphak*). Although *hayetha* can also be used to introduce a change of state, it simply means "was" in 98% of its occurrences in the Bible. There is nothing at all in the context of Genesis 1 to suggest that it should in this particular case be rendered "became." But even if it were to be translated "became," it would not necessarily imply a change of state. It might well refer simply to the nature assumed by the created earth in response to the divine creative decree of Genesis 1:1.

5. ***The context of Genesis 1 did not suggest that the Hebrew words (tohu waw bohu) should be translated "ruined and desolate."*** The gap theory suggests that the words, "without form and void" (Hebrew, *tohu waw bohu*), should be translated "ruined and desolate." It would then speak of a divine cataclysmic judgment which had been visited on the earth and which had left it in a chaotic and ruined condition. However, the proper translation of the word *tohu* depends on the context of Genesis 1:2. It should be translated exactly as "without form." Likewise, the word *bohu* does not connote a desolation, but simply "emptiness." When initially created, the earth had no inhabitants, it was "void." The creation narrative in Genesis 1 tells the steps by which God brought form to the unformed earth and living inhabitants to its empty surface.

6. ***The terminology of verse 2 does not imply a "catastrophe."*** The creative work is incomplete at this point, but the language does not necessitate a ruined earth. The words "without form and void" simply describe an unformed, uninhabited earth.

7. ***If such a gap did exist, there is no Biblical reason to suggest that it extended through vast geologic ages.*** It might have been a very brief period of time.

8. ***We cannot automatically assume that fossils were formed during a gap or indefinite period.*** Genesis 1 indicates that animals and plants were not created until the third, fifth, and sixth days, which follow later in the creation record. Some gap theorists attempt to place the entire fossil record in the gap.

9. ***It contradicts the teachings of Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.*** Its "gap" creates a problem with Romans 5:12 which teaches that death (and consequently extinction) entered the world with Adam, not before. Added to this are the claims of 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22 that by "man came death" and "as in Adam all die." It is easily seen from these Scriptures that death on the earth did not precede Adam's sin, but resulted from it. To insist that *anything* died prior to the judgment passed upon Adam is to be in contradiction with these passages in Romans and Corinthians.

### *4.5.2 Recreation theory*

Another view sees the gap as occurring before Genesis 1:1, and 1:1ff. as telling of a recreation. In this view Genesis 1:1 is a summary statement of what follows, just as Genesis 2:1 summarizes what has gone before. Genesis 1:2 is indicative of the judgment of God, but how or why this judgment came about is shrouded with mystery. It seems probable, however, that Satan's fall may well have been the cause. In this view Moses gives the order of the present creation, and he is not concerned with the original creation or what had caused the judgment from God.

### *4.5.3 Traditional orthodox view*

The most common view, or traditional orthodox view, interprets Genesis 1:2 as presenting the universe in a state of incompleteness. After stating that the earth was unfinished, Moses continued to tell how it was made into an

inhabitable place for man. The picture of formlessness, emptiness, and darkness is not necessarily a description of judgment, but rather of incompleteness; God's created earth was meant to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18). This view does not allow for a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, nor for a creation before Genesis 1:1. As far as the fall of Satan, the history is not concerned with it; however, it obviously must have occurred before Genesis 3:1.

The essential meaning of Genesis 1 is summarized as follows:

1. In the beginning God created the heaven (i.e. space) and the earth (i.e. matter, raw materials, etc.) (Genesis 1:1).
2. And the matter so created was at first unformed, empty and uninhabited (Genesis 1:2).
3. Moses continued to tell how it was made into an inhabitable place for man in six literal days (Genesis 1:3-31).

**Genesis 1:1**

The initial creation was of basic elements and raw materials rather than of a completed system. The created cosmos was a tri-universe of time, space and matter. Initially there were no stars or planets, only the basic matter component of the space-matter-time continuum. The elements which were to be formed into the planet earth were at first only elements, not yet formed but nevertheless comprising the basic matter - the "dust" of the earth.

**Genesis 1:2**

In Genesis 1:2 we are told that in the beginning the earth was without form, and void. The earth was void, or empty. When initially created, the earth had no inhabitants, it was "void."

**Genesis 1:3-31**

Moses continued to tell the steps by which God brought form to the unformed earth and living inhabitants to its empty surface.

**Example**

Let us suppose that there is a vacant lot where someone is going to build a house. Suddenly, one day, you notice that the builder has placed bricks, sand, sacks of cement, and other building materials on the lot. At that time, we would say that the house is without form - it hasn't been built yet. And we could certainly say it is void, or empty. Obviously, no one can live in it yet.

That is the way it was in the beginning. Everything was there that God needed to make the earth, but He had not yet formed the earth and put living things on it.

I believe that this view is the best way to interpret Genesis 1.

**4.6 Are the six days of creation to be thought of as six revelatory days, long periods of time, or six literal days?**

This is answered in three ways:

1. six revelatory days;

2. day-age theory;
3. threshold evolution;
4. progressive creationism; and
5. six literal days (traditional orthodox view).

### *4.6.1 Six revelation days*

Some hold that Moses received the revelation concerning creation during a span of six days. In this view the six days were days in the life of Moses, not days of creation. "Creation was revealed in six days, not performed in six days." Against this view would be a verse like Exodus 20:11, "For in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day."

### *4.6.2 Day-age theory or theistic evolution*

Others hold that the days refer to long eras of time. This is the day-age theory. There are variations within the position, but the primary thrust is that God created the physical universe and life and then guided the evolutionary process through long period of time. This position, often called theistic evolution, allows for the geological ages, evolutionary processes, and the active involvement of a creator God.

### *4.6.3 Threshold evolution*

Some refine the theistic evolution theory into what is known as threshold evolution, which contends that God stepped in at certain key points in the evolutionary process and created some new thing. This view rejects macro-evolution, but accepts micro-evolution, that is, that there can be "a wide and varied change within the *kinds* originally created by God." Man himself is considered a special creative act of God.

### *4.6.4 Progressive creationism*

A similar approach to threshold evolution, though not necessarily in harmony with the day-age concept, is progressive creationism. God created the unformed matter and then, through the inworking of His Spirit, formed and directed the creation progressively according to His preordained plan. God took the raw material and formed the finished product. This involved several acts of creation as well as the employment of His ordained natural laws.

### *4.6.5 Six literal days (Traditional orthodox view)*

Finally, many interpret the six days as literal days (note: I agree with this view.). The term "literal day" refers to the time for one rotation of the earth on its axis, today approx. 24 hours, resulting in a day / night sequence. But according to Genesis 1, whereas light and the day / night cycle were created on day one, the sun wasn't created until day four, so there was no sun during the first three days. In Scripture, however, there is no differentiation between the length of the first three days and the last three, and the entire week is referred to as being "6 days" long, followed by a day of rest. According to the Scripture, God Himself is the source of light (John 1:1-14; Revelation 21:23; 22:5, 16). He can provide temporary light energy to the universe in the first 3 days of creation.

#### *4.6.5.1 Usage of the term "day" in the Bible*

The term "day" is used in various ways in the Bible:

1. daylight as distinguished from darkness (Genesis 1:5, 16, 18);
2. daylight and darkness combined (Genesis 1:5);
3. the six creative days (Genesis 2:4);
4. sometimes it is rendered "time" (Genesis 26:8; 38:12); and
5. indefinite periods such as "the day of their calamity" (Deuteronomy 32:35), "the day of battle" (1 Samuel 13:22), "the day of fury" (Job 21:30), "the day of Salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2), and "the day of the Lord" (Amos 5:18).

### *4.6.5.2 Is it reasonable to believe that God created the universe in six literal days?*

The length of time for the creation-week days has been demonstrated conclusively by many Bible-believing scholars to be only six literal days, the reasons are summarized as follows:

1. The appearance of the sun and moon to rule the day and night.

2. The interdependence of the created universe (Can green grass or living animals exist over a prolonged period of time without the sun?).

3. The Hebrew word *yom*, translated "day," can have a variety of meanings, and sometimes can mean an indefinite period of time. It occurs over 2,000 times in the Old Testament, and it almost always certainly means a literal day.

4. The use of numerals before the word "day." When the Hebrew word *yom* is modified by a number, such as "6 days," or the "third day" (as it is some 359 times in the Old Testament outside of Genesis 1), it always means a literal day.

5. The words "evening and morning," which always mean a true daily evening and morning, define *yom* some 38 times throughout the Old Testament outside of Genesis 1.

6. There are several good words in Hebrew which mean "time," or an indefinite period, which the writer could have used, but *yom* was chosen, the only Hebrew word which can mean a literal day.

7. The general tenor of the passage, plus the summary verses in Genesis 2:1-4, will not allow any other meaning. Genesis 1:1-2:4 was obviously intended to give a chronology of events that really happened, just as written.

8. Furthermore, when the plural form of *yom* is used, *yamim*, as it is over 700 times in the Old Testament, including Exodus 20:11, it always means a literal day.

9. Perhaps the most definitive passage was written by God's own finger on a slab of rock so that we couldn't get it wrong. The fourth of the Ten Commandments regards resting on the Sabbath Day (read Exodus 20:8-11). In Exodus 20:8-11, God instructs us to work 6 days and rest one day because He worked 6 days and rested 1 day - during which week He created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all things in them.

10. The passage in Exodus also clears up another mystery. "If God is omnipotent, surely He is capable of creating the entire universe instantaneously. Why did He take 6 days?," some ask. The answer is, to provide a pattern for our work week. We are to work 6 days and rest one, just as He did. The seventh day rest is a

commemoration of His perfect work of creation.

Thus, in all cases, the use of the language implies a literal meaning for *yom*. Why could Genesis 1 be the exception? The God say it plainly that He created the universe in 6 literal days!

**4.7 How to explain the seemingly long geological ages?**

The seemingly long geological ages are a problem with this position. Several solutions are suggested:

1. Creation scientists showed that the age of the earth is less than 20 thousand years (i.e. the earth is very young).
2. The universal flood, known as the Genesis Flood, had major effects on the topography of the earth (Genesis 7-8).
3. There are gaps in the early genealogies of Genesis, and therefore creation should be considered to have occurred much before 4000 BC.
4. Since God created man with the appearance of age (Adam was created full-grown), He may also have created the earth with the appearance of age.
5. The interdependence of the created earth conditions.

**4.8 What is the age of the earth?**

Various theories are suggested:

1. Big bang theory;
2. Standard Geological Column;
3. Radioactive dating;
4. Theistic evolution;
5. Gap theory; and
6. Biblical creationism (Traditional orthodox view).

***4.8.1 Big bang theory***

Some see the origin of the universe as the burst of the primeval atom into the present universe; others hypothesize that the universe is in a continuing state of localized progression and regression. Within this universe the earth took form from an original mass of dust and gas some ten billion years ago.

According to this theory, billions of years ago there weren't any stars, or planets, or people, or anything else. All of the energy and matter in the universe was crammed together in a big ball, or "cosmic egg." Where did the cosmic egg come from? How did it get there? No one knows! The cosmic egg exploded with a "big bang." How long was it there before it exploded? Why did it explode? No one knows.

Where did the stars and planets come from? How did they form? Evolutionists imagine that somehow stars created themselves from hydrogen gas. They believe that the hydrogen molecules in a certain area of space began to pull in on themselves by gravity. As the cloud of gas got smaller and smaller and the molecules of gas got closer and closer, the cloud of gas got hotter and hotter, and finally, evolutionists tell us, the cloud of gas got so hot, it became a star.

The Big bang theory must be wrong due to the following reasons:

1. Actually, there is a very simple scientific reason why this could never happen and why stars cannot create themselves. If the cloud of gas is going to collapse, or sink in on itself to make a star, the gravity pulling in has to be stronger then the gas pressure pushing out. Scientists have ways of calculating these two forces. It turns out that the gas pressure pushing out is almost 100 times stronger than the gravity pulling in! Instead of the cloud of gas getting smaller and smaller until it forms a star, it would get bigger and bigger, and a star could never create itself.

2. The universe is not only very large and complex, it is very orderly. Such complicated universe cannot be formed by chance. Has anyone ever seen an explosion create order? Of course not! Explosions don't create order, they just leave a mess.

3. *Sir Fred Hoyle*, one of the world's most famous astronomers, no longer believes in the Big Bang theory. He says that no stars, no planets, no galaxies - nothing like that - could ever come out of such a "big bang." *Sir Fred Hoyle* used to be an atheist and an evolutionist, but now he believes that life had to be created! *Sir Herman Bondi*, a noted British astronomer, admitted that **all such theories have been proven wrong by scientific facts** (*Sir Herman Bondi*, **New Scientist**, August 21, 1980, p.611). *Sir Harold Jeffreys*, another well-known British astronomer, said that **since all of our theories about how the Solar System formed have been shown to be wrong, we can say it doesn't exist**!

### *4.8.2 Standard geological column*

The Standard Geological Column, used by evolutionary geologists for dating the earth's strata, was based on the theory of evolution and developed from a study of the fossil content (paleontology) in the various rock formations and strata. It dates according to eras: precambrian (3,500 million or more years of age), paleozoic (270-3,500 million years), mesozoic (135-270 million years), and cenozoic (present-135 million years). The earliest forms of life are found in the precambrian era.

But how do geologists know that the theory of evolution is correct? Geologists know that fossil evidence is supposed to be the primary basis for evolution. The assumed evolutionary progression is based on the fossil record so constructed. Here is obviously a system of circular reasoning. Fossils are used as the only key for placing rocks in chronological order. The criterion for assigning fossils to specific places in that chronology is the assumed evolutionary progression of life; the assumed evolutionary progression is based on the fossil record so constructed. The main evidence for evolution is the assumption of evolution! Therefore, the fossils really do not provide a satisfactory means for dating rocks. Consequently there is certainly no real proof that the vast evolutionary time scale is valid at all. **The Geologic Time Scale is a statement of evolutionary dogma which cannot be proved by any scientific methods**.

### *4.8.3 Radioactive dating*

Various kinds of dating methods are used. One method, by measuring the annual increase of sodium in the ocean, determines the ocean to be just under 100 million years old. Another method measures geological time by studying the rate of decay of radioactive elements, such as uranium, potassium, and rubidium. According to this method, some meteorites show an age of 4,700 million years. Certain earth minerals are 3,500 million years. Another method uses radiocarbon dating.

Problems with all radiodating methods are listed below:

1. *W.F. Libby*, inventor of the C-14 dating technique, found that, prior to 1600 B.C., the radiocarbon dates go wild. But, since he assumed earth was millions of years old, he went ahead with his work and ignored the problem.

2. *Lee, Robert E.* say, "The troubles of the radiocarbon dating method are undeniably deep and serious. The radiocarbon is still not capable of yielding accurate and reliable results. There are gross discrepancies, the chronology is uneven and relative, and the accepted dates are actually selected dates." (*Lee, Robert E.*, **Radiocarbon, Ages in Error**, Anthropological Journal of Canada, Vol. 19, No.3, 1981, pp.9, 29)

3. *G.T. Emery* discovered that long half-life radioactive elements do not have consistent half-lives! This would be like having a clock, with one "sixty minutes" actually eight minutes long, with another two days in duration.

4. *F.B. Jeaneman* noted that just one catastrophe, such as a worldwide flood, would throw all the dating clocks off. Immense contamination of all radioactive sources would occur; there would be major shifting of rock pressure and reversals in earth's magnetic core.

5. All aside from contamination and other problems, everything hinges on unchanging decay rates. But *H.C. Dudley* noted five ways they could change. Dudley actually changed the decay rates of 14 different radioisotopes by means of pressure, temperature, electric and magnetic fields, and stress in molecular layers. He also cited research by Westinghouse laboratories which changed the rates simply by placing inactive iron next to radioactive lead.

6. These systems of dating are not exact, for they assume a uniformitarian geology, conditions available only in a scientific laboratory. Uniformitarianism either presupposes the absence of or ignores the presence of a personal God who acts in His creation.

Dating the age of the earth along secular scientific methods is very inexact. One scientist acknowledges, "On the average, the *age* of the earth has been doubling every 15 years for the past three centuries; the rate, perhaps, has been somewhat faster during the past century."

### *4.8.4 Theistic evolution*

Theistic evolution, as stated earlier, postulates that God directs and controls the evolutionary processes from the rudimentary beginnings to the culmination of man. The dating methods are no different than in the non-theistic geological methods mentioned above. The day-age theory or similar approaches also seek to harmonize the geological eras with the Genesis 1 account.

### *4.8.5 Gap theory*

Another consideration is the gap theory. If, as has been suggested by many, Genesis 1:2ff. is a recreation, the date of the original creation could be early or late. The period between the creation and recreation is unknown. Some postulate long period of time; others a short period of time.

As I have mentioned in section 4.5.1 of this chapter, this theory must be wrong.

### *4.8.6 Biblical creationism or young earth theory (Traditional orthodox view)*

And finally, genuine Christians hold a creation date of approx. 6 thousand to 20 thousand years. *Archbishop Ussher* (AD 1581 - 1656) worked out a series of dates from the genealogies in the Bible and concluded that the world was created in 4004 BC. There seems to be some evidence for primitive cultures before 10,000 BC (*John Davis*, **Paradise to Prison**, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975, p. 31). Creation scientists suggest that the creation of the universe cannot earlier than 10,000 BC (*Henry M. Morris*, **The Genesis Record**, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976, p. 45). The recent creation theory of 6 to 20 thousand years seems more tenable and more in keeping with the grammatical-historical methods of interpretation than does the early dating of billions of years.

If creation (or recreation) is recent, and the literal interpretation of Scripture favors this, the interpretation of long geological ages and the Standard Geological Column must be challenged. What is the answer to the seemingly astronomical expanse of time necessary for the earth's formation? As was suggested earlier (i.e. section 4.7), answers can be found in the following ways:

1. mature creationism (i.e. appearance of age);
2. the interdependence of the created earth conditions;
3. omissions in the Genesis genealogies;
4. flood geology; and
5. creation science.

#### *4.8.6.1 Mature creationism (i.e. appearance of age)*

The fact that Adam was created full-grown seems obvious from Genesis 2. Therefore, in at least the creation of Adam, we have the appearance of age. Is it not also conceivable that the whole creation of God had the appearance of age, perhaps even including the fossils. If God created the universe with the appearance of age, then we can see that we have no zero reference point in measuring the exact age of the earth.

For example: When we want to know the length of a rod, we usually use a ruler to assist us to measure the length of it. If we don't have such zero reference point in our ruler, then how can we accurately measure the length of the rod?

#### *4.8.6.2 The interdependence of the created earth conditions*

Can sea animals exist in pure water? It is obvious that the salt concentration of the sea must be suitable for the habitation of sea animals. God must have created the sea with suitable initial salt concentration, otherwise all sea animals could not survive. Likewise, the soil and atmospheric conditions must have created with initial suitable compositions, otherwise all plants and animals could not survive.

#### *4.8.6.3 Omissions in the Genesis genealogies*

Also, a study of the various Biblical genealogies indicates that they are incomplete and contain omissions. Acknowledging these three items allows one to postulate a creation date earlier than 4,000 BC, while at the same time not demand the billions of years.

#### *4.8.6.4 Flood geology*

The Bible teaches a universal flood (Genesis 7-8), and such a cataclysmic event would have far-reaching effects upon the topography of the land.

### *4.8.6.5 Creation science*

What do scientific facts tell us? They declare that our planet is only a few thousand years old. The following paragraphs are some of the scientific facts to prove it:

1. **Evidence From Our Sun.** The sun must be quite young obtained from the direct measurement of its diameter. "*Jack Eddy*, of the High Altitude Observatory in Boulder, claimed that the sun was shrinking at such rate that our local star would disappear within a 100,000 years." (*John Gribbin*, **The Curious Case of the Shrinking Sun**, New Scientist, Vol. 97, March 3, 1983, pp.592-594) This means that our sun, as little as 50,000 years ago, would have been so large that our oceans would boil. In less time in the past (25,000 years or so), all life on earth would have ceased to exist.

2. **Evidence From Our Own Moon (Moon dust).** Ultraviolet light changes moon rocks into dust. It had long been predicted that a thick layer of dust (32-96.5 km), caused by ultraviolet radiation on the moon's 4-billion-year-old surface, must cover the moon's surface. But scientists were astonished to learn that there is not over (5.08-7.62 cm) of dust.(*Harold S. Slusher*, **Age of the Cosmos**, San Diego, Institute for Creation Research, 1980, p.76).

3. **Evidence From Earth's Atmosphere (Atmospheric Helium).** Our helium comes from three sources: Radioactive decay of either uranium or thorium produces helium. Helium spewed out by the sun, is pulled in by earth's gravity. All of that helium is accumulating, since helium is not able to reach escape velocity and go into outer space. But the amount of helium we have is too small if our world has existed for long ages. *Henry Faul* estimated that the age of the atmosphere should be several thousand years (*Henry Faul*, **Nuclear Geology**, New York: John Wiley, 1954).

4. **Evidence From the Earth (Magnetic Field Decay).** Earth's magnetic field is slowly lessening. This evidence is found by *Dr. Thomas G. Barnes*, Professor of Physics at the University of Texas (*Thomas G. Barnes*, **Origin and Destiny of the Earth's Magnetic Field**, 2nd Edition, San Diego: Institute for Creation Research, 1983, pp. 132). He has pointed out that the strength of the magnetic field has been decaying exponentially with a half-life of 1400 years. This would mean that the earth would have had a magnetic field 32 times stronger than it is now even 7,000 years ago.

5. **Evidence From Beneath the Surface of the Earth.** How do fossils form? The bodies of death animals usually float to the surface, although sometimes they sink to the bottom, where, in either case, they are eaten by scavengers or decomposed by bacterial or mechanical action. In no case do they remain for long. It is suffice to say that in order to be preserved, they must be buried quickly, out of reach of destructive agents. And this is how it is at the Green River Formation. Fossilized catfish are found in abundance, having the skin and soft parts preserved, obviously buried rapidly (*Buchheim, H. Paul and Surdem, Ronald C.*, **Fossil Catfish and the Depositional Environment of the Green River Formation**, Wyoming, Geology, Vol. 5, April 1979, p.196). Fossils actually support rapid catastrophism due to the Genesis Flood (Genesis 7:18-24).

6. **Evidence From on the Surface of the Earth.** A tremendous amount of meteoritic material falls each year on the earth. *Isaac Asimov* calculated that 14,300,000 tons of new meteror dust must enter the atmosphere each year. If the earth is several billion years old, then meteror dust by now would form a layer 54 feet thick cover all the surface of the earth if (*Isaac Asimov*, **14 Million Tons of Dust Per Year**, Science Digest, Vol. 45, Jan. 1959, p.34). Obviously, no layer of meteoritic dust of any appreciable thickness is found around the earth's

surface.

7. **Evidence From Civilization.** If mankind had been living on earth for millions of years, we should find records extending back at least 500,000 years. But, instead, records only go back to about 2000-3000 B.C. When writing began, it was fully developed. The earliest dates are Egyptian based on Manetho's king lists (*H.R. Hall*, **Article, Egypt, Archaeology in Encyclopedia Britannica**, 1956, p.37, Vol. 8). Studies of ancient agricultures in Europe point to similar conclusion (*J. Troels Smith*, **Neolithic Period in Switzerland and Denmark**, Science, Vol. 124, Nov. 2, 1956, p.879). The earliest Chinese date is approx. 2250 B.C. (*Ralph Linton*, **The Tree of Culture**, New York, Alfred A., Knopf Publishing Company, 1955, p.520). If the Biblical records are true, then this is exactly the historical evidence we would expect to find.

### 4.9 Biblical Proofs of Creation

There are many other Scriptures that teach the doctrine of creation. A few of them speak of the original creation of heaven and earth (Isaiah 40:26; 45:18). A goodly number of them speak of God's creation of all men (Psalm 102:18; 139:13-16; Isaiah 43:1, 7; 54:16; Ezekiel 21:30). Many represent God as the creator of heaven and earth and of all things in them (Isaiah 45:12; Acts 17:24; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 3:9; Revelation 4:11). As in Genesis 1, God is also represented as creating by means of His Spirit (Psalm 104:30), His Son (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16), and His Word (Psalm 148:5).

### 4.10 Weakness of the Non-Biblical Positions

Many philosophies deny the doctrine of creation and postulate other origins for the universe. Atheism, which denies the existence of God, must either make matter eternal or find some other natural cause. Dualism argues for either two eternal principles, one good and one evil, or two eternal beings, God and Satan or God and matter. Pantheism makes creation a part of God. Agnosticism says no one can know about God or His creation.

### 4.11 Why God Created the Universe?

First and primarily, God created in order to display His glory. The Scriptures declares, "Our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth, who hast displayed Thy Splendor above the heavens" (Psalm 8:1); "The heavens are telling of the story of God" (Psalm 19:1); and "Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together" (Isaiah 40:5; cf. Ezekiel 1:28; Luke 2:9; Acts 7:2; 2 Corinthians 4:6).

Second, God created in order to receive glory. The Bible commands, "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name" (1 Chronicles 16:29); "Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in holy array" (Psalm 29:1f); and "Give glory to the Lord your God" (Jeremiah 13:16). The responsibility of the church is to glorify God (Romans 15:6, 9; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 1 Peter 4:16).

The universe is God's handiwork, and it is intended to display His glory. It is, therefore, proper to study it in order to behold His glory. And also, it is proper to do what we can to enhance and declare His glory.

### 4.12 Conclusion

Christianity affirms that creation came through the sovereign will and working of an infinite God, who, though immanent in His creation, also transcends His creation. The doctrine of creation is a doctrine of faith (Hebrews 11:3).

Therefore, the Biblical record must be accepted as the final authority.

## 5. THE WORKS OF GOD: HIS SOVEREIGN RULE

Having shown that all things have their origin in the decrees or purposes of God, and that God has created the whole material and immaterial universe, we come next to consider the question of the government of the universe.

God, as creator of all things, has an absolute right to rule over all (Matthew 20:15; Romans 9:20f), and He exercises this authority in the universe (Ephesians 1:11). This sovereignty of God is the ground of peace and confidence to all His people. They rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; that neither necessity, nor chance, nor the folly of man, nor the malice of Satan controls the sequence of events and all their issues.

The Scriptures abundantly teach that God is sovereign in the universe (read 1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 45:9; Ezekiel 18:4; Daniel 4:35; Matthew 20:15; cf. Romans 9:14-21; 11:36; Ephesians 1:11; 1 Timothy 6:15f; Revelation 4:11). God's sovereignty involves:

1. preservation; and
2. providence.

### 5.1 The Doctrine of Preservation

#### *5.1.1 The definition of preservation*

By preservation we mean that God sovereignly, by a continuous agency, maintains in existence all the things which He has made, together with all their properties and powers. Preservation is to be distinguished from the act of creation, for only that which is already in existence can be preserved; that the objective creation is not self-existent and self-sustaining; and that it is not merely a refraining from destroying that which has been created, but a continuous agency of God by means of which He maintains in existence that which He has created.

#### *5.1.2 The proof of the doctrine of preservation*

It can be demonstrated from reason and from Scripture. The proof may be summarized as follows:

1. Matter does not have the cause of its being in itself.
2. It is everywhere contingent, dependent, and changing; it is not self-existent or self-sustaining.
3. No force is self-existent or self-renewing, for everywhere force implies the existence of a will that exerts and sustains it.
4. God would not be absolutely sovereign if anything occurred or existed in the universe apart from His will and power.
5. The Scriptures teach that after God completed the work of creation, He continues His activity in upholding the universe and its powers (Psalm 36:6).
6. Christ is the mediating agent in preservation: "in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17); "upholds all things" (Hebrews 1:3).
7. God preserves animate and inanimate creation: "O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast" (Psalm 36:6; Psalm 104:29; Psalm 66:9; Acts 17:28).

8. God preserves His saints: "He preserves the way of His godly ones" (Proverbs 2:8; cf. Psalm 37:28); "they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

### *5.1.3 The method of preservation*

Theists would not all agree as to the way in which God does this. Three theories have been put forward to explain the method of preservation:

1. the deistic theory;
2. the continuous creation theory; and
3. the concurrence theory (biblical approach).

#### *5.1.3.1 The deistic theory*

Deism explains preservation in terms of natural law. It holds that God created the universe and endowed it with powers sufficient to keep itself in existence. The universe is, thus, a great self-sustaining mechanism, and God is a mere spectator of the world and of its operations, exerting no direct efficiency in sustaining it.

But this is a false assumption, for where it there a machine that can sustain itself? Furthermore, a lot of evidences show that God has not withdrawn from the universe:

1. God has become incarnate in Jesus Christ by a miraculous birth;
2. Regeneration is a supernatural work of God in the heart of man;
3. He sometimes intervenes miraculously in the affairs of the world; and
4. God answers prayer.

Therefore, this theory is wrong.

#### *5.1.3.2 The continuous creation theory*

This theory confounds creation and preservation. This view holds that from moment to moment God creates the universe with all that is in it. It is based on the conception that all force is divine will in direct exercise. It leaves no room for human will and the indirect exercise of the divine will in the form of natural law. This theory necessarily leads to pantheism. The errors of this theory are:

1. it makes the regular activity in nature the repetition of creation, rather than the indirect exercise of God's power;
2. it makes God the author of sin by making all will His will;
3. it removes man from being a real, self-determining moral agent; and
4. it does away with moral accountability.

#### *5.1.3.3 The concurrence theory (biblical approach)*

This theory is the Biblical approach. It holds that God concurs in all the operations of both matter and mind. Though God's will is not the only force in the universe, without His concurrence no force or person can continue to exist or to act (Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 12:6). His power interpenetrates that of man without destroying or absorbing it. Men

retain their natural powers and exercise them.

Although God preserves mind and body in their working, He concurs with the evil acts of His creatures only as they are natural acts, and not as they are evil. In other words, in evil actions God gives only the natural power; the evil direction of these powers is caused by man only. God's declared hatred of sin proves that He is not the cause of man's evil acts: "do not do this abominable thing which I hate" (Jeremiah 44:4); and "Let no one say when He is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt any one. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust" (James 1:13f; cf. Habakkuk 1:13).

**5.2 The Doctrine of Providence**

The Christian view affirms that God has not only created the universe, together with all its properties and powers, and that He is preserving all that He has created, but He also exercises sovereign control over it. This sovereign control is called providence.

***5.2.1 The definition of providence***

Providence means that continuous activity of God whereby He makes all the events of the physical, mental, and moral realms work out His purpose, and this purpose is nothing short of the original design of God in creation. To be sure, evil has entered the universe, but it is not allowed to thwart God's original, benevolent, wise, and holy purpose.

***5.2.2 The proof of the doctrine of providence***

The proof of the doctrine of providence is divided into two main categories:

1. The nature of God and the universe; and
2. The teaching of Scripture.

***5.2.2.1 The nature of God and the universe***

The universe itself bears evidence of God's sovereign rule over His creation:

1. Since God is the creator and consequent owner of the universe, He may be expected to govern His own possession.
2. We note that the universe everywhere exhibits evidence of intelligence and control.
3. We find that one system is adapted to another and the solar system to our world as a whole.
4. This is seen in men's constitution. Our sense of dependence involves the idea, not only of our origination by Him, but also of our continued existence.
5. He holds our soul in life; when He takes away our breath, we die.
6. Our sense of responsibility implies that God has a right to lay down the laws of moral conduct.
7. He knows all about our ways, and that He will reward the righteous and punish the unrighteous.

***5.2.2.2 The teaching of Scripture***

The Scriptures say more about God's work in providence than about His work in creation. They show that God exercises sovereign rule over all the:

1. physical universe;
2. plant and animal creation;
3. nations of the earth; and
4. areas of each man's existence.

**(A) Physical universe**

Scriptures indicates that God controls all the physical universe, including:

1. sunshine (Matthew 5:45);
2. stars (Job 38:31-33);
3. wind (Psalm 147:18);
4. lightning (Job 38:25, 35);
5. rain (Job 38:26; Matthew 5:45);
6. thunder (1 Samuel 7:10);
7. waters (Psalm 147:18);
8. hail (Psalm 148:8);
9. ice (Job 37:10);
10. snow (Job 37:6; 38:22);
11. frost (Psalm 147:16);
12. mountains (Job 9:5);
13. the earth quakes (Job 9:6); and
14. the ground yields her increase (Acts 14:17) at His mandate.

He uses the beneficent elements as expressions of His goodness and love, the destructive as instruments of discipline and punishment. Men should, therefore, humble themselves in the times of physical visitation and pray to Him who has all the elements in His power.

**(B) Plant and animal creation**

Every living creation is in the hand of God (Job 12:10). God provides for and controls all:

1. plants (Jonah 4:6; Matthew 6:28-30);
2. fowl (Matthew 6:26; 10:29);
3. beasts (Psalm 104:21, 27f; 147:9); and
4. fish (Jonah 1:17; Matthew 17:27).

**(C) Nations of the earth**

God "rules over the nations" (Psalm 22:28). He:

1. increases and destroys them (Job 12:23);
2. observes and judges them (Psalm 66:7; 75:7);
3. establishes and dethrones rulers (Daniel 2:37-39; 4:25);
4. sets national boundaries (Acts 17:26); and
5. uses nations and their rulers in the exercise of His will (Isaiah 7:20; 10:5-15; 45:1-4).

"There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God" (Romans 13:1).

**(D) Areas of each man's existence**

Scriptures indicates that God controls all areas of each man's existence, including:

1. **Over the birth, career, and death of men.** God is actively involved before one is yet born (Psalm 139:16; Jeremiah 1:5) and works out His purposes in one's life (1 Samuel 16:1; Galatians 1:15f). This is the case whether one recognizes it or not (Isaiah 45:5; Esther 4:14). God provides for man's needs (Matthew 5:45; 6:25-32; Acts 14:17) and determines the time and circumstances of man's death (Deuteronomy 32:49f; John 21:19; 2 Timothy 4:6-8).

2. **Over the successes and failures of men.** The Lord promotes and demotes people (Psalm 75:7), puts down princes and exalts the lowly (Luke 1:52), makes rich and makes poor (1 Samuel 2:6-8). He is involved in the very thinking process of man (Proverbs 21:1).

3. **Over the most trivial of circumstances.** He is concerned with the sparrow, and more so the hairs of our head (Matthew 10:29f). He determines the way the lot falls (Proverbs 16:33). He even gives and withholds sleep (Esther 6:1).

4. **Over the needs of His people.** He cares for His own (1 Peter 5:7), gives safety (Psalm 4:8), protects (Psalm 121:3), provides good (Psalm 5:12), sustains (Psalm 63:8), supplies needs (Philippians 4:19), and in general makes all things work out for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28). "For from old they have not heard nor perceived by ear, neither has the eye seen a God besides Thee, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him" (Isaiah 64:4).

5. **Over the destinies of the saved and the unsaved.** He will bring the believer through this life to glory (Psalm 73:24), and, though He fall, the Lord will uphold Him (Psalm 37:23f), but judgment shall come from the Lord upon the unbeliever (Psalm 11:6).

6. **Over the free acts of men.** He worked in the hearts of the Egyptians to do His bidding (Exodus 12:36), and likewise in the hearts of David (1 Samuel 24:18), Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:27), the believer (Philippians 2:13), the king (Proverbs 21:1), even all men (Jeremiah 10:23). "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord" (Proverbs 16:1).

***5.2.3 How do the sinful acts of men fit into the program of a sovereign God?***

How then do the sinful acts of men fit into the program of a sovereign God? Does God necessitate sin? Several incidents make it appear that way:

1. God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 10:27);
2. it was sin for David to number Israel, yet the Lord moved him to do it (2 Samuel 24:1; cf. 1 Chronicles 21:1);
3. God gave the sinner up to more sin (Romans 1:24, 26, 28);
4. He shut up all in disobedience (Romans 11:32); and
5. during the tribulation, God will send a deluding influence so that the unbelievers will believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

If God is not the author of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5; 2:16), how can these incidents be explained? How is God related to man's sinful acts? This can be answered in four ways:

1. **God restrains man from the sin which man intends to do.** This is called "preventative providence." God said to Abimelech, "I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her" (Genesis 20:6). David prayed, "Also keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me" (Psalm 19:13; cf. Matthew 6:13). God has promised not to allow the believer to be tempted above what he can hear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

2. **God, instead of actively restraining man from doing evil, will sometimes permit sin to take its course.** This is called "permissive providence." In Hosea 4:17, God said, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." God "permitted all the nations to go their own ways" (Acts 14:16; cf. 2 Chronicles 32:31; Psalm 81:12; Romans 1:24, 26, 28).

3. **God uses directive providence.** He allows evil, but directs the way it goes. Jesus said to Judas, "What you do, do quickly" (John 13:27). Those involved in the crucifixion of Christ did what God predestined to occur (Acts 2:23; 4:27f). Man's intent was evil, but God used this evil intent to accomplish His will. God uses the wrath of man to praise Him (Psalm 76:10; cf. Isaiah 10:5-15).

4. **God, through restrictive providence, determines the limits to which evil and its effects may go.** He said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him" (Job 1:12; cf. 2:6; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; Revelation 20:2f).

From these considerations it is clear that all the evil acts of the creature are under the complete control of God. They can occur only by His permission, and only insofar as He permits them. Though they are evil in themselves, He overrules them for good, classic examples are as follows:

1. the wicked conduct of Joseph's brethren;
2. the obstinacy of Pharaoh;
3. the lust for conquest of the heathen nations that invaded the Holy Land and finally carried the people into captivity;
4. the rejection and crucifixion of Christ;
5. the persecution of the church; and
6. the wars and revolutions among the nations have all been overruled for God's purpose and glory.

The fact that God has turned evil into good ought to induce His children to trust Him to do the same with the evil of the present generation.

### *5.2.4 The ends towards which providence is directed*

God governs the world with a view to:

1. the happiness of the creature;
2. the mental and moral development of the race;
3. the Salvation and preparation of a people for His own possession; and
4. His own glory.

#### *5.2.4.1 The happiness of the creature*

God governs the world with a view to the happiness of the creature. Satan implied in his temptation of Eve that God was trying to withhold something good from her and Adam (Genesis 3:4f), and he has been endeavoring all along to make men believe that God is doing this. In contrast, the following Bible verses rebuke the false accusation of Satan:

1. "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).
2. Jesus says, God "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45).
3. His goodness has the important purpose of leading people to repentance (Romans 2:4).
4. God seeks the welfare of His children in particular, "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).
5. "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" (Romans 8:28).

#### *5.2.4.2 The mental and moral development of the race*

God also governs the world with a view to the mental and moral development of the race. There is such a thing as an education of the race, but it is not an education that takes the place of Salvation. The entire Levitical system was educational, preparing the way for the introduction of the true Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (Galatians 3:24). This mental and moral development is seen in various ways during the Christian centuries. It is seen in the:

1. elevation of woman;
2. erection of hospitals;
3. introduction of educational systems;
4. abolition of slavery;
5. granting of religious liberty; and
6. development of technology in such areas as communication and transportation, etc.

These are all humanitarian developments, but even so, we must ultimately trace them back to God's providential government of the world. Though in themselves they have but a temporal value, they may be used as aids in the spread of the gospel.

#### *5.2.4.3 The Salvation and preparation of a people for His own possession*

God governs the world with a view to the Salvation and preparation of a people for His own possession, for examples:

1. He chose Israel that they might be such a possession (Exodus 19:5f);
2. He has called the church for the same purpose (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9);
3. the incarnation of God in Christ;
4. the atoning death of Christ;
5. the gift and coming of the Holy Spirit;
6. the production and preservation of the Scriptures; and
7. the institution of the church and its ministry are all intended to help save and prepare this people for Himself.

In a very real sense, God's providence is directed toward the production and preservation of saints (Ephesians 3:9f; 5:25-27). It is clear also that God bestows many blessings upon the unsaved people because of the presence of His people among them (Genesis 18:22-33; 2 Kings 3:13f; Matthew 5:13-16).

#### *5.2.4.4 <u>His own glory</u>*

The primary end of God's government is His own glory. He rules for the purpose of manifesting His perfections, including His:

1. holiness or righteousness;
2. power;
3. wisdom;
4. love; and
5. truth.

The providence of God is directed to the exhibition of these qualities of His being:

1. His holiness and righteousness are manifested in His hatred of and opposition to sin;
2. His power is manifested in His work of creation, preservation, providence, and redemption;
3. His wisdom, in His establishing ends and means to these ends;
4. His love, in His provision for His creatures, especially in His provision of Salvation through the gift of His Son; and
5. His truth, in the establishing of the laws of nature and of the mind, and in His faithfulness to His promises.

Thus the primary object of His sovereign rule is the manifestation of His own glory. As He Himself says, "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; for how can My name be profaned? And my glory I will not give to another" (Isaiah 48:11).

### *5.2.5 The means employed in the exercise of divine providence*

The means employed in the exercise of divine providence are classified into two categories:

1. outward affairs; and
2. inward affairs.

#### *5.2.5.1 <u>Outward affairs</u>*

In outward affairs, God employs the laws of nature, such as:

1. He has established the seasons and assured us of food for our subsistence (Genesis 8:22); and
2. He has given man the instinct of self-preservation and the sense of moral responsibility (Romans 1:26; 2:15).

He sometimes supplements these laws by miracles, for examples:

1. He delivered and prepared Israel by a miracle (Exodus 14:21-31);

2. He provided relief in time of war (2 Kings 3:16f);
3. He delivered His servant Elisha (2 Kings 6:18); and
4. He free Peter for further ministry (Acts 12:1-19).

He sometimes brings things to pass by uttering His powerful word, for examples:

1. when He speaks, it is done; when He commands, it stands fast (Psalm 33:9);
2. when He calls for destructive insects, they come (Psalm 105:31, 34);
3. when He speaks the word of healing, sickness vanishes (Matthew 8:8, 13); and
4. when the lawless one will come and for a time rule the world, Christ will appear and destroy him with his powerful word (2 Thessalonians 2:8; cf. Revelation 19:20f).

### *5.2.5.2 Inward affairs*

In the inward affairs of His government, God uses a variety of means:

1. **God uses His Word.** Men are frequently referred to the Scriptures for guidance and direction (Joshua 1:7f; Isaiah 8:20; Colossians 3:16). Kings, as well as subjects, are to be subject to the Word of God (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

2. **God appeals to man's reason in the solution of their problems (Acts 6:2).** God's ways cannot be fathomed by reason, but they are not contrary to sound reason.

3. **God uses persuasion.** He has instituted the ministry to instruct and persuade people of the truth (Jeremiah 7:13; 44:4; Zechariah 7:7; Acts 17:30). Through His servants, God entreats men to be reconciled to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:20).

4. **God uses inner checks and restraints.** Paul was very sensitive to such inner indications of God's will (Acts 16:6f).

5. **God uses outward circumstances.** He leads by closed doors as well as by open doors (1 Corinthians 16:9; Galatians 4:20). It is, of course, always possible that inauspicious circumstances may be a test of our faith rather than a providential hindrance to a certain action. Only prayer and careful study can determine which is the case in any given instance.

6. **God inclines the hearts of men in one direction rather than in another (1 Kings 8:58; Psalm 119:36; Proverbs 21:1; 2 Corinthians 8:16).** He even inclines the hearts of evil men to do His will (2 Kings 19:28; Isaiah 45:1-6; Revelation 17:17).

7. **God sometimes guides men by dreams and visions.** Joseph (Matthew 2:13, 19, 22) and Paul (Acts 16:9f; 22:17f) were thus guided.

8. **In some of His providential dealings, God employs special agents.** These are the angels and the Holy Spirit. It appears as if the angels are used in the outward administration of His government (2 Kings 19:35; Daniel 6:22; 10:5-21; 12:1; Matthew 28:2; Acts 8:26; 12:7-10), and the Holy Spirit in the inward and spiritual part of His rule (Luke 4:1; John 16:7-15; Acts 8:29; 10:19f; 16:6f; Romans 8:14, 26). The former, of course, though great in power, are not omnipotent; the latter, being Himself God, is both omniscient and omnipotent.

### *5.2.6 The theories opposed to the doctrine of providence*

The doctrine of providence is denied by those who do not believe in the true God. Three theories opposed to it may be briefly noted:

1. naturalism;
2. fatalism; and
3. pantheism.

#### *5.2.6.1 Naturalism*

Naturalism holds that nature is the whole of reality. Everything that occurs in the universe is due to the operation of the laws of nature. Man's happiness and chances of success are dependent upon his knowledge of and cooperation with these laws. While the Scriptures recognize the existence of the laws of nature, they do not teach that they operate independently. They represent them as neither self-directing nor self-sustaining. God concurs in all the operations of these laws, both of matter and of mind, and sometimes He acts entirely independent of them. In this way the miracles of the incarnation and resurrection of Christ can be explained.

#### *5.2.6.2 Fatalism*

Fatalism is to be distinguished from determinism. The former holds that all events are determined by fate, instead of by natural causes, and that nothing man can will or do affects the course of events; determinism holds that events take place of necessity, but that they are made necessary by events immediately preceding, to which they stand in a relation of cause and effect. The fatalist may speak of the decreeing power as God, but it is certainly not the God of the Scriptures. Fatalism recognizes the inadequacy of naturalism to explain all that happens and ascribes the events which take place in spite of natural law to the direct operation of fate. The chief objection to fatalism is that it makes the originating cause arbitrary and non-moral, and usually impersonal.

#### *5.2.6.3 Pantheism*

Since all pantheistic theories are necessitarian in nature, they have no real doctrine of providence. Since they are obliged to make the governing cause also the author of sin, they destroy all possibility of true morality. Man, being a part of this pantheistic god, cannot help sinning. Further, these theories cannot explain miracles. They may speak of "mutations" and "emergent evolution," but these ideas cannot explain the miracles of the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ, nor, indeed, any of the other Biblical miracles. Also, they deny the freedom of man. Being part of this world system, man, too, acts of necessity. Yet man feels that in a very real sense he can initiate action and that he is responsible for his conduct. He will not sacrifice his freedom to a logical process or a great mechanism of which he is supposed to be a part.

### *5.2.7 The relation of providence to some special problems*

It is difficult to refrain from adopting one or the other of two extremes: that God is the sole actor in the universe or that man is the sole actor. The truth lies somewhere between these two extremes. This fact has to be kept in mind in connection with our conception of the freedom of man and of prayer. Note these relations briefly:

1. the relation of providence to freedom; and

2. the relation of providence to prayer.

#### *5.2.7.1 The relation of providence to freedom*

As has been said, God sometimes allows man to do as he pleases; that is, He puts no restraints in the way of man's carrying out his wicked desires. Also, God sometimes keeps a man from doing what, in his freedom, he would otherwise do. He uses circumstance, the influence of friends, and inner restraints to accomplish this purpose. Sometimes He controls sin by allowing it to go so far and no further. Finally, God always overrules what man does in order to accomplish His own ends. He makes even the wrath of man to praise Him.

#### *5.2.7.2 The relation of providence to prayer*

Some hold that prayer can have no real effect upon God, since He has already decreed just what He will do in every instance. But that is an extreme position. "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2) must not be ignored. God does some things only in answer to prayer; He does some other things without anyone's praying; and He does some things contrary to the prayers made. In His omniscience He has taken all these things into account, and in His providence He sovereignly works them out in accordance with His own purpose and plan. If we do not pray for the things that we might get by prayer, we do not get them. If He wants some things done for which no one prays, He will do them without anyone's praying. If we pray for things contrary to His will, He refuses to grant them. Thus, there is a perfect harmony between His purpose and providence, and man's freedom.

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# Chapter Seventeen - The Pre-existence and Deity of Christ

God's method of redemption was through the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). The redeemer was to be born of a woman, born under the law (Galatians 4:4). He needed to be both human and divine so that He might be the mediator between man and God and reconcile man to God. Reconciliation could only be accomplished through the incarnation, God being made flesh. The purpose of this chapter is help the readers to understand the pre-existence (also known as the pre-incarnation) and deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This chapter is divided into four major parts, they are:

1. various historical views of the person of Christ;
2. the pre-existence of Christ;
3. Christ's riches in eternity; and
4. the deity of Christ.

## 1. VARIOUS HISTORICAL VIEWS OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

There has been a great diversity of views concerning His person, the most outstanding are as follows:

1. Ebionites;
2. Gnostics;
3. Arians;
4. Apollinarians;
5. Nestorians;
6. Eutychians; and
7. Biblical (Traditional Orthodox View).

### 1.1 Ebionites

This group was a remnant of extreme Judaizing Christianity. They taught that Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, so fulfilled the Mosaic law that God chose Him to be His Messiah. The consciousness that God chose Him to be the Messiah came at His baptism, when He received the Holy Spirit. The deity and virgin birth of Christ were denied. The belief of Christ's deity seemed to be incompatible with monotheism. The heresy in this view is obvious.

### 1.2 Gnostics

Whereas the Ebionites demonstrated a Jewish perversion from the truth, the Gnostics represent a Gentile perversion. This system had a basic dualism running through it:

1. the higher and the lower;
2. the spirit and the flesh; and
3. the good and the evil.

Because flesh was considered evil, surely God could not become flesh, at least not in the orthodox interpretation of the incarnation. Thus, the person of Christ was approached in one of two ways:

1. Cerinthian Gnosticism taught that the divine Christ came upon the human Jesus at His baptism and departed shortly before Jesus' death.
2. Docetic Gnosticism held that Jesus was actually a kind of phantom, and only had the appearance of flesh.

Incipient Gnosticism is touched upon in the epistles of Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 John, Jude and Revelation. The doctrinal error as it relates to the person of Christ is strongly refuted in such passages as Colossians 1:15-18; 2:9; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 2:22f; 4:2-6, 15; 5:1-6; and 2 John 7.

### 1.3 Arians

In the early fourth century, Arius of Alexandria championed the position that though Christ may be called God, He was not true God and in no way equal with

God in essence or eternity. Before time was, Christ was created. He, the *Logos* of God, was the first-born of all creation, and the agent in fashioning the world. In the incarnation, the *Logos* entered a human body, taking the place of the human spirit. Thus, Christ was neither fully God nor fully man. Such verses as Mark 13:32; John 5:19; 14:28; and 1 Corinthians 15:28 were used in support (Please read section 5 of Chapter 15 of this course for the correct interpretation). The Nicean Council, held in AD 325, rejected Arianism as heresy and declared that Jesus Christ was begotten, not made, and was of one substance with the Father.

## 1.4 Apollinarians

The Nicean Council did not bring the controversy to an end, for the relationship of the two natures of Christ to one another was not clarified. There was a danger of two extremes:

1. on the one hand, the divine nature could also absorb the human that the human would lose its identity; or
2. on the other hand, the identities of the two natures could be so separate that Christ virtually would be two persons.

Apollinaris, taking the former position, argued that Jesus had a true body and animal soul, but not a rational spirit or mind. The *Logos* filled the place of human intelligence. This view did honor to the deity of Christ, but it had the effect of destroying His full humanity. The First Council of Constantinople, held in AD 381, condemned this as heresy.

## 1.5 Nestorians

Nestorius denied the real union of the two natures of Christ into one person, and implied a twofold personality. The *Logos* dwelt in the man Jesus, so that the union between the two natures was somewhat analogous to the indwelling of the Spirit. This endangered the true deity of Christ, since He was distinguished from other men in whom God dwelt only by the plenitude of His presence and the absolute control that the divine in Christ exercised over the human. The Synod of Ephesus,

in AD 431, condemned this teaching.

### 1.6 Eutychians

The Eutychians were led to the opposite extreme from the Nestorians. They held that there were not two natures but only one nature in Christ. All of Christ was divine, even His body. The divine and the human in Christ were mingled into one, which constituted a third nature. The Eutychians were often called Monophysites because they virtually reduced the two natures of Christ to one. The Council of Chalcedon, in 451, condemned this doctrine.

The Monophysite controversy then took a new turn. Some followers of this view now taught that Christ had but one will. But the Third Council of Constantinople, in AD 681, condemned the Monothelite doctrine, declaring that in Christ there are two distinct natures, a human and a divine, and that therefore there are of necessity two intelligences and two wills.

### 1.7 Biblical (Traditional Orthodox View)

The Council of Chalcedon, in AD 451, established what has been the position of the Christian church. There is one Jesus Christ, but He has two natures, the human and the divine. He is truly God and truly man, composed of body and rational soul. He is consubstantial with the Father in His deity and consubstantial with man in His humanity, except for sin. In His deity He was begotten of the Father before time, and in His humanity born of the virgin Mary. The distinction between the natures is not diminished by their union, but the specific character of each nature is preserved and they are united in one person. Jesus is not split or divided into two persons; He is one person, the Son of God.

## 2. THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

### 2.1 The Definition of the Pre-existence of Christ

"Pre-existence" when applied to the person of Jesus Christ means that He existed before this created realm, and there was never a time when He did not exist; He

had no beginning. God is the uncaused cause of all things. He always has been and always will be. He had no beginning and will never have an end. So, not only is God beyond the beginning and ending of time; He exists outside of time. And since the person of Jesus Christ is God, there should be evidence that He, too, existed in "eternity past" with His Father.

## 2.2 The Importance of the Doctrine of the Pre-existence of Christ

Christ's existence prior to His conception and birth is assumed and used as the basis of the doctrines of incarnation and atonement. His birth in Bethehem was not His origin, only His incarnation. Indeed, how could there be an incarnation without a previous existence? To deny the latter renders the former impossible. Christ's pre-existence is the foundation on which the whole superstructure of the Christian faith rests. If He was not pre-existent, He cannot be God, and if He is not God, He cannot be Creator and Redeemer.

## 2.3 The Uniqueness of the Birth of Christ

Jesus was unique among men in that His birth did not mark His origin, but only His appearance as a man on the stage of time. Of no other person would it be possible to distinguish between His birth and His origin, or to say that His life did not begin when He was born. His origin was not related to His birth, nor His nature dependent only on human ancestry. His nature was derived from His eternal being. He did not become God's Son at the incarnation, or when He rose from the dead. He is God, supreme and without beginning.

We will look at three kinds of evidences which support the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ:

1. appearances of Christ in the Old Testament record (called "theophanies," meaning "a visible manifestation of a deity"; or, to use a theological term, "Christophanies").
2. Old Testament statements of the pre-existence of Christ; and
3. New Testament statements of the pre-existence of Christ.

## 2.4 The Appearances of Christ in the Old Testament

Occasionally in the Old Testament a mysterious person appears to speak for God. This person accepts worship as God, something never done even by angels. Theologians call this appearance **theophanies**. This person has the the following names:

1. Son of God (Psalm 2:7; Daniel 3:24-25);
2. God (Psalm 45:6);
3. Jehovah (Genesis 19:24; 18:13f; 17-20, 33; Hosea 1:7);
4. captain of the host of the Lord (Joshua 5:13-15); and
5. the angel of the Lord (Genesis 16:7-14; 22:11-18; Exodus 3:2-5; 14:19; Numbers 22:22-35; Judges 6:11-24).

### *2.4.1 Son of God*

Although the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, often appears in the Old Testament, He is never referred to as Christ. In Psalm 2:7 Jehovah calls Him His Son.

Three faithful men in the fiery furnace, and the Son of God was walking with in the midst of the fire. One can readily understand Nebuchadnezzar's astonishment at what happened. "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? ... Lo, I see four men loose" (Daniel 3:24-25). The king recognized the fourth figure as a divine being.

### *2.4.2 God*

In Psalm 45:6 Jehovah calls Him God.

### *2.4.3 Jehovah*

More frequently He is called Jehovah. Note the usage in Genesis 19:24, "The Lord [Jehovah] rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord [Jehovah] out of Heaven." Undoubtedly, this is the same one who is called the

Lord [Jehovah] in Genesis 18:13f, 17-20, 33. God said, "But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the Lord [Jehovah] their God" (Hosea 1:7).

### *2.4.4 Captain of the host of the Lord*

An example of such an appearance is in Joshua 5:13-15. It takes place just prior to Israel's first encounter with the Canaanites while Joshua is outside of Jericho, preparing to attack it. This "man," as He is called, identifies Himself as "captain of the host of the Lord," a reference to the heavenly, angelic host. Joshua bows down to Him and calls Him "Lord" and refers to himself as "servant."

### *2.4.5 The angel of the Lord (Most Often)*

Most often He is called "the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah]" in the following Old Testament Scriptures:

1. He appeared to Hagar and told her to return and submit herself to Sarah, adding that He would multiply her posterity (Genesis 16:7-14).
2. He appeared to Abraham and stayed his hand when he was about to slay his son Isaac (Genesis 22:11-8).
3. He told Jacob that He would prosper him in the face of Laban's unfair dealings with him (Genesis 31:11-13).
4. To Moses He appeared in a flame of fire out of the bush and asked him not to draw near, for the ground was holy (Exodus 3:2-6).
5. He went before Israel when they left Egypt (Exodus 14:19; cf. 23:20; 32:34). Paul says that the rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4).
6. When Balaam came to curse Israel, He intercepted him and instructed him to say only such things as He would speak to him (Numbers 22:22-35).
7. He came to Gideon when he was secretly threshing wheat to hide it from the Midianites, and told him to go and deliver Israel (Judges 6:11-24).
8. To Manoah He appeared and promised him a son, whom his wife called Samson (Judges 13:2-24).
9. When David sinned in numbering the people, God sent the angel with a

pestilence (1 Chronicles 21:1-27).
10. When Elijah fled before Jezebel, He came and refreshed him under the juniper tree (1 Kings 19:5-7).
11. No doubt it was the same person that spoke to Elijah at Mt. Horeb (1 Kings 19:9-18).
12. In the days when Sennacherib invaded Judah, He came to the rescue of the distressed Jews and smote 185,000 Assyrians in one night (2 Kings 19:35).
13. In Zechariah 1:11 He stands among the myrtle trees and receives the reports of various messengers.
14. In Zechariah 3:1 Joshua the high priest is represented as standing before this same angel.

The appearance of "the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah]" in the Old Testament is usually a **theophany**, which is a technical term for an appearance of God Himself in a form like a man, so that He can be seen by men. The God who in His essence is invisible (Colossians 1:15; John 1:18) makes Himself visible in this way.

The translators and editors of the New King James Version (1982) have used the capitalized form **Angel** in those places where in their judgment the expression indicates a theophany, and angel in those places which seem to introduce a created angel.

In the light of John 1:18 it would appear that appearances of God in the Old Testament were actually appearances of the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son, who is the Revealer of God. Appearances of "the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah]" cease after the incarnation of Christ which supports conclusions that He was the preincarnate Christ.

### *2.4.5.1 Biblical evidence in Genesis 16:7-14*

**The Angel of the LORD [Jehovah] spoke with God's own authority.** The Angel of the LORD [Jehovah] said to Hagar, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand" (Genesis 16:9). This is not a suggestion, but a command. This Angel spoke for and with the authority of God. Note that this command

provided guidance. Hagar did not know where she was going or what to do, but the angel knew what she was to do (return) and how she was to go about doing it (accept the submissive role appropriate to her position in the family).

**The Angel of the LORD [Jehovah] can guarantee the future!** Then the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah] said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude" (Genesis 16:10). The Angel of the LORD [Jehovah] can guarantee the future! The word "I will" assumed not just knowledge of the future, but actual control of the future insofar as Hagar's child was concerned.

**Hagar identified the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah] as the LORD Himself!** Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" (Genesis 16:13). Hagar, recognizing this Angel's inherent authority, identified Him not as an angel, but as the LORD Himself! Hagar was convinced that the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah] was more than an angel, that in meeting Him she met God cloaked in angelic form.

Hagar's conclusion, that her experience of the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah] was a theophany - an appearance of God in human or angel form - has been accepted by many Bible scholars. Others argue that the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah] is one of the special "named" angels of Scripture, one who is so intimate with God that his words can be considered those of God Himself. While other angels who appear to human beings display knowledge of what happens in the material realm and service as God's messengers, no other angel makes promises as if he were God Himself. Only the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah] makes first person pronouncements about the future, such as "I will multiply your descendants' (cf. Judges 2:1).

### *2.4.5.2 Biblical evidence in Judges 6:11-24*

The change of expression from "the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah]" (Judges 6:11-12) to "the LORD [Jehovah]" (Judges 6:14, 16, 23) is evidence that this was

indeed a theophany.

The account shows Gideon's own progress of understanding. At first he addresses his Visitors as "my lord" (Judges 6:13), a translation of the Hebrew *adoni*, which is used of men.

Later he calls Him "my Lord," using the Hebrew *Adonai*, which is a name for God (Judges 6:15).

Gideon's exlamation in verse 22 shows that he is finally aware of being in the presence of God:

> Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah]. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face."

This clearly implies that to see the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah], is to see the LORD [Jehovah] Himself. Gideon instantly built an altar to commemorate this appearance and his commission. Because God spoke peace to Gideon, he named the altar "Yahweh-shalom", that is, "The LORD is peace" (Judges 6:24).

### *2.4.5.3 Biblical evidence in Judges 13:2-24*

Manoah's wife, in speaking to her husband, describes the unusual visitor as a "Man," but also an "Angel." The text calls Him "the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah]" (Judges 13:3); "the Angel of God" (Judges 13:9); and "God" (Judges 13:22).

At first Manoah does not know who this Person is (Judges 13:16). But the context seems to denote a theophany. After the event Manoah acknowledges that he has seen God (Judges 13:22).

The name which the Visitor gives - "wonderful" (Judges 13:18) - is used of the Messiah in the famous prophecy of Isaiah 9:6.

### *2.4.5.4 Biblical evidence in Exodus 3:2-6*

God (compare "the Angel of the LORD in verse 2" with "God" in verses 4-6) appeared to Moses and gave him a personal call to the service of delivering Israel from Egypt. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the experience of Moses "at the bush" (Luke 20:37). Exodus 3:2-6 clearly shows to us that "the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah]" is actually an appearance of God Himself in a form like a man.

### *2.4.6 Conclusion*

Micah 5:2 informs us that prior to His birth Messiah made appearances. From all these Scriptures, we learn that Christ had a distinct personal existence during the Old Testament period and that He had definite and repeated dealings with the Israelites.

## 2.5 Old Testament Statements of the Pre-existence of Christ

The following Old Testament Scriptures have the intimations of the pre-existence of Christ:

1. Proverbs 8:22-31;
2. Micah 5:2; and
3. Isaiah 9:6.

### *2.5.1 Proverbs 8:22-31*

*"The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or over the earth was ... When He prepared the Heavens, I was there ... When He appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him" (Proverbs 8:22-31).*

An illuminating glimpse of the relationship of eternal Father and eternal Son is suggested in Proverbs 8:22-31. It would appear that here "wisdom" is more than the personification of an attribute of God, but is rather a foreshadowing of Christ,

who is the wisdom of God. "Wisdom" is personified in much the same way as is "the Word" (John 1:1). Between the personified divine wisdom in Proverbs and the incarnate divine Word in John there are striking correspondences.

### *2.5.2 Micah 5:2*

*"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2).*

Through the prophet Micah, God tells His people that the Messiah's existence would not begin in Bethlehem, but that He is "from long ago." The last word in the verse, the Hebrew word *olam*, is translated "eternity." However, Hebrew scholars are disagreed whether *olam* should be "days of old" or "eternity." For example, in Micah 7:14 the same word is clearly "days of old." But if we are correct in translating this word "eternity," then this text supports not only the pre-existence of Christ, in the form of theophanies, but also His eternal nature, His timelessness.

### *2.5.3 Isaiah 9:6*

*"For a child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).*

The strongest statement here is "Eternal Father." Possibly the Hebrew phrase should be rendered "father (possessor) of eternity," which would mean "self-existent one"; or it means that "Messiah is eternally a Father to His people, guarding, supplying and caring for their needs." This second interpretation seems to be most widely accepted. Incidentally, there is no teaching here that Christ is identical with the Father. The point is that He is eternal.

Another statement found in the first part of the sentence, "A child will be born," speaks definitely of His birth in Bethlehem. "A son will be given" implies His pre-

existence, since a gift usually exists prior to the time it is actually given.

## 2.6 New Testament Statements of the Pre-existence of Jesus Christ

Our Lord Jesus Christ was conscious of a previous existence. He spoke of the glory He had with the Father before the world existed (John 17:5). He claimed pre-existence in explicit and unmistakable terms, e.g. "I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world" (John 16:27-28). We can know the pre-existence of Christ from the following explicit New Testament statements:

1. John 1:1 and 1 John 1:1;
2. John 3:13; 17:24 and 19:9-11;
3. John 8:56-58;
4. John 17:5;
5. John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Colossians 1:16-17; and
6. Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 1:2.

### *2.6.1 John 1:1 and 1 John 1:1*

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).*

In the eternal past, Christ "was with God," indeed, He "was God" (John 1:1). This was "before the world was" (John 17:5). He is called "the Word" (John 1:1, 14; Revelation 19:13). A word is a medium of manifestation, a means of communication, and a method of revelation. In harmony with this interpretation, we read in Hebrews 1:2 that God "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son." That John conceives of the *Logos* as personal is evident from the structure of his sentence. He says *theos en ho logos*, which means that the *Logos* is God, but does not mean that He is all of God. If he had said, *ho theos en ho logos*, he would have made the terms God and Logos convertible terms and so have taught Sabellianism.

Both John 1:1 ("In the beginning was the Word") and 1 John 1:1 ("that which was from the beginning") undoubtedly mean the beginning of time as recorded in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In other words, the Son of God was present at creation. John 1:3 says further that this Word created all things. Since Genesis 1:1 attributes creation to God, this implies both pre-existence and eternal existence. To the Hebrew reader who would naturally make these associations it is safe to say that pre-existence and eternal existence are one and the same.

### *2.6.2 John 3:13; 17:24 and 19:9-11*

Jesus described Himself to Nicodemus as "He that came down from Heaven" (John 3:13). He often spoke out of the consciousness of His own pre-existence. "Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). When Pilate asked Jesus, "Where are You from?" He remained silent, but left no doubt of His pre-existence (John 19:9-11).

### *2.6.3 John 8:56-58*

*"'Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and He saw it, and was glad.' The Jews therefore said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM'" (John 8:56-58).*

Reacting violently to Jesus' last statement, the Jews picked up stones to throw at Him. They took it as a clear claim to pre-existence and hence to eternal existence, an attribute of God. Jesus' claim in the original Aramaic probably appeared to the Jews to be a blatant play on words; "I am" is an expression of existence, but the name of God, Yahweh, is built upon the same root ("self-existent One"). Furthermore, the words, "I AM" are grammatically incorrect, taking the place of the more usual, "I was." Evidently, Jesus had another message behind the use of these out-of-place words - to express His eternal existence. These words are a clear assertion of pre-existence and also a claim of identity with the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

### *2.6.4 John 17:5*

*"Glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5).*

In His prayer, Jesus voiced His yearning for a resumption of the glorious relationship that had eternally existed between Himself and His Father, until interrupted by His incarnation. This is not just pre-existence, but also actual and conscious existence at the Father's side. This yearning throws light on His frequent withdrawals into mountain solitude where He could recapture something of the atmosphere of His Heavenly home.

### *2.6.5 John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Colossians 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. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:16-17).*

Scripture repeatedly declares that Christ had a part in creation. The claim to be creator is, of course, a claim to eternal existence. Furthermore, the expression "before all things" is a phrase which not only declares His temporal priority to the universe but also suggests His superiority over it. John writes that "all things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:3; cf. v.10). Paul says that "through Him are all things, and we through Him" (1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16-17). These Scriptures represent Christ as creator, preserver, and goal of creation. Particular attention may be called to the fact that when God was about to create man there was first a council in the Godhead. God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Proverbs 8:30 says, "Then I was beside Him, as a master workman."

### *2.6.6 Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 1:2*

Paul calls Him "the first-born of all creation" (Colossians 1:15; cf. its messianic use in Psalm 89:27). This title does not mean that Christ Himself was the first one created; what the title does mean is that Christ, existing as He did before all creation, exercises the privilege of primogeniture as Lord of all creation, the divinely appointed "heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2). He was there when creation began, and it was for Him as well as through Him that the whole work was done. We know very little of Christ's work during this period, except that the Father through Him made the world (Hebrews 1:2) and that He chose the believers in Him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

## 3. CHRIST'S RICHES IN ETERNITY

Paul links His precedence in time with His preeminence as Creator and Preserver. "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17). He compresses into three pregnant words the condition of our Lord in His former state of glory: "He was rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). This enhances the magnitude of the love that moved Him to lay aside "the splendours and prerogatives of deity, the exercise of infinite power and the disclosures of supreme majesty."

"His love transcends all human measure," exclaimed *P.T. Forsyth*, "if only, out of love, He renounced the glory of heavenly being for all He here became. Only then could we grasp the full stay and comfort of words like these. 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' Unlike us, He chose the oblivion of birth and the humiliation of life. He consented not only to die, but to be born ... What He gave up was the fulness, power and immunity of a heavenly life."

He was certainly not rich in the sense in which we use the word. Then in what did these riches that He renounced for our enrichment consist? Divine riches cannot be weighed by earth's scales. They were, of course, spiritual, not material. And are not all true riches spiritual?

Among others, the following three elements have been suggested as constituting His riches in His heavenly home:

1. He was rich in home love;
2. He was rich in home harmony; and
3. He was rich in home resources.

## 3.1 He Was Rich in Home Love

"My Father's house" (John 14:2) was a phrase that seemed to linger on His lips, conjuring up as it did nostalgic memories of past joys and loving fellowship. In His high-priestly prayer He had said to His Father, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Not luxurious furnishings or priceless *objets d' art*, but mutual understanding and reciprocal love are the true riches of the home. In His Father's house, those had been the Son's from the unbeginning eternity, and in addition, the love and adoration of all the heavenly host. He was rich in home love.

## 3.2 He Was Rich in Home Harmony

The unity of the Godhead was unmarred by discord. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit delight to honour one another. "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30), Jesus claimed, implying they were one not only in essence, but also in attitude and purpose. The Persons of the Trinity co-operated for our redemption in perfect harmony and reciprocity. The Father planned. The Son made the plan possible of realization by yielding up His life to death on the cross. The Spirit bent His fiery energies to the implementation of the plan. It was His appreciation of this harmony that inspired our Lord to pray for His followers: "That they may be one, as We are" (John 17:11). The harmony of His heavenly home was complete and satisfying.

## 3.3 He Was Rich in Home Resources

Every Biblical allusion to the Father's house is one of surpassing beauty and splendor. It seems as though the inspired writers, at a loss to describe its magnificence and great generosity, ransacked the universe for conceptions to convey something of the glories that Christ renounced in the incarnation. "And the

building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones ... And the twelve gates were twelve pearls ... and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" (Revelation 21:18-21).

In His Father's house, every created being was at His immediate command. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53) was Jesus' challenge to His enemies. There, for Him to desire was to have, and it was his desire that His disciples should share in His Father's bounty. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you" (John 16:23).

## 4. THE DEITY OF CHRIST

### 4.1 The Definition of the Deity of Christ

The term "deity" when applied to our Lord Jesus Christ means that He is:

1. God;
2. eternal;
3. all-holy;
4. almighty;
5. on an absolute equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit; and
6. of whose person and glory He is the accurate expression (Hebrews 1:3).

### 4.2 The Importance of the Doctrine of the Deity of Christ

Is any other question so far-reaching and important as the question: *Who was Jesus? Is He or is He not God?*

The Importance of the doctrine of the deity of Christ is best summarized in the following statements:

1. If Jesus is not God, then there is no Christianity.
2. The very basis of Christianity is that Jesus was God manifest in the flesh.

3. The deity of Christ is the key doctrine of Scripture.

### *4.2.1 If Jesus is not God, then there is no Christianity*

If Jesus is not God, then there is no Christianity, and we who worship Him are nothing more than idolaters. Conversely, if He is God, those who say He was merely a good man, or even the best of men, are blasphemers. More serious still, if He is not God, then He is a blasphemer in the fullest sense of the word. If He is not God, He is not even good.

### *4.2.2 The very basis of Christianity is that Jesus was God manifest in the flesh*

The very basis of Christianity is that Jesus was God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). If that assertation can be overthrown, then the whole superstructure of Christianity crashes to the ground, and we are bound to assume that Jesus was either a shameless impostor or that He suffered from a delusion. In either case He is disqualified from being our Saviour, and the most astounding phenomenon as well as the most potent factor in human affairs is left entirely without explanation.

### *4.2.3 The deity of Christ is the key doctrine of Scripture*

The deity of Christ is the key doctrine of Scripture. Reject it, and the Bible becomes a confused jumble of words devoid of any unifying theme. Accept it, and the Bible becomes an intelligible and ordered revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is the center of Christianity, and the conception we form of Christianity is therefore the conception we have of Him.

## 4.3 Our Belief in the Deity of Christ Is Based on Our Faith in the Scriptures

Our belief in the deity of Christ is based on our faith in the Scriptures. We believe Him to be the Son of God because we accept the teaching of Holy Scripture and its statements about Him. When we assert belief in the deity of Christ we mean that the person known to history as Jesus of Nazareth existed in eternity before He became man as the infinite and eternal God, the second Person of the Trinity.

## 4.4 Denials of Christ's Deity

It was not until the fourth century that anyone began to attack the belief of Christians in the deity of Christ. Then it was *Arius* the noted heretic who led the attack. From the form his attack took, it is apparent that until then Christians had accepted the doctrine without question. His arguments were not couched to correct an existing heresy, but to overthrow the currently accepted view.

Without question, the last battle of the Christian age, as the first, will centre in the person of Christ. It is significant that most of the modern religious cults are in error concerning the person and deity of Christ:

1. *Spiritism* asserts: "it is an absurd idea that Jesus was more divine than any other man."
2. *Christian Science* claims: "Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus Himself declared, but the Son of God."
3. *Jehovah's Witnesses* boldly state: "Jesus was not God the Son."

In order to defend the doctrine of the deity of Christ, we will look at the following evidences:

1. the creedal testimony;
2. the personal testimony;
3. the powers and prerogatives of Christ;
4. the witness of the four gospels;
5. the witness of the other New Testament passages;
6. the witness of Christ's claims;
7. the witness of the spread of Christianity; and
8. the witness of Christ's transforming power.

## 4.5 The Creedal Testimony

Creedal testimony to Christ's deity abounds, beginning with that first confession of Peter, which the Lord attributed not to keen spiritual insight, but to divine

revelation: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Throughout the centuries there has been an unbroken chain of creedal testimony to the Godhood of Christ. From many, three creedal statements are selected:

1. the Apostles Creed (AD 165);
2. the Nicene Creed (AD 325); and
3. the Westminster Confession (now more than three centuries old).

### *4.5.1 The Apostles Creed (AD 165)*

"I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord ...."

### *4.5.2 The Nicene Creed (AD 325)*

"I believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God ... being of one substance with the Father ..."

### *4.5.3 The Westminster Confession (AD 1643)*

"The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature ..."

## 4.6 The Personal Testimony

While personal testimony is not in itself proof, it is significant that there is a volume of testimony bearing on this point from unbelievers as well as believers.

### *4.6.1 Unbelievers*

Unbelievers have outdone each other in applauding the unique character of Christ, and in a court of law, favourable evidence from a witness for the opposing side carries great weight. Here are some tributes from unbelievers and even enemies of Christianity:

1. *Ernest Renan*, the French infidel: "Repose now in Thy glory, noble founder. Thy work is finished! Thy divinity is established ... Between Thee and God there will no longer be distinction ... Whatever may be the surprise of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed."

2. *Lord Byron*, profligate poet: "If ever a man was God, or God was man, Jesus Christ was both."

3. *J.J. Rousseau*, immoral atheist: "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God."

4. *Napoleon*, the ruthless conqueror: "I know men, and I tell you, Jesus was not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. This resemblance does not exist ... Jesus Christ alone founded His Empire upon love, and at this hour millions would die for Him. In every other existence but that of Christ, how many imperfections."

### *4.6.2 Believers*

Believers have added their testimony and of these a few are selected:

1. *Daniel Webster*, American statesman: "I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God."

2. *William Shakespeare*, immortal poet: "Jesus Christ, my Saviour."

3. *John Milton*, blind poet, "Begotten Son, Divine Similitude."

4. *William E. Gladstone*, Prime Minister of Britain: "All that I live for is based on the divinity of Christ."

5. *Alexander Whyte*, Scottish preacher: "The longer I live, the firmer is my faith rooted in the Godhead of my Redeemer. No one short of the Son of

God could meet my case. I must have one who is able to save to the utmost."

## 4.7 The Powers and Prerogatives of Christ

The powers and prerogatives of Christ is one of the strong evidences supporting the deity of Christ. Jesus demonstrates the attributes of God:

1. omnipotence;
2. omniscience;
3. omnipresence;
4. self-existence;
5. creation;
6. resurrection;
7. judgment;
8. works miracles;
9. casts out demons;
10. forgives sin; and
11. accepts worship.

### *4.7.1 Omnipotence*

He Himself laid claim to omnipotence. "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). On occasions He exhibited this power over:

1. nature (Matthew 8:27);
2. demons (Luke 4:36);
3. angels (Matthew 26:53);
4. disease (Luke 4:40); and
5. death (Mark 5:41-42).

### *4.7.2 Omniscience*

Jesus displays omniscience when He reads Nathaniel's mind (John 1:48-51). Omniscience is also implied in the statement "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men" (John 2:24; see also John 4:29; 16:30;

Colossians 2:3).

### *4.7.3 Omnipresence*

The promise subjoined to our Lord's Great Commission involves the omnipresence of Christ. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

### *4.7.4 Self-existence*

He asserted His own self-existence in these words: "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself" (John 5:26; see also John 8:57-58; Revelation 1:8).

### *4.7.5 Creation, resurrection and judgment*

Actions are ascribed to Christ that are possible to deity alone:

1. creation (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:10);
2. resurrection (John 5:28-29); and
3. judgment (John 5:27).

### *4.7.6 Works miracles, casts out demons and forgives sin,*

He works miracles (John 2:11), casts out demons (Luke 8:28-33) and forgives sin (Mark 2:7).

### *4.7.7 Accepts worship*

When Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28), Jesus did not rebuke him for blasphemy, but accepted his ascription of deity without objection or hesitation. Contrast this with the reaction of the angel, when John fell down to worship him: "See thou do it not" (Revelation 22:8-9).

## 4.8 The Witness of the Four Gospels

The four gospels are the main source of our knowledge of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament makes its contribution to the subject. References to Jehovah in the Old Testament are applied to Christ in the New Testament. That is inexplicable and unwarranted if He was not God. Yet, as strict monotheists, the New Testament writers constantly use these ascriptions without any explanation or apparent consciousness of incongruity. In illustration of this, compare Matthew 3:3 with Isaiah 40:3; Ephesians 4:7-8 with Psalm 68:18; 1 Peter 3:15 with Isaiah 8:13.

The witness of the four gospels is credible because of the following reasons:

1. The four gospel writers could not have the ability to invent such incomparable figure.
2. The atmosphere in which the gospel writers lived was hostile to the message they recorded.
3. The Christ of the Bible had historical reality.
4. The four gospels are consistent.

### *4.8.1 The four gospel writers could not have the ability to invent such incomparable figure*

The four evangelists are obviously depicting a real and not an imaginary character. It has been suggested that they created the story out of their own inner consciousness, but that assumption is incredible. How could those "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13) with such consummate skill invent such an incomparable figure? As well expect four artisans to take up palette and brush and combine to produce a masterpiece in art eclipsing a Raphael!

### *4.8.2 The atmosphere in which the gospel writers lived was hostile to the message they recorded*

Again, the moral and religious atmosphere in which those men lived was entirely hostile to the message they recorded. How could provincial, exclusive Jews, with their scorn of the Gentiles, paint such a glowing portrait of a Messiah whose love

embraced both Jew and Gentile?

### *4.8.3 The Christ of the Bible had historical reality*

To contend that the Christ of the Bible is the offspring of mere human imagination and had no historical reality, would make the gospels as great a miracle in the realm of literature as the living Christ in the realm of history. *Ernest Renan* remarked that it would take a Jesus to invent a Jesus. *J.J. Rousseau* contended that it is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one should form the subject of it.

### *4.8.4 The four gospels are consistent*

The four gospels combine to present a character absolutely unique, the one universal Man. Although He came of the most exclusive of races, He Himself bore no race mark. No other man has escaped this. Each gospel presents identically the same character. The Christ of Mark says and does nothing inconsistent with the Christ of Matthew. And more remarkable still, the New Testament epistles continue to present "this same Jesus."

The gospel narratives are so thoroughly saturated with the assumption of His deity, that it crops out in quite unexpected ways and places. In three passages in Matthew's record, for example, He is represented as speaking most naturally of "His angels" (Matthew 13:41; 16:27; 24:31).

## 4.9 The Witness of the Other New Testament Passages

The witness of the other New Testament passages are as follows:

1. John 1:1;
2. Romans 1:4;
3. Philippians 2:6;
4. Colossians 1:15-17;
5. Colossians 2:9; and
6. Hebrew 1:1-8.

### *4.9.1 John 1:1*

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). John 1:14 clearly identifies the "Word" as Jesus who "dwelt among us." He was, first of all, pre-existent, or "in the beginning." Second, He was "with" God; that is, He was in the presence of God yet a distinct personality in His own right. Finally, the climax of the sentence is in the words, "The Word was God." This teaches the full deity of the Word without saying that the Word is the same person as God, because the previous phrase, "the Word was with God," clearly says that the Word is distinct from God as an individual personality. In other words, Jesus Christ is a distinct member of the triune Godhead. He is eternal ("in the beginning") and He is full deity ("Word was God").

### *4.9.2 Romans 1:4*

Paul says that the resurrection "declares" that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Romans 1:4). This perhaps is the conclusive issue. All the evidence to which we have referred is meaningless apart from the fact that Jesus rose from the dead.

### *4.9.3 Philippians 2:6*

"He existed in the form of God" (Philippians 2:6). The word "existed" can be literally translated "was existing." This supports the idea of eternal existence, rather than existence at a point in time or for a limited duration of time. According to the context, this existence is prior to His "taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men," His birth in Bethlehem.

"Form" means the outward manifestation of the inner reality in classical Greek, thus "essence." Possibly it means "glory," since "form" and "glory" are synonymous in the Greek Old Testament. In either case, "form of God" means that Jesus is God. This is confirmed further by the fact that in Philippians 2:7 Jesus took on the "form of a bondservant," which surely means that He truly was a servant.

### *4.9.4 Colossians 1:15*

Several words and phrases are especially revealing of Jesus' deity in this passage:

1. "He is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15a). The "image" here is quite similar in meaning to the "exact representation" of Hebrews 1:3. For example, it could pertain to the stamp of a dye on a coin, or the imprint of a king's signet ring on wax. The result is an accurate image of the dye or the ring. In the same way, Jesus is an accurate representation of God. We assume this image is in reference to God's moral or personal attributes, since for example, infinity cannot be represented in anything finite.

2. "He is ... the firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15b). The Jewish "firstborn" son occupied a superior role in the family, especially as the primary heir, receiving two thirds of the family estate. As the Son of God, Jesus Christ is entitled to all the rights of a firstborn, having first place in everything, and preeminence over all creation.

### *4.9.5 Colossians 2:9*

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). "Fullness" means completeness; thus "fullness of Deity" means that Jesus is fully or completely God. Paul avoids the absurd by qualifying this statement with the words, "in bodily form," for the infinite God cannot be contained in a body; rather Jesus was a means of the full expression of the moral attributes of God.

### *4.9.6 Hebrew 1:1-8*

Here, the writer to the Hebrews makes a classic statement of the deity of Christ while setting forth His superiority as a spokesman for God:

1. "God ... has spoken to us in His Son" (Hebrew 1:2) and "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee" (Hebrew 1:5). According to John 5:18, to be the Son of God is to be equal with God; it is not merely a loving relationship. For such a claim, the Jews were prepared to stone Jesus.

2. "His Son ... through whom also He made the world" (Hebrew 1:2). In light of Genesis 1:1, this makes Jesus Christ one with the God (Hebrew, *Elohim*) of the Old Testament.

3. "He is the radiance of His glory" (Hebrew 1:3). "Radiance" here means "expression." The writer is telling us that God's "glory," His collective attributes, is found in Jesus Christ.

4. "He is ... the exact representation of His nature" (Hebrew 1:3). The term "representation" means "character." It is the same word used to describe an impression by a metal object upon a pliable surface. The emphasis is upon the precision or exactness of this impression. Jesus accurately, exactly, represents the moral character of God.

5. "He ... upholds all things by the word of His power" (Hebrew 1:3). Jesus Christ acts as the agent of preservation in our world through the laws of the physical universe.

6. "But of the Son He says, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever'" (Hebrew 1:8). "Throne" is a figure of power. God the Father is addressing His Son here, and He Himself ascribes deity to the Son. The power or sovereignty, "Thy throne," belongs to the one addressed, and that is the Son. If the Son is sovereign, He is God, for sovereignty is a divine attribute. It is not only a declaration that the Son possesses eternal power, but also He is God.

## 4.10 The Witness of Christ's Claims

No other man in history has made claims for himself that parallel those made by Christ. He evinced a sublime self-consciousness of His own person and work. Christ preached Himself. "He distinctly, repeatedly, energetically preaches Himself," says *Canon H.P. Liddon*. The fact that He was "meek and lowly in heart," and that He sought nothing for Himself, gives additional emphasis to this tremendous self-assertion. In anyone else it would have been absurd and

blasphemous, but in Him it does not seem not in harmony or agreement.

Christ has made the following claims:

1. "My Father" (Luke 2:41-52);
2. "I AM" (John 8:58; cf. Exodus 3:14);
3. assumed superiority over prior revelation (Matthew 5:43; 31; 21; 11); and
4. "Verily, I say unto you" (John 5:25).

### *4.10.1 "My Father" (Luke 2:41-52)*

In the first words recorded of Him, He offsets the words "My Father" against His mother's "Thy Father" (Luke 2:41-52), surely an indication of His consciousness of a unique relation existing between Himself and God.

### *4.10.2 "I AM" (John 8:58; cf. Exodus 3:14)*

To the horror of the Jews, He even went so far as to assume to Himself the sacred divine name - "I AM." "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58; cf. Exodus 3:14). In point of fact, no fewer than sixteen names clearly implying deity are used of the Lord, for example, "Lord of glory."

No less astounding are the claims He made in His "I AM" utterances (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7-11). These are undoubted assumptions of deity, as is His claim to possess the divine resources to meet all human need (Matthew 11:28; John 4:14; 7:37-38; 10:28).

### *4.10.3 Assumed superiority over prior revelation (Matthew 5:43; 31; 21; 11)*

He assumed superiority over prior revelation. Concerning the attitude of the Lord to the Old Testament Scriptures, *D.M. McIntyre* has this to say: "The Sermon on the Mount is a summary of the ethical teachings of the Old Testament. And our Lord, with all His profound reverence for Scripture, holds Himself towards it with a certain freedom. He clears away rabbinical glosses (Matthew 5:43); He affirms the transitory and imperfect nature of the civil law in Israel (Matthew 5:31); He

shows that the divine pronouncement reaches beneath the letter of the statute, and searches the thoughts and intents of the heart (Matthew 5:21). He brings all life under His personal rule; the test of conduct is 'for my sake'" (Matthew 5:11).

### *4.10.4 "Verily, I say unto you" (John 5:25)*

As a final word of authority, His oft-repeated "Verily, I say unto you" was nothing short of an assertion of a divine prerogative.

### *4.10.5 Comments*

He manifested a superhuman character. The sublimity of His character added confirmation to His claims. He was too sincere to prefer a false claim, too humble and unselfish to seek selfish honour or self-interest.

His disciples, who had ample opportunity to observe His inner life, never found Him to falter or fail. They were impressed by His moral courage, and amazed at His miracles. It was out of daily intercourse as well as divine illumination that Peter's confession was born: "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20; John 6:69).

In reviewing the claims Christ made, we are faced with three possibilities:

1. He was a deceiver and was not telling the truth. But that is contradicted by His whole life and work.
2. He was self-deceived and thought such things of Himself, but they had no basis in fact. But the fact that He performed miracles and that He was raised from the dead contradict that.
3. The third and only tenable possibility is that He was exactly what He claimed to be.

It is clear that Christ was exactly what He claimed to be.

## 4.11 The Witness of the Spread of Christianity

Christianity is the greatest proof of Christ's deity, because He as its Head measures up to the highest standard of deity. Although the Scriptures are the greatest testimony to the deity of Christ, there are other avenues of evidence:

1. the spread of Christianity has caused mighty revolution in the world;
2. the teaching of Christianity is unique among the other world religions; and
3. the acceptance of Christianity is universal.

### *4.11.1 The spread of Christianity has caused mighty revolution in the world*

Think of the mighty revolution He has caused in the world. Where it comes and is faithfully practiced, sin and slavery and selfishness are banished and holiness is enthroned.

### *4.11.2 The teachings of Christianity is superior than the other world religions*

To compare Christianity with Islam is inadmissible, for Islam made its tremendous advances by the sword, and continues to gain adherents by tolerating sin instead of condemning it. The consecration of lust in the name of religion found ready acceptance.

### *4.11.3 The acceptance of Christianity is universal*

The acceptance of Christianity is universal. How different it is with Christianity, which knows no distinction of race or creed, but claims the world for Christ and whose messengers circle the globe. Islam and other world religions are mainly confined to the nations in or near to the region in which it had its birth. The growth and spread of other religions can be traced to natural causes, but Christianity can be accounted for only by supernatural.

### *4.11.4 Comments*

Whence this universality and ability to capture the hearts of men of every race and culture? Could this transforming influence, still undiminished, have proceeded from a mere man? Of course, NOT!

## 4.12 The Witness of Christ's Transforming Power

Christ's ministry of power is another link in the already strong chain of proof of His deity. What gained for Him the unquestioning obedience and unfaltering loyalty of His followers? If He be not Son of God, how explain the fact that after two millennia there are millions who would gladly surrender life itself rather than deny Him? The transformed lives of Christians are an eloquent and ever-present witness to the deity of the person from whom the transforming power proceeds.

## 4.13 Conclusion

According to the above mentioned evidences, I conclude that the Lord Jesus Christ was exactly what He claimed to be. In other words, He is God and existed in "eternity past" with His Father.

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# Chapter Eighteen - The Birth, Incarnation and Humiliation of Christ

This chapter, divided into seven major divisions, is a careful study of the Biblical truth of the doctrines of:

1. the Old Testament prophecies of the life of Christ;
2. the incarnation of Christ;
3. the humanity of Christ;
4. the manliness of Christ;
5. the twofold nature of Christ;
6. the character of Christ; and
7. the humiliation of Christ.

**1. THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

The Old Testament, written over a period of 1000 years and written several hundred years before the time of Christ, contains some three hundred prophecies of the coming Messiah. The fact these prophecies were written at least two hundred years before Christ is proven by the **Septuagint [LXX]**, the Greek translation of the Old Testament written in 200 BC, and by the Dead Sea Scrolls some of which are dated over 200 years before Christ as well.

The following table shows the approximate dates of Old Testament books (References: *John H. Walton*, **Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament**, 1994 Edition, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids; *Roy R. Matheson*, **Old Testament Survey**, 1989 Edition, Moody Bible Institute):

## The Approximate Dates of Old Testament Books

| Books | Approximate Dates Concerned (BC) |
|---|---|
| Geneis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy | The Beginning to 1406 |
| Joshua | 1406-1380 |
| Judges | 1380-1050 |
| Ruth | 1200-1150 |
| I Samuel | 1100-1010 |
| II Samuel | 1010-971 |
| I Kings | 971-853 |
| II Kings | 853-560 |
| I Chronicles | 1010-971 |
| II Chronicles | 971-539 |
| Ezra | 539-450 |
| Nehemiah | 445-410 |
| Esther | 483-474 |
| Job | 1400-950 |
| Psalms | 1000-440 |
| Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon | 970-930 |
| Isaiah | 739-700 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Jeremiah | 627-580 |
| Lamentations | 586 |
| Ezekiel | 593-570 |
| Daniel | 605-530 |
| Hosea | 760-730 |
| Joel | 500 |
| Amos | 760 |
| Obadiah | 500 |
| Jonah | 770 |
| Micah | 737-690 |
| Nahum | 650 |
| Habakkuk | 630 |
| Zephaniah | 627 |
| Haggai | 520 |
| Zechariah | 520-518 |
| Malachi | 433 |

All of these ancient prophecies were fulfilled in the one person of Jesus Christ, and they provide solid confirmation:

1. for His credentials as Messiah;
2. for His claims as the Son of God and Savior;
3. for His unique life in comparison to all the other religious leaders of the world; and
4. for our hope and confidence that truly He and He alone is the one to whom we (and the world) must look for salvation and meaning in life.

The Old Testament prophecies of the life of Christ are divided into the following four categories:

1. the lineage of Christ;
2. the birth of Christ;
3. the ministry of Christ; and
4. the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ.

**1.1 The Lineage of Christ**

Concerning Christ's lineage, it was predicted that He would be of the:

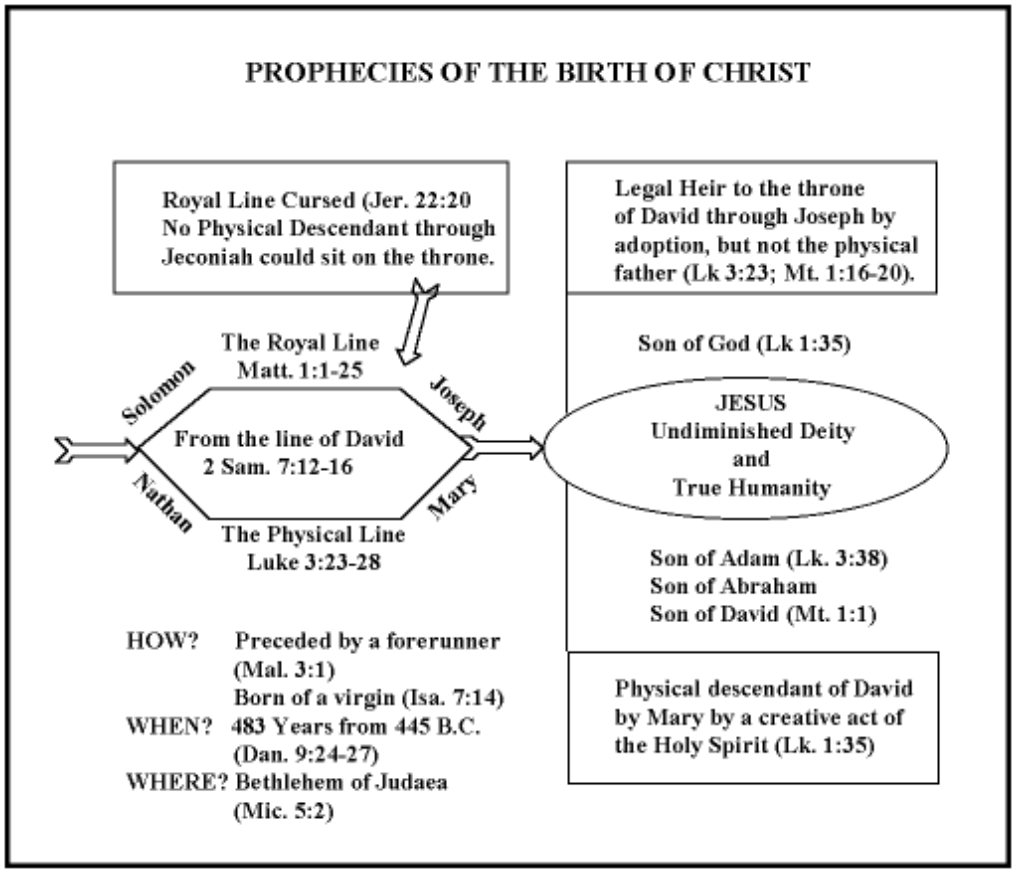
1. Son of God (compare Isaiah 9:6 with Matthew 1:23; 16:16; Luke 1:35);
2. seed of the woman - i.e. virgin birth (compare Genesis 3:15 with Matthew 1:22-23; Luke 1:26-38);
3. seed of Abraham (compare Genesis 22:18 with Matthew 1:1-2; Luke 3:34);
4. tribe of Judah (compare Genesis 49:10 with Matthew 1:1-3; Luke 3:33);
5. family of Jesse (compare 1 Samuel 16:1; Isaiah 11:1, 10 with Matthew 1:6; Luke 3:32);
6. house of David (compare 1 Samuel 16:12-13; 2 Samuel 7:12-17; Isaiah 9:6-7 with Matthew 1:1, 6-7; Luke 1:32-33; 3:23-38); and
7. the royal line cut off and cursed, yet the promise preserved (Jeremiah 22:28-30; Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:17-38).

Jeremiah 22:28-30 clearly shows the royal line was to be cursed and cut off. Included in the royal line of David through Solomon was Jeconiah (or Coniah) (Compare Jeremiah 22:28-30 with Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:17-38). The curse clearly states that no physical seed of Coniah could ever occupy the throne of David. This means the royal line of David through Solomon was cut off.

But what about God's promises to David concerning his throne and kingdom? Are they abrogated and thus fulfilled in the spiritual reign of

God in the church as many teach today? Is God finished with the nation of Israel? Will there be then no millennial reign? The answer is and emphatic NO! God is not finished with Israel. And YES, there will be a millennial reign! God's promises to David are not abrogated and the reason they are not is because of the Immanuel promise and its fulfillment in the birth of Jesus Christ.

How does the virgin birth accomplish this? Through the virgin birth Jesus became the legal son of Joseph by adoption, but the physical son David through Mary. Joseph, who was in the royal line of David through Solomon, gave Jesus legal title to the throne by adoption (Matthew 1:1-17). Mary, by the Spirit-wrought miracle of the virgin birth, made Jesus a literal son of David through Nathan another one of David's sons (Luke 3:23-38).

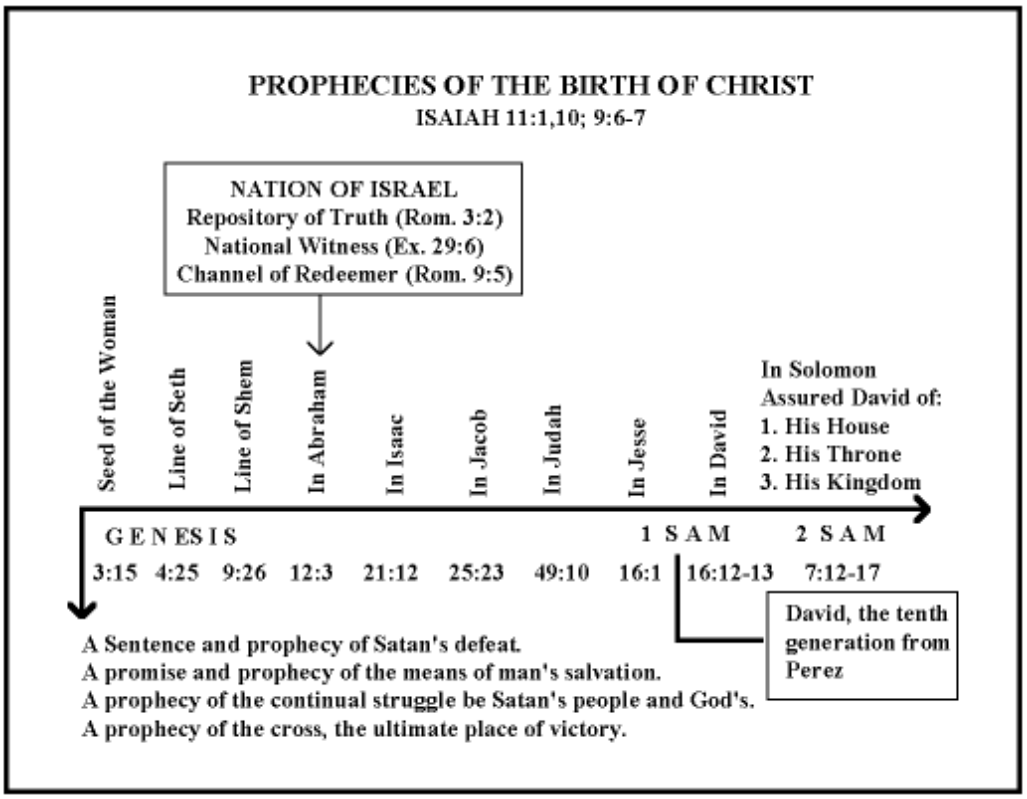



**1.2 The Birth of Christ**

As to His birth, it was foretold that He would be:

1. born around AD 0-4 and cut off around AD 30-33 (compare Daniel 9:24-27 with Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-38; see also my explanations in **Section 4.4, Chapter 4 of the course: Bible Prophecy**);
2. born of a virgin (compare Isaiah 7:13-14 with Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35);
3. in the town of Bethlehem Ephratah (compare Micah 5:2-3 with Luke 2:1-7; Matthew 2:1-6); and
4. announced by the stars (compare Numbers 24:17 with Matthew 2:1-2).

The Micah prophecy was well known by Israel and when the men from the east came seeking the one born King of the Jews and inquired of His birth, the religious leaders told Herod precisely where He was to be born, in Bethlehem. It is an interesting sidelight that there are two Bethlehems mentioned in the Bible. One was in the territory of Zebulun, in the northern part of Israel (Joshua 19:15). The other was in the territory of Judah, and was also known as Ephratah. The prophecy of the birthplace of the Messiah is so exact that it distinguishes between these two, and specifies that He would be born in Bethlehem Ephratah.




**1.3 The Ministry of Christ**

Isaiah predicted that:

1. He would be announced by a forerunner (compare Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1 with Matthew 3:1-3; Mark 1:1-4; Luke 3:4-7; John 1:23-24);
2. anointed by the Holy Spirit (compare Isaiah 11:2; 61:1 with Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:33); and
3. His ministry would begin in Galilee (compare Isaiah 9:1-2 with Matthew 4:12-16).

**1.4 The Death, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ**

The manner of His death, by crucifixion, was clearly outlined in the Old Testament. It was prophesied that He would be:

1. betrayed by a familiar friend (compare Psalm 41:9 with John 13:18);
2. for thirty pieces of silver (compare Jeremiah 18:1-6; Zechariah 11:12-13 with Matthew 26:14-15; 27:3-10);
3. He was to die for others (compare Isaiah 53:5, 10-11 with Matthew 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-33);
4. He was to die with transgressors (compare Isaiah 53:12 with Matthew 27:38; Luke 23:32-33);
5. His enemies were to cast lots for His clothing (compare Psalm 22:18 with Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:23-24);
6. His hands and feet were to be pierced (compare Psalm 22:16 with Luke 23:33; John 19:23);
7. His side was to be pierced (compare Zechariah 12:10 with John 19:34);
8. vinegar and gall were to be given to Him (compare Psalm 69:21 with Matthew 27:34; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; John 19:28-30);
9. none of His bones was to be broken (compare Psalm 34:20 with John 19:33-36);
10. His burial in a rich man's tomb (compare Isaiah 53:9 with Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53);
11. His resurrection (compare Psalm 16:8-10 with Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:1-7; Acts 2:25-32; 13:35-37); and
12. ascension (compare Psalm 68:18 with Luke 24:51; Acts 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:8).

Even the exact words He used were foretold, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (compare Psalm 22:1 with Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

**1.5 Conclusion**

The probability for all these being fulfilled in one person as merely accidental or coincidence is beyond comprehension and, for all practical

purposes, mathematically impossible. I conclude that the Old Testament prophecies of the life of Christ are accurate and reliable.

## 2. THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

Man has always craved a God who is tangible and visible. As he bows to stones and trees, the idolater is mutely expressing the desire of the human heart for a god who can be seen. Job lamented that although he sought for God, he could not see Him. "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there ... I cannot behold Him" (Job 23:8-9). Philip shared the same longing when he asked, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us" (John 14:8).

God's answer to this universal longing, the incarnation of His Son, was implied in Jesus' answer to Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The clear implication is that in the acts and attitudes of the Father. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (John 1:18).

### 2.1 Secular History Acknowledges That Jesus Christ Lived

Even secular history acknowledges that Jesus Christ lived. The Roman historian Tacitus (AD 112) and the first-century Jewish historian Josephus both make mention of Jesus (*Geisler,* **A Popular Survey of the Old Testament**, p. 11).

### 2.2 Meaning of "Incarnation"

The word "incarnation" is derived from the Latin word meaning "in flesh." When it is applied to Jesus Christ it means that His divine nature was united to a true human nature at the time of His conception. The eternal God was "enfleshed"; He became the God-man.

Jesus is fully God, and also fully man. His birth merged a true but sinless humanity with all the attributes of His deity resulting in a single, integrated person with both divine and human natures. To do this, the Lord Jesus Christ condescended to leave all the glories and privileges of His pre-existent state, and become a servant and sacrifice.

### 2.3 The Incarnation of Christ Mentioned in the Scriptures

The following Scriptures teach that the pre-existent Christ became man:

1. the Word became flesh (John 1:14);
2. since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same (Hebrews 2:14);
3. when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman (Galatians 4:4; cf. Romans 8:3); and
4. who, although He existed in the form of God ... emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:6f).

The Gospels (Matthew 1,2; Luke 1, 2) give the historical record of the incarnation and trace it to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. That the historical Jesus was in fact the eternal Son of God whose coming was predicted in the Old Testament, was the theme of apostolic preaching (Acts 17:3; 18:5, 28).

### 2.4 The Reasons for the Incarnation

There are a number of reasons why God became man:

1. to confirm God's promises;
2. to reveal the Father;
3. to become a faithful high priest;
4. to put away sin;
5. to destroy the works of the Devil;
6. to give us an example of a holy life; and
7. to prepare for the second advent.

#### *2.4.1 To confirm God's promises*

Jesus became man in order to confirm the promises made to the fathers and to show mercy to the Gentiles (Romans 15:8-12). Beginning with the promise in Genesis 3:15 and continuing through the Old Testament, God at various times promised to send His Son into the world:

1. For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us (Isaiah 9:6);
2. Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14);
3. But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity (Micah 5:2).

A careful examination of the Old Testament reveals that there are two lines of prediction concerning the coming of Christ:

1. as a Saviour from sin; and
2. as a King in His kingdom.

#### *2.4.1.1 As a Saviour from sin*

The purpose of His coming as a Saviour from sin is mentioned in the following Scriptures:

1. prefigured in the sacrifices of the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 5:7);
2. taught in many of the Psalms (Psalm 16:8-10; 22:1, 7f., 18; 41:9-11); and
3. the Prophets (Isaiah 52:14; 53:4-6; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 11:12f.; 13:1, 7).

#### *2.4.1.2 As a King in His kingdom*

The purpose of His coming as a King in His kingdom is mentioned in the following Scriptures:

1. foretold in many Old Testament Scriptures (Genesis 17:6, 16; 49:9f.; Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 2 Samuel 7:12-17; Psalm 2; 8; 24; 45; 72; 89; 110; Isaiah 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5; 31:31-34; Ezekiel 37:15-24; Zechariah 14:9);
2. Matthew says, "He was the son of David and also the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1);
3. Gabriel had told Mary that the Lord God would "give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32);
4. Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24);
5. however, His own received Him not (John 1:11); and
6. though the multitude acclaimed Him as the Son of David when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21:9), a few days later the leaders induced the multitude to ask that He be crucified.

### *2.4.2 To reveal the Father*

In the Old Testament God is revealed as creator and governor. The Old Testament reveals the unity, holiness, might, and beneficence of God. Christ completed the revelation by adding the idea of God as **Father** (Matthew 6:9). The following Scriptures further illustrate the concept of God as Father:

1. no man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him (John 1:18);
2. to see Him was to see the Father (John 14:9), that the Father Himself loves us (John 16:27);
3. the Father knows that what things we have need of before we ask Him (Matthew 6:8; cf. v. 32); and
4. He will withhold no good thing from His children (Matthew 5:45; John 3:3, 5; 1 John 3:1f.).

The relationship of the child of God to His heavenly Father is a precious New Testament concept.

### *2.4.3 To become a faithful high priest*

Christ came that He might enter into every human experience, apart from sin, so that He might be qualified as a high priest. The reasons for doing this are as follows:

1. **The Old Testament high priests were taken from among men in order that they might faithfully represent men (Hebrews 5:1f.).** Christ likewise was taken from among men for the same reasons (Hebrews 5:4f.). "It was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their Salvation through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10). There is, then, a perfection that Christ obtained through His experiences here as a man.

2. **Christ had to be made like His brethren in all things that He can sympathize with us.** "He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17f.). "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin," and it is on this ground that it is said, "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15f.).

The very fact that He felt the pangs of hunger, the want of sympathy from others, that He had sleepless nights, that He was weary from the toils of life, that He felt every type of temptation that comes to man, that He was misunderstood, forsaken, persecuted, and delivered up to death, was a preparation for His present priestly ministry.

***2.4.4 To put away sin***

He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26). Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). It is clearly indicated that He needed to become a man in order to die for the sins of mankind. Hebrews reads, "But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one" (Hebrews 2:9); and John wrote, "And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

Several things should be noted:

1. If Christ came to give His life a ransom for many, then we know that He came to redeem men from their sin by His death. Then we also know that **His death was substitutionary** and, further, that not all, but many will be saved.

2. **The idea of putting away sin seems to refer to the scapegoat of the Old Testament.** On the annual Day of Atonement one goat was offered in sacrifice, and another was sent into the wilderness after the sins of the people had been confessed upon its head (Leviticus 16:20-22). Thus Christ was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29; cf. v. 36). As Isaiah says, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (Isaiah 53:6).

3. **When it is said that He tasted death for every man, the thought is that He did this in place of every man.** Those who believe this truth are saved from tasting it themselves. Paul declares that He who knew no sin was made sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Christ came to teach men, to aid them in material and physical respects, to give them an example, and so forth, but above all these things, He came to die for man's sins. His death is the foundational requirement of every other blessing we enjoy.

***2.4.5 To destroy the works of the devil***

Shortly after Christ appeared to take away sin (1 John 3:5), He also appeared to destroy the works of the evil (1 John 3:8). The Bible say, "Since then 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" (Hebrews 2:14). This was so that He "might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Hebrews 2:15).

Christ's coming, particularly His work on the Cross, brought defeat to Satan (John 12:31). Satan:

1. is a vanquished foe;
2. has lost his hold on his subjects;
3. some day will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10); then
4. all that he has wrought through the introduction of sin will come to an end, except for the punishment of those who have been his followers.

*Stott* suggests, "If, then, the whole purpose of Christ's first appearing was to remove sins and to undo the works of the devil, Christians must not compromise with either sin or the devil, or they will find themselves fighting against Christ" (*Stott*, **The Epistles of John**, p. 125).

***2.4.6 To give us an example of a holy life***

This purpose is implied in many references:

1. take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:29);
2. for you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21); and
3. the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked (1 John 2:6).

The writers of the Holy Scriptures were infallible teachers, but they were not infallible characters. Christ was the only one who was infallible in His teachings and in His character. It was necessary that we should have an illustration of what God wants us to be. Christ is the believer's Saviour, and He is also His example.

To the unsaved the Bible says, believe and live; to the saved, follow in his steps. This order is never reversed. The most powerful incentive to holiness is not precept, but example, especially the example of one with whom we associate closely. When Moses came down from the mountain where he had spoken face to face with God, his face shone (Exodus 34:29). Similarly, the believer is being transformed into the same image of our Lord by "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

***2.4.7 To prepare for the second advent***

Scripture says, "Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, not to bear sin, to those who eagerly await Him, for Salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). There are two parts to Salvation, namely, the provision of it, and the application of it; and the provision of Salvation must come before there can be application of it.

Now, manifestly, much of the Salvation Christ provided is presently being applied. Believers:

1. are saved from the penalty and guilt of sin the moment they accept Christ;
2. are being saved from the power of sin by Christ's intercession and their yielding to Him of their whole being; but
3. they are not saved from the presence of sin until they are taken to be with Him.

Furthermore, there is the redemption of the body in the future. When Christ died on the Cross, He died for the whole man. But bodily healing is not being granted to everyone today, and bodily immortality is wholly in the future.

So is it also with the redemption of creation. On the Cross, Christ purchased this whole creation, but He is holding back the actual deliverance of creation until the day when the sons of God will be revealed (Romans 8:18-25). It is as "a Lamb standing, as if slain" (Revelation 5:6) that Christ will open the seals of the book, the title-deed to the purchased possessions. His first coming was necessary as a preparation for His second coming.

**2.5 The Means of Incarnation: the Biblical Record of Virgin Birth**

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit brought about the conception of Jesus Christ in a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to a man named Joseph at the time, but the Bible makes it clear that Joseph was not the natural father of Jesus. The Biblical evidences are as follows:

1. **The Scriptures are careful to avoid calling Joseph the father of Jesus.** In Matthew 1:16 we read, "and to Jacob was born Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ". This careful attribution of Jesus' birth to Mary alone is rooted in the relative pronoun "whom." It is found here in the feminine gender which is obvious in the Greek syntax, but not the English.

2. **Luke 3:23 asserts that Jesus was "supposedly the son of Joseph," which could be literally translated, "as it was being thought."** For the bulk of society, a virgin birth was a ridiculous idea; thus, unfamiliar with the Scriptures, they thought of Joseph as Jesus' natural father.

3. **Further evidence is found in Matthew 1:18-25 which tells us what happened after Mary was discovered pregnant.** According to Jewish custom, an engagement is as binding as the marriage vows themselves, and a divorce is required to sever the commitment. Joseph intended to divorce her quietly and graciously, though the Jewish law would have condoned stoning an unfaithful or immoral woman. Later, Joseph is assured by an angel that the pregnancy was the result of a conception by the Holy Spirit, and that it thus fulfilled the ancient prophecy of Isaiah 7:14: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel."

4. **Luke 1:26-38 gives additional details concerning the virgin birth.** When Mary asks how she is to conceive apart from sexual relations, the angel Gabriel answers, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy off-spring shall be called the Son of God." An act of creation occurred in the womb of Mary similar to God's creation of the material universe in Genesis 1:1 - out of nothing, and through His power.

**2.6 Results of the Virgin Birth**

The most significant feature of the virgin birth is that it was the only way to produce a "holy offspring." The term "holy" means "without sin." The most important purpose of such a birth was miraculously to prevent the transmission of original sin. Jesus possessed true humanity as Adam had from His creation, but, like Adam originally, He had no sinful tendencies, tendencies all of Adam's descendants have had as a result of the Fall.

The more obvious result of the virgin birth is the fact that Jesus became the God-man. Luke 1:35 says that He is the Son of God, and Matthew 1:23 calls Him "Immanuel," a name that implies incarnation for it means "God is with us."

**2.7 Mystery of Virgin Birth**

If, as science demands, every event must have an adequate cause, then the presence of a sinless Man in the midst of universally sinful men implies a miracle of origin. Such a person as Jesus was demands such a birth as the gospels record. The **how** of the birth becomes believable when the **who** of the birth is taken into account. Only in isolation from the unique Person who was born does the virgin birth create difficulties. Would not the pre-existence of Christ necessitate some such miracle of birth?

An orthodox Jew once asked a Jewish Christian,

> *"Suppose a son were born among us today, and it was said of him that he was born of a virgin, would you believe it?"*
>
> *"Yes,"* replied the other, *"I would believe it if he were such a son!"*

In his *Cur Deus Homo, Anselm* reviewed four ways in which God can make man:

1. By the law of natural generation - a man and a woman.
2. Without the agency of either man or woman - as Adam.
3. A man without a woman - as Eve.
4. Through the divine empowering of a man and a woman both past age - as Abraham and Sarah.

If these be admitted, as they must be if the Scripture records are accepted as authoritative and trustworthy, it is but a step to believe that:

> *"Jesus was born of a woman without a man, that He was begotten of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35).*

**If we accept that Jesus was the incarnate Son of God, does not belief in the virgin birth become logically inevitable? Who could be the Father of the Son of God but God Himself?**

This doctrine was accepted by the early church and is included in all the great Christian creeds. Justin Martyr included it among the cardinal items of Christian belief. The apologist Aristides accepted it. Ignatius insisted on it, and those three lived very close to the apostolic age and to the documents setting forth the virgin birth.

**2.8 Meaning of Virgin Birth**

What does the term "virgin birth" mean? Several wrong concepts of virgin birth are listed below:

1. It does not imply that Jesus was born in a manner different from other children. He was born in exactly the same way as any other baby.
2. Nor does it suggest that there was merely a miraculous conception as in the case of Elizabeth, who was past age.
3. It does not mean **immaculate conception** as taught by the Roman Catholic Church, for that dogma asserts that Mary was conceived and born without original sin, a claim for which there is no Scriptural support.

It was a virgin conception entirely without parallel. Contrary to the course of nature, Jesus was miraculously conceived in the womb of Mary. In His case the ordinary processes of the transmission of the racial heritage were interrupted by the miraculous conception.

Such a birth was foreshadowed in the following Old Testament Scriptures:

1. The earliest Bible Prophecy implies this unique event. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Genesis 3:15). Only here are the words "her seed" used. Elsewhere it is uniformly the seed of the man. This is a unique conception.

2. The sign divinely given to Ahaz was that "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Matthew saw their fulfillment in the manner of our Lord Jesus' birth. The Hebrew word of "virgin" used here (transliteration, *almah*) is alleged by opponents of the supernatural that the word means simply a young woman of marriageable age, not necessarily a virgin, for which *bethulah* is the term used. However, the correct meaning of the word *bethulah* is used of a bride weeping for her husband instead of a virgin. While, in any other passage of Scripture *almah* means an unmarried maiden.

**2.9 Alternatives to Virgin Birth**

It is conceded that the Bible does not demand belief in the virgin birth as a prerequisite for Salvation, but it does indicate that the fact of the virgin birth must be true if we are to be saved. It is possible for a man to be saved without knowing details of the process, just as babies are born without any knowledge of embryology. It is the integrity of the fact, not our knowledge of it, that lays the basis for our Salvation.

If Joseph and Mary, who were sinners by nature and deed, could have given birth to a sinless Man like Jesus, would not an even greater miracle be involved? Let us consider the alternatives that face us if this doctrine is fiction and not fact:

1. The New Testament narratives are proved false and the Book is robbed of its authority on other matters also.
2. Mary, instead of being blessed among women, is branded as unchaste, for Joseph asserted that Jesus was not his son.
3. Jesus becomes the natural child of sinful parents, which at once rules out His pre-existence, with the result that there was not real incarnation.
4. We are deprived of any adequate explanation of His unique character and sinless life.
5. If He was begotten of a human father (i.e. the only alternative to virgin birth), he was not the Son of God, and therefore had no power to forgive sin.
6. If this miracle is denied, logically we should deny all miracles. The question is, Are we willing to accept the supernaturalistic claims of Scripture or not?

**2.10 Objection to Virgin Birth**

Before considering the objection, I should state that this doctrine is at variance with nothing taught elsewhere in the New Testament; but on the other hand it positively correlates the pre-existence of Christ and His incarnation.

Some contend that Jesus' having only one human parent would not of itself guarantee sinlessness. That may well be true, but we answer that it was not the mere biological fact of having only one parent that preserved Him from the infection (i.e. taint) of hereditary sin. A moral fact cannot be explained merely in terms of physical considerations. His conception was holy and untainted, not because man had no part in the conception, but because He was sanctified by the Holy Spirit, so that His generation was as pure and holy as it would have been before Adam's Fall. It was by the special agency of the Holy Spirit who overshadowed Mary (Luke 1:35). It was by the direct activity of God that Jesus was kept from the contamination of Mary's sinful nature.

**3. THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST**

**3.1 Meaning of the Human Nature of Christ**

Meaning of the term "nature." **Webster's Dictionary** defines nature as:

> *"The inherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing; essence; an inner force or the sum of such forces in an individual."*

Here, we would further define it as all that makes a person who he is, or the sum of the attributes of someone. Within Jesus we find all the characteristics and properties of humanity; His essence was human. We want to avoid the tendency to perceive that Jesus Christ is a sort of superman with whom we cannot identify.

**3.2 The Denial of the Real Humanity of Christ**

There were some inadequate concepts of Christ held at various times in history. The writers of the four gospels were never in doubt of the reality of Christ's humanity, but this doctrine has not been undisputed in the history of the church:

1. *Appolinarius*, Bishop of Laodicea, denied the existence of a rational soul in Christ's human nature. Regarding the soul as the seat of sin, he argued that therefore the sinless Son of man could not have possessed a human soul.

2. There were heresies, like *Gnosticism*, that denied the reality of His body, and *Eutychianism*, which made even the body of Christ divine.

3. On one hand the *Apollinarians* and *Docetics* emphasized the deity of Christ to the exclusion of His true humanity; on the other hand, the *Arians* and *Ebionites* held to His humanity, but denied His deity. Both extremes are heresy.

4. In our own day *Christian Science* pursues a similar line. "Christ is incorporeal, spiritual," wrote *Mary Baker Eddy* in her **Miscellaneous Writings**, thus denying the reality of His body and His real humanity.

It is important to refute those who denied the true humanity of Christ. John denounced this heresy, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of anti-christ" (1 John 4:3).

**3.3 The Importance of the Issue**

The study of the purpose and nature of the incarnation leads easily into an analysis of the two natures possessed by Christ:

1. the divine nature; and
2. the human nature.

We have already discussed the reality of Jesus' deity or divine nature in Chapter 17 of this course. Now we need to investigate the genuineness of Jesus' human nature. Since Christ must become a true man if He is to atone for the sins of men, the question of his humanity is not merely an academic one, but a most practical one. What are the proofs of His humanity?

**3.4 The Genuineness of the Humanity of Christ**

The evidences of the humanity of Christ are as follows:

1. He had a human ancestry;
2. He had a human development;
3. He had a real body;
4. He had a soul and a spirit;
5. He had human names;
6. He is repeatedly called a man;
7. He had the essential elements of human nature;
8. He experienced human frailty;
9. He was able to die;
10. He was normal in His human appearance; and
11. He was subject to human limitations.

***3.4.1 He had a human ancestry***

Jesus was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4). He was born of the virgin Mary. This fact is confirmed by the narratives of the virgin birth (Matthew 1:18-2:11; Luke 1:30-38, 2:1-20). Because of this, He is called "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1) and is said to

be "born of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3). For the same reason, Luke traces his descent back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). The names of His brothers are given, and His genealogy on both sides of the family is given in detail (Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38). This was in direct fulfillment of the promise made to Eve (Genesis 3:15) and to Ahaz (Isaiah 7:14).

***3.4.2 He had a human development***

Jesus had the ordinary development of human beings. Thus we are told that He "continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him" (Luke 2:40), and that He "kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men" (Luke 2:52). Christ's physical and mental development are the result of the ordinary laws of human growth.

His mental development cannot be ascribed totally to His learning in the schools of the day (John 7:15), but must be attributed largely to the following ways:

1. His training in a godly home;
2. His regular attendance at the synagogue (Luke 4:16);
3. His visits to the temple (Luke 2:41, 46);
4. His study of the Scriptures (Luke 4:17);
5. His use of the Scriptures in His temptation; and
6. His communion with the Father (Mark 1:35; John 4:32-34).

***3.4.3 He had a real body***

Jesus had, as a result of His conception, a real human body is clear from the following statements:

1. "she poured this perfume upon My body" (Matthew 26:12);
2. "the boy Jesus grew in stature and wisdom as all normal human beings do" (Luke 2:40, 52);
3. "but He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:21);
4. "Jesus partook of the same flesh and blood as the children of humanity" (Hebrews 2:14);
5. "God had prepared a body for Jesus" (Hebrews 10:5; quotes a verse from Psalm 40);
6. "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 10:10);
7. "Jesus could be seen and handled" (1 John 1:1);
8. true believers as those who have confessed that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2);
9. after His resurrection He said, "Touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39).

***3.4.4 He had a soul and a spirit***

Matthew 26:38 says that Jesus' "soul" was deeply grieved. Luke 23:46 gives us Jesus' last words before He died: "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit."

***3.4.5 He had human names***

Human names were given Him:

1. The name "Jesus," which means "Saviour" (Matthew 1:21), is but the Greek of the Old Testament "Joshua" (cf. Acts 7:45; Hebrews 4:8).

2. He is called "son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1) and "son of David," it is occurring frequently in Matthew (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30f.; 21:9, 15).

3. The name "Son of Man" occurs over 80 times in the New Testament. This name is repeatedly applied to Ezekiel (2:1; 3:1; 4:1, etc.), and once to Daniel (8:1). It is used prophetically of Christ in Daniel 7:13 (cf. Matthew 16:28). That this name was regarded by the Jews as referring to the Messiah is evident from the fact that the high priest split his garment when Christ applied this prophecy in Daniel to Himself (Matthew 26:64f). The Jews understood this phrase to mean the Messiah (John 12:34), and to call Christ the Son of Man was equivalent to calling Him the Son of God (Luke 22:69f). The expression implies not only that He is truly human, but also that He is the representative of all humanity (cf. Hebrews 2:6-9).

***3.4.6 He is repeatedly called a man***

He is repeatedly called a man:

1. John the Baptist (John 1:30), Peter (Acts 2:22), and Paul (1 Corinthians 15:21, 47; Philippians 2:8; cf. Acts 13:38) called Him a man.
2. He was known as a Jew (John 4:9).
3. He recognized as a man (John 7:27; 9:29; 10:33).
4. He was thought to be older than He really was (John 8:57); and He was accused of blasphemy for calling Himself anything but a man (John 10:33).
5. Even after His resurrection, He had the appearance of a man (John 20:15; 21:4f).

Furthermore, He today exists as a man in heaven (1 Timothy 2:5), will come again (Matthew 16:27f; 25:31; 26:64f), and will judge the world in righteousness as a man (Acts 17:31).

***3.4.7 He had the essential elements of human nature***

Not only did Christ have a physical, human body, He also had other necessary properties of human nature, such as rationality and voluntariness. He could reason, will and feel unhappy. Scripture speaks of Him as "My soul is deeply grieved" (Matthew 26:38; cf. Mark 8:12; John 12:27; 13:21). In saying that He took on our nature, we must always distinguish between a human nature and a sinful nature; Jesus had the former, but not the latter.

***3.4.8 He experienced human frailty***

He had the following weaknesses of human nature. He was:

1. after fasting in the desert, Jesus felt the pangs of hunger (Matthew 4:2; 21:18);
2. in Samaria He sat by Jacob's well to relieve His weariness (John 4:6);
3. at Lazarus' tomb Jesus expressed great sorrow and wept (John 11:35);
4. on the cross He exclaimed, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28);
5. slept (Matthew 8:24; cf. Psalm 121:4); and
6. tempted (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15; cf. James 1:13).

Christians have in heaven a high priest with an unequalled capacity for sympathizing with them in all the dangers and sorrows and trials which come their way in life, because He Himself, by virtue of His likeness to them, was exposed to all these experiences. Again, it must be born in mind that to speak of the weaknesses of Christ's nature does not imply sinful weaknesses.

***3.4.9 He was able to die***

The conditions accompanying His death, as well as the death itself and the aftermath when the soldiers speared His body, all point to a genuine physical being who died (John 19:33-35).

***3.4.10 He was normal in His human appearance***

The following Scriptures show that Jesus was normal in His human appearance:

1. So far as the woman of Samaria was concerned, at first Jesus was only another hated Jew. She noted nothing unusual in His appearance (John 4:9).
2. To the two dispirited disciples walking along the Emmaus road, He was only another fellow-citizen (Luke 24:18).
3. Even after the resurrection when Jesus appeared in His glorified body, Mary at first mistook Him for the gardener (John 20:15).
4. His own intimate friends mistook Him for another man when they returned from their fishing expedition (John 21:4-5).

These incidents all combine to underline the naturalness and humanness of His physical appearance.

***3.4.11 He was subject to human limitations***

Our Lord's consenting to be subject to human limitations was part of the mystery of His great self-humiliation. While in His incarnate state He did not renounce His divine powers. His intelligence was so subject to human limitations that He submitted to the ordinary laws of human

development. He was no exception. As noted in the above section 3.4.2, He acquired His knowledge through the ordinary channels open to the other boys of His day; through instruction, study, reflection. It would appear that He even voluntarily renounced knowledge of certain future events. "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Mark 13:32).

Like ourselves, Jesus was not self-sustained, but needed prayer and communion with His Father for the support of His spiritual life. In all the great crises of His life, He resorted not to the counsel of men but to prayer to His Father for guidance (Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28).

He was subject to human limitations of power. He obtained the power for His divine works not by drawing on His inherent deity, but by depending on the anointing Spirit (Acts 10:38).

**4. THE MANLINESS OF CHRIST**

Jesus was not only a man, He was a manly man. He has far more frequently been misrepresented as womanly and weak than as masculine and manly.He combined in Himself the gentler graces of womanhood and the virile virtues of manhood. Unfortunately it is the former that have received stronger emphasis.

*John Oswald Sanders* wrote:

> When World War I was over, a sentence in the report of the chaplains of the services confirmed this impression. It said, *"The average Tommy believed that Jesus was just and good but just a trifle soft."* They never knew that He was Lion of Judah as well as Lamb of God. A young man was being counseled by a Christian man, when a conversation somewhat as follows ensued:
>
> *"I do not admire your Jesus. He was rather weak and effeminate. I like a man with red blood in his veins."*
>
> *"I suppose you heard the ususal Bible stories when you were younger?"*
>
> *"Oh, yes, I used to love them as a child."*
>
> *"And I suppose the rugged Elijah who appeared dramatically and fearlessly before the King of Israel and challenged the whole nation would be one of your favorite characters?"*
>
> *"You have guessed right. I always admired his manliness."*
>
> *"And in the New Testament, John the Baptist with his unconventional garb and fearless preaching would also attract you?"*
>
> *"Strangely enough you have lighted on my two favorite Bible characters."*
>
> *"Then would it surprise you to know that when Jesus asked His disciples whom men said He was, they replied, 'Some say that thour art John the Baptist: some, Elijah' (Matthew 16:14)? If He had been weak and effeminate as you contend, would they have been likely to confuse Him with the rugged Elijah, or the fearless Baptist?"*
>
> *"I had never thought of that before."*

Nor perhaps have many of us so conceived of Him. The term "manliness" does help to impress an important element in the Saviour's character, for people are inclined to think that goodness, innocence, patience, and purity belong to feeble characters, when the fact is far otherwise. The manliness of Jesus can be seen in the following characteristics of His life and ministry:

1. His resolute courage;
2. His fearless utterances;
3. His physical endurance;
4. His courageous silence;
5. His unbending sternness;
6. His remarkable self-control;
7. His blistering denunciations; and

8. His uncompromising frankness.

**4.1 His Resolute Courage**

Jesus knew more of peril than most, and yet when faced with it He never evinced the slightest fear. The highest form of courage is not that of the blind enthusiast who in a moment of exaltation runs great risks, but that of the man who though clearly foreseeing the consequences of his action, nevertheless continues unwavering.

Though Jesus knew Jerusalem meant for Him suffering and death - and no one ever shrank from death as He did - yet "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). When confronted with the traitor and the rabble that accomplished Him, Jesus refused to exercise the divine power He demonstrated on them to effect deliverance. Rather, He invited them to take Him. He faced the suffering and obloquy of the Cross with manly courage. He displayed no fear of disease, of demons, or of men (John 18:3-8; 12:27-28).

**4.2 His Fearless Utterances**

He is strong man who will voluntarily speak words that must inevitably bring on Him painful consequences. And yet the Lord never withheld, from fear of possible consequences, one word given to Him by His Father.

Hear Him reply to Annas, "I spake openly to the world ... in secret have I said nothing, Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me" (John 18:20-21). His reply to Pilate was equally fearless (John 18:33-37; 19:11).

**4.3 His Physical Endurance**

Have you ever endeavored to calculate the extent of His travels or the magnitude of His labours during His ministry? In the many tours recorded in the gospels, it is estimated that He traveled on foot about two thousand five hundred miles during the three years, and we need not conclude that every journey was recorded. Those were not unbroken marches, for He constantly stopped to help and heal, to teach and preach.

Ponder the strain imposed on His physique by the constant demands of the crowds milling around Him. Consider the constant drain on His nervous resources. We are apt to overlook the fact that He always helped others at His own expense. Even when the woman secretly touched the hem of His garment, it is recorded that "virtue had gone out of Him" (Mark 5:30). His was costly service. Only a man of extraordinary physique could have endured such unremitting strain.

**4.4 His Courageous Silence**

It is often more easy to speak than to keep silence. A strong man may be recognized by his silence, and this was true of the Master. He knew when to speak and when to hold His peace. However strong the provocation He never stooped to self-vindication, much less retaliation. Before the craven Pilate and the taunting Herod, both of whom possessed the power of life and death, He maintained a majestic silence. His silences were often more eloquent than His speech (Matthew 26:62-63; 27:12; Mark 15:4-5; Luke 23:9).

**4.5 His Unbending Sternness**

Nothing is more awe-inspiring than the unbending severity of a kindly man who has been roused to moral indignation. A man who is not tenderhearted becomes harsh and cruel. One who is only tenderhearted is weakly sentimental. But mercy and justice met and were harmonized in the character of the Son of Man.

See the bearing of the divine Lord as He enters His Father's house, which He loved so fervently, only to find it desecrated, "a den of thieves." Mark the flashing of His eye, the resolute step as He advances with uplifted whip of cords and begins to oust the rapacious traffickers (John 2:13-17). Watch Him overturn the bankers' tables. "It is written, My house is the house of prayer," He is saying, "but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Luke 19:45-47).

In this incident we are given a graphic example of "the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22). Our Lord evinced not only moral courage, but no small degree of physical bravery as well.

**4.6 His Remarkable Self-control**

Not even once did Jesus betray the slightest semblance of lack of self-control. Strong though His emotions were, He always held them on a

taut leash. Calm power and self-possession marked all His words and actions.

*R.E. Speer* wrote:

> *"Now and then we meet a strong man, who has control over his emotions in the way of repression, and to some little extent of stimulation also, but generally there is a large range of involuntary and uncontrolled emotions which are true and unconscious revelations of the inner life which they express and manifest, or betray ... In Jesus there was no contradiction between the voluntary and involuntary, the unconscious and the controlled. All the manifestations of His inner life were reliable and true, and they constantly increase our awe of Him and our sense of His majesty and mystery."*

**4.7 His Blistering Denunciations**

The tendency of our day is to over-emphasize the love of God and Christ. A preacher who is unafraid to denounce in strong terms the sins of the day, within and without the church, is termed "unChristlike."

But listen to these sentences from the lips of the King of love. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you ... for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves ... Woe unto you ... for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness ... Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:14-15, 27, 33).

It should be noted that those blistering words were not spoken to the prodigal son or Mary Magdalene, but to the hypocritical ruling class and religious leaders. There is surely no soft effeminacy here.

**4.8 His Uncompromising Frankness**

Christ never concealed the Cross to gain a disciple. No one ever left all and followed Him who did not have opportunity to count the cost. His followers must be intelligent volunteers. The emphasis of our day is rather on what one gains by becoming a Christian. Jesus never failed to emphasize the cost of following Him. The birds had their nests, the foxes their holes, "but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). Following Christ involves a love for Him transcending that for father or mother, wife or child. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27).

In His final agony, with tongue parched, fever raging, and joints dislocated, He was offered an anodyne to deaden His sufferings. "They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink" (Matthew 27:34). He displayed no unmanly shrinking from suffering. He showed Himself every inch a manly man in life's most testing hours.

**5. THE TWOFOLD NATURE OF CHRIST**

How can there be two natures and yet but one person? Though this is a difficult concept to understand, the Scriptures, nevertheless, encourage a consideration of the mystery of God, even Christ (Colossians 2:2f), and Jesus indicates that a true knowledge of Him is possible through divine revelation (Matthew 11:27).

**5.1 Meaning of the Union of the Human and Divine in Christ**

What was the result of the two natures coming together?

In theological terminology this phenomenon is referred to as the "**hypostatic union**." It is taken from the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1: "the *assurance* [or *substance*] of things hoped for". Applied to Jesus, it refers to the union of the two "substances," the human and divine natures, and communicates that each of these nature is actual, not merely similar, and complete, not merely partial.

The great confessions of the church affirm this as one of the cardinal Christian doctrines. Here are two examples:

> *"He continueth to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person for ever"* (**Westminster Shorter Catechism**).

> *"We confess that He is Very God and Very Man; Very God by His power to conquer death and Very Man that He might die for us"* (**Belgic Confession**).

The Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) seems to have used it to refer to the **one person** (Greek, *hupostasis*) into which the **two genuine natures** (Greek, *phuses*) were united.

**5.2 The Purpose of the Union of the Human and Divine in Christ**

Why did the Son of God become a human being? The incarnation is not only a unique phenomenon of history but it was absolutely necessary, especially for our eternal well-being. There are several reasons why:

1. Through the incarnation God communicated most fully His character and love. Prior to the coming of His Son, God had spoken through the prophets and the "fathers," but this revelation evidently was not sufficient - a message from the Son of God Himself was required (Hebrews 1:1-2).

2. Through the incarnation redemption was provided through one who was perfect man, thus able to die and atone for the sins of mankind (Hebrews 2:17-18).

3. Through the incarnation a perfect high priest was made available who could sympathize with us, thus encouraging us to approach Him. He offers us mercy when we fail, and grace to enable us to obey (Hebrews 4:15-16).

4. The incarnation provided the ideal mediator, one who fully understands both sides. As God, he can represent and communicate the divine concerns, and as man He can appreciate the human condition (1 Timothy 2:5).

**5.3 The Four Essentials**

*Louis Berkhof* (**The History of Christian Doctrines**, The Banner of Truth, 1978) lists four requirements of a proper view of the union of the human and the divine in Jesus:

1. He is truly God;
2. He is truly human;
3. these two natures are united in one person; and
4. each of these natures remains distinct; that is, there is not a blend into some third substance in which He is neither fully human nor fully divine.

**5.4 The Biblical Evidence**

Throughout the New Testament the writers assume that Jesus Christ is one person, not two. His behaviour and thinking are always that of one integrated person. In Romans 1:3-4 we find the assumption that Christ is one person, while He is called the "Son of God" (deity) as well as "a descendant of David according to the flesh" (humanity).

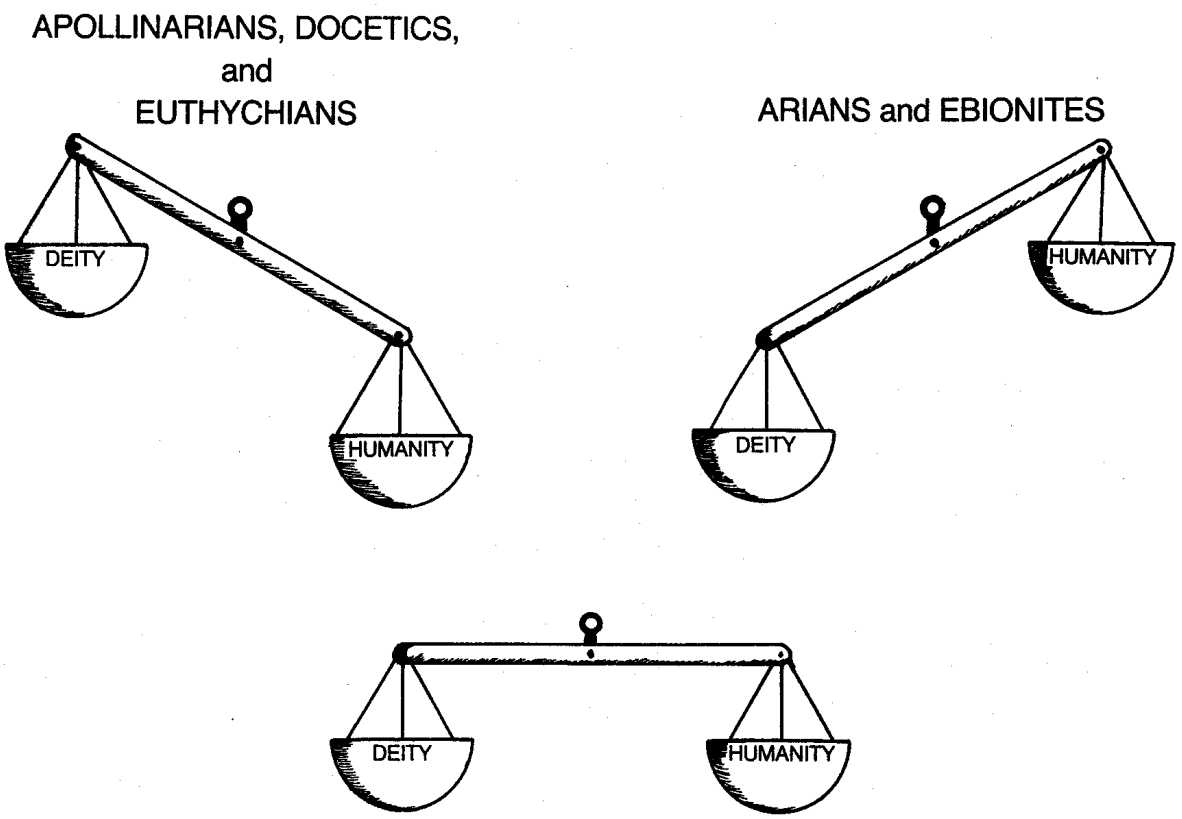
Often both natures are displayed or confirmed within one event or passage. For example, John 3:13 says: "He who descended from heaven [display of deity], even the Son of Man [confirmation of humanity]." Or, in John 4 Jesus (obviously one person) is wearied from His journey and apparently thirsty (confirming His humanity), but He displays an intimate knowledge of the woman's past which He could only know in the omniscience of His deity.

**5.5 Inadequate Historical Views of Christ (as mentioned in Section 1 of Chapter 17)**

Section 1 of Chapter 17 gives a full description of the various heresies in history, and their views of the person of Christ Their errors are as summarized as follows:

1. Arianism erred in regard to both Jesus' deity and humanity, declaring neither to be complete.
2. The Apollinarians and Eutychians both denied Jesus' humanity.
3. The Nestorians did not believe that the two natures were united into *one person*, Jesus.
4. The Eutychians and Monophysites erred in regard to the distinction of each of the two natures.

Each of the heretical theories is characterized by a deficiency in one or more of the four requirements *Berkhof* outlined. The deficiency of the false views are illustrated in the following diagrams:




**5.6 The Misconceptions of the Union of the Human and Divine in Christ**

Certain misconceptions must be clarified:

1. The union between the two natures is not comparable to the marriage relationship, for the two parties to that union remain, after all, two distinct persons.

2. Nor are the natures united by the kind of tie that unites believers to Christ. Nor did the divine nature dwell in Christ in the same way that Christ dwells in the believer, for then He would have been but a man filled with God and not God Himself.

3. The suggestion of a dual personality in Christ is unscriptural. Neither did the Logos occupy the place of the human mind or spirit in Christ, for in that case Christ would have united Himself with an imperfect humanity.

4. Neither did the two natures combine to form a third, for then Christ would not have been true man.

5. Nor yet did Christ gradually take on the divine nature, for in that case the reality of His deity would have been dependent upon the conscious appropriation of it by the humanity of Christ and not a fact *per se*.

The church at large has definitely condemned these various views as unscriptural and therefore unacceptable.

**5.7 The Proof of the Union of the Human and Divine in Christ**

If the above misconceptions are in error, how can we show that the two natures are inseparably bound together so as to constitute but one person with two consciousnesses and two wills?

Though there are two natures, there is but one person. And though the attributes of one nature are not to be attributed to the other nature, the two natures are attributed to the one person. Christ cannot be properly described as deity possessing humanity, nor humanity indwelt by deity. In the former case, humanity would not have its proper place, nor would deity in the latter.

The second person of the trinity assumed humanity with all its attributes. It follows that Christ's personality resides in His divine nature, because the Son did not unite with a human person but with human nature. Christ's human nature was impersonal apart from the incarnation; this, however, is not true of the divine nature. So complete was this union into one person that, as *Walvoord* observes, "Christ at the same moment has seemingly contradictory qualities. He can be weak and omnipotent, increasing in knowledge and omniscient, finite and infinite" (*John Walvoord*, **Jesus Christ Our Lord**, p. 116-118), and we might add, localized and omnipresent.

Jesus speaks of Himself as a single person; He does not evidence a split personality. Further, the individuals with whom He came in contact thought of Him as one person with a single and undivided personality. What about His self-consciousness? Jesus evidently was aware at all times of His deity in His divine self-consciousness. It was fully operative at all times, even in infancy. There is evidence, however, that the human nature developed and with it a human self-consciousness came into play. Sometimes He would act from His human self-consciousness, at other times from His divine, but the two were never in conflict.

The same thing is true of His will. No doubt the human will desired to avoid the Cross (Matthew 26:39), and the divine desired to avoid being made sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). In the life of Jesus His will was to do the Father's will (Hebrews 10:7, 9). This He fully accomplished.

**5.8 The Nature of the Union of the Human and Divine in Christ**

If, then, the two natures of Christ are indissolubly united in the one person, what, in the second place, is the nature of this union? The Scriptures give us the following indications:

1. It is not theanthropic;
2. It is personal;
3. It is incomprehensible;
4. It is mysterious;
5. It is actual;
6. It is demonstrable;
7. It is necessary;
8. It is eternal;
9. It included the human and divine qualities and acts; and
10. It insures the constant presence of both humanity and deity.

***5.8.1 It is not theanthropic***

The person of Christ is theanthropic, but not His nature. That is, one may speak of the God-man when He wishes to refer to the person; however, one cannot speak of the divine-human nature, but must say the divine and human nature in Christ. This is evident from the fact that Christ had an infinite intelligence and will and a finite intelligence and will; He had a divine consciousness and human consciousness. His divine intelligence was infinite; His human intelligence increased. His divine will was omnipotent; His human will had only the power of unfallen humanity. In His divine consciousness He said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30); in His human consciousness He said, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28). It must be emphasized that He is still the God-man.

***5.8.2 It is personal***

The union of the two natures in Christ is called the hypostatic union. That is, the two natures or substances constitute one personal subsistence. Because Christ did not unite with a human person but with a human nature, the seat of the personality of Christ is in the divine nature.

***5.8.3 It is incomprehensible***

The great American statesman *Daniel Webster* was dining with a company of literary men in Boston. The conversation turned upon Christianity. A Unitarian minister opposite him responded,

> *"Mr. Webster, can you comprehend how Jesus Christ could be both God and man?"*
>
> *"No sir, I cannot understand it," replied Webster, "and I would be ashamed to acknowledge Him as my Saviour if I could comprehend it. He could be no greater than myself, and such is my conviction of accountability to God, my sense of sinfulness before Him, and my knowledge of my own incapacity to recover myself, that I feel I need a superhuman Saviour."*

It is just as heretical to affirm the deity of our Lord while omitting the reality of His humanity, as it is to affirm the humanity while omitting the deity.

***5.8.4 It is mysterious***

"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16), said Paul. In this connection *W. Graham Scroggie* wrote:

> *"Christ was human and divine; but we must not think of these as being distinct and separate in Him. Their relation must remain to us a mystery, but the evidence of each is abundant, and the necessity for both is obvious. Had He not been man, He could not have sympathized with us; and had He not been God, He could not have saved us."*

The reason for the mystery is that we have no analogies to it in our own nature or experience. Illustrations of such matters are only partial and often confuse rather than clarify. It is a truth of revelation that like many others must be accepted by faith, awaiting the dawn of eternal day for fuller knowledge, for a full explanation. The fact that there is mystery need not prevent us from taking at their full value the Scriptures that teach it.

The correct approach to the subject was indicated by *R.A. Torrey*, who wrote:

> *"It is not our main business to reconcile the doctrine of the deity of Christ with the doctrine of the real humanity of Christ. Our first business is to find out what the various passages mean in their grammatical interpretation. Then if we can reconcile them, well; if not, believe them both and leave the reconciliation to increasing knowledge."*

Must we reject the doctrine of the Trinity, so clearly taught in the Scriptures, merely because to our minds it is an impenetrable mystery?

***5.8.5 It is actual***

Jesus was truly God; whatever it is to be God, Jesus was that absolutely. He was equally really man. His deity and His humanity were distinct and separate, and each nature retained its normal attributes. The divine did not permeate the human, nor was the human absorbed by the divine. *St. Leo* expressed it:

> *"He united the true 'form of a servant' in which He was equal to God the Father, and combined both natures in a league so close that the lower was not consumed by receiving glory, nor the higher lessened by assuming lowliness."*

The Son of God was not changed into a human being, nor did the man Jesus rise to a state of deity. The two natures were so bound as to constitute them a single undivided person, acting with a single consciousness and will. Since the union of the natures was accomplished without the conversion or weakening of either, Jesus Christ cannot be spoken of as God and man. He was the God-man.

Although He possessed those separate and distinct natures, He did not act sometimes by His human and sometimes by His divine nature only. He acted in all things as a single person. He is asleep in the stern of the boat, wearied with His day's service. In a moment He arises and controls the raging storm. Thus the reality of His humanity is seen against the background of His divine power and prerogatives.

*Chrysostom* has a striking paragraph on this theme:

> *"I do not think of Christ as God alone, or man alone, but both together.*
>
> *For I know He was hungry, and I know that with five loaves He fed five thousand.*
>
> *I know He was thirsty, and I know that He turned the water into wine.*
>
> *I know He was carried in a ship, and I know that He walked on the sea.*
>
> *I know that He died, and I know that He raised the dead.*
>
> *I know He was set before Pilate, and I know that He sits with the Father on His throne.*

> *I know that He was worshiped by angels, and I know that He was stoned by the Jews.*
>
> *And truly some of these I ascribe to the human and others to the divine nature. For by reason of this He is said to have been both God and Man."*

***5.8.6 It is demonstrable***

In all His ministry our Lord uniformly speaks and is spoken of as a single person. There is no interchange of "**I**" and "**Thou**" between Christ's two natures, such as is recorded of the three Persons of the Trinity (e.g. "**I** in them, and **thou** in me," John 17:23). Nor does He ever use the plural in speaking of Himself.

It is significant that the powers and attributes of both natures are ascribed to the one personality. We can attribute to the one person what is really appropriate to only one of the two natures, for example, "None of the princes of this world knew [this]: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8).

It is of the greatest importance in thinking of our Lord's ministry and life on earth, that we make no distinction such as saying that a certain act or saying was divine and another purely human. Both proceeded from the single personality of Christ.

Again, Jesus spoke of Himself as being in heaven and on earth at the same time. "He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). This is inexplicable on any other theory than that the two natures were so organically united as to form a single person. "His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:3-4).

***5.8.7 It is necessary***

The value of the atonement is intelligible only upon the assumption that the two natures were so united in Christ that **what each did had the value of both**:

1. Had Christ been only man, His death would have meant no more than that of any other martyr who gave himself for others.
2. Had He been only divine, He would have had no real link with humanity, and His death would have been devoid of any redeeming quality.

In the union of the two natures, the atonement becomes not only available, but infinite in its efficacy. Apart from it, Christ could not have been a proper mediator between God and man. His twofold nature enables Him to lay His hand on both:

> "His deity affords Him equal dignity with God, His humanity gives Him perfect sympathy with man" (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15-16).

But suppose He had been only human. How could He have helped us?

He would have afforded an inspiring example of how to live, but His sympathy with us would have been of little avail. We need not only human sympathy but divine power. Assured of His human sympathy, we know that He is willing to help and save us. Assured of His divine power we know that He is able to help and save us. This willingness and ability combine to make Him our all-sufficient Saviour (Hebrews 7:25).

***5.8.8 It is eternal***

It seems clear from Scripture that the Son of God assumed forever the humanity of which He partook at His birth. His incarnation is in perpetuity. He could not lay aside His humanity without ceasing to be Son of Man. This does not imply that He is forever subject to the natural limitations of life on this earth but that He has a bodily form such as was manifested to His disciples after His resurrection. He never will cease to have all the essential attributes of humanity.

In the ascension of Christ, humanity attained the throne of the universe. His ascension appearances represent Him as having a literal but glorified body (Acts 7:56; 9:4-6; Revelation 1:9-18).

*D.M. McIntyre* wrote,

*"May we not believe that the Holy Spirit holds in an indissoluble unity the human and the divine nature of our Lord ... The Spirit ... was the Bond of Union between the divine and human natures of the Son."*

***5.8.9 It included the human and divine qualities and acts***

Both human and divine qualities and acts may be ascribed to the God-man under either of His names. Thus we have human qualities and characteristics ascribed to Christ under the following divine titles:

1. "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:32);
2. "they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8); and
3. "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

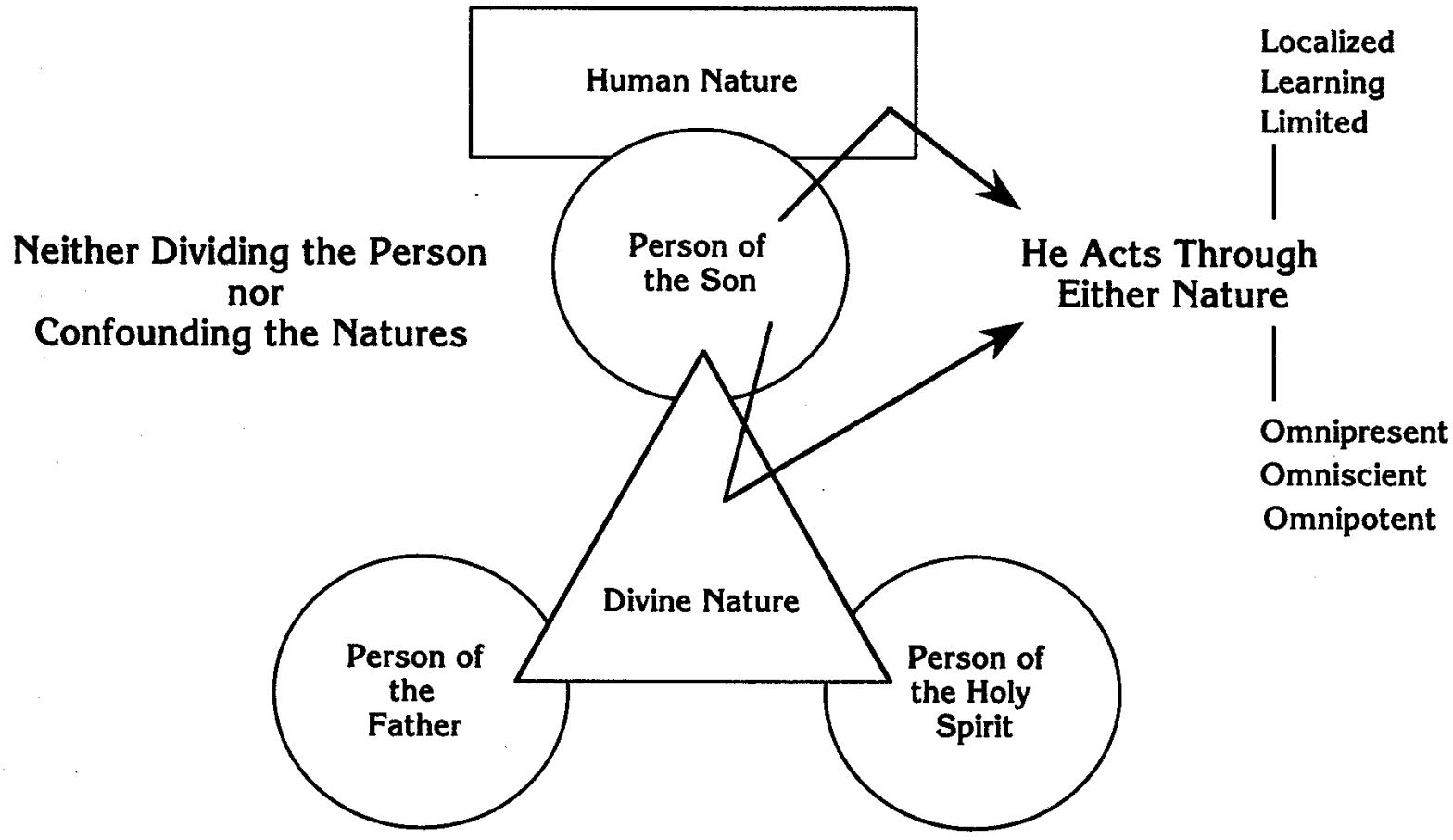
From these we see that God was born and that God died. There are also divine qualities and characteristics ascribed to Christ under His human names:

1. "He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man" (John 3:13);
2. "what then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?" (John 6:62);
3. "the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever" (Romans 9:5);
4. the Christ who died is the Christ who "fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23; cf. Matthew 28:30); and
5. the one by whom God will judge the world is the man (Acts 17:31; cf. Matthew 25:31f).

***5.8.10 It insures the constant presence of both humanity and deity***

The humanity of Christ is present with His deity in every place. This fact adds preciousness to the thought that Christ is in His people. He is there in His deity, and by the union of His humanity with His deity, also in His humanity.

The union of humanity and deity in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is illustrated in the following diagram:



**6. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST**

As has been noted, one of the purposes of the incarnation was that Christ might set for us an example (Matthew 11:29; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6). It is, therefore, important to study His character in order to know the standard, the ideal, of the Christian's walk.

To cast our eyes upon this wonderful person is to say with Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

John says, "These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him" (John 12:41).

Peter responded in similar fashion as Isaiah when he said, "Depart from me, for I am sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8). What was so unique about Christ that would make men like Isaiah and Peter respond in the manner they did? Christ possesses the following unique characters:

1. He was absolutely holy;
2. He had genuine love;
3. He was truly humble;
4. He was thoroughly meek;
5. He was perfectly balanced;
6. He lived a life of prayer; and
7. He was a continual worker.

**6.1 Christ Was Absolutely Holy**

As shown in the following Scriptures, Christ was absolutely holy:

1. He was that "holy offspring" (Luke 1:35).
2. "the Holy and Righteous One" (Acts 3:14).
3. God's "holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:27).
4. "He was holy in nature, for the prince of this world had nothing in Him" (John 14:30).
5. He was "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).
6. "He was holy also in conduct, for He was separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26).
7. "He always did the things well-pleasing to His Father" (John 8:29).
8. No one accepted the challenge when He bade His enemies, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46).
9. Yet He was "tempted in all things as we are" (Hebrews 4:15).
10. He "committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 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 Peter 2:22f).

We are to be holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). However far we may fall from being like Christ, we have no excuse for choosing a lower ideal than the Scriptures hold out for us. If we with unveiled face behold "as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18; cf. Psalm 34:5). Christ is our example of sinless perfection, and it is nothing short of absolute perfection. He has shown us how to be holy.

**6.2 He Had Genuine Love**

Paul says that "the love of Christ ... surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19).

Christ's love goes out, in the first place, toward His Father (John 14:31).

Christ's love is directed also to the Scriptures, in this case the Old Testament:

1. He received these as relating truthfully the events and doctrines of which they treat (Matthew 5:17f).
2. He used Scripture in time of temptation (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).
3. He expounded certain prophecies in it as referring to Himself (Luke 4:16-21; 24:44f).
4. He declared that the Scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35).

Christ's love also goes out to men, to men in general:

1. When Jesus looked upon the rich young ruler, He loved Him (Mark 10:21).
2. He was accused of being "a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners" (Matthew 11:19).
3. He so loved the lost that He laid down His life for them (John 10:11; 15:13; Romans 5:8).
4. More particularly, He loves His own. John speaks of "Him who loves His disciples to the end (John 13:1).
5. He loved them as much as the Father loved Him (John 15:9).
6. He loves His own so much that He gave His life for them (Ephesians 5:2, 25).
7. He loves them so much that no one can separate them from His love (Romans 8:37-39).

**6.3 He Was Truly Humble**

Though equal with God, He emptied Himself, took on the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, and then further humbled Himself and went to the ignominious death of the Cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

His humility is also seen in His conduct while on earth:

1. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9);
2. He was born in a stable, for there was no room for Him in the inn (Luke 2:7);
3. He had no place to lay His head when He went about teaching and healing (Luke 9:58);
4. so that certain women whom He had healed of evil spirits and infirmities ministered unto Him of their substance (Luke 8:2f);
5. He had Peter catch a fish to supply the money needed for Him and Peter for the temple tax (Matthew 17:27); and
6. He was buried in a borrowed tomb (Matthew 27:59f).

Further, He associated with the lowly:

1. He was called "a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners" (Matthew 11:19; cf. Luke 15:2);
2. He welcomed the anointing by a woman who was a sinner (Luke 7:37f) and forgave her sins (Luke 7:47f); and
3. The disciples were of lowly origin, and yet He revealed to them the great mysteries of the kingdom (Matthew 13:11, 16f).

Additionally, He engaged in the most menial service:

1. He "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28);
2. He washed the feet of His disciples (John 13:14); and
3. Though He was the master of His disciples (Matthew 23:10; John 13:14), He really wanted to be recognized as their friend (John 15:13-15).

**6.4 He Was Thoroughly Meek**

He Himself said, "For I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29), and Paul exhorts the Corinthians "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:1). His meekness is seen in:

1. His not breaking the bruised reed, nor putting out the smoldering wick (Matthew 12:20; cf. Isaiah 42:3);
2. His gentle dealings with the repentant sinner (Luke 7:37-39; 48-50);
3. His accommodating Himself to doubting Thomas (John 20:29);
4. His tenderness toward Peter subsequent to Peter's denial of Him (Luke 22:61; John 21:15-23);
5. His gentle dealings with Judas the betrayer (Matthew 26:50; John 13:21) and with those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34); and
6. He did not quarrel, nor cry out, nor did anyone hear His voice in the streets (Matthew 12:19; cf. Isaiah 42:2).

In like manner, the servant of the Lord" must not be quarrelsome, but He kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition" (2 Timothy 2:24f).

**6.5 He Was Perfectly Balanced**

As shown in the following Scriptures, He was grave without being melancholy, joyful without being frivolous:

1. He took life seriously. Isaiah speaks of His life: "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. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:3f; cf. Psalm 69:9; Romans 15:3; Hebrews 2:10).

2. In addition to being sorrowful, Jesus was joyful. He said, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11), and "These things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves" (John 17:13).

3. We never read that Jesus laughed, though in His teaching He sometimes introduced the humorous and the ridiculous (Matthew 19:24; 23:24; Luke 7:31-35).

4. He wept is clear (Luke 19:41; John 11:35). He sorrowed over those who willingly rejected His free Salvation (Matthew 23:37; John 5:40). He bore our griefs and sorrows and seemed to have appeared older than He was (John 8:57).

5. His joy was largely the joy of anticipation (Hebrews 12:2; cf. Isaiah 53:11), the joy of seeing the multitude of souls saved and with Him forever in glory.

**6.6 He Lived A Life of Prayer**

Jesus prayed often. He often prayed before His disciples, but He is never said to have prayed with them. He lived a life of prayer is shown in the following Scriptures:

1. He spent long seasons in prayer, sometimes whole nights (Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12).

2. At other times He arose early and sought seclusion for prayer (Mark 1:35).

3. While He prayed for Himself, He never forgot to pray also for His own (Luke 22:32; John 17).

4. He prayed before engaging in great tasks: before entering upon a missionary tour in Galilee (Mark 1:35-38); before choosing the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12f); and before He went to Calvary (Matthew 26:38-46).

5. He prayed earnestly (Luke 22:44; Hebrews 5:7); perseveringly (Matthew 26:44); believingly (John 11:41f); and submissively (Matthew 26:39).

6. He also prayed after great successes (John 6:15).

The writer to the Hebrews say, "In the days of His flesh, when He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and who was heard because of His piety" (Hebrews 5:7). If the Son of God needed to pray, how much more do we need to wait upon God.

**6.7 He Was A Continual Worker**

Jesus said, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working" (John 5:17), and "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work" (John 9:4). As shown in the following Scriptures, He was a continual worker:

1. Beginning early in the morning (Mark 1:35; John 8:2), He continued until late at night (Matthew 8:16; Luke 6:12; John 3:2).

2. It is interesting to follow Him through a typical busy day (Matthew 12:22-13:53; Mark 3:20-4:41).

3. He forgot about food (John 4:31-34), rest (Mark 6:31), and His own death pains (Luke 23:41-43) when He had the opportunity of helping a needy soul.

4. His work consisted of teaching (Matthew 5-7), preaching (Mark 1:38f), casting out demons (Mark 5:12f), healing the sick (Matthew 8-9), saving the lost (Luke 7:48; 19:9), raising the dead (Matthew 9:25; Luke 7:14; John 11:43), and calling and training His workers (Matthew 10; Luke 10).

5. As a worker, He was characterized by courage (John 2:14-17; 3:3; 19:10f), thoroughness (Matthew 14:36; John 7:23), impartiality (Matthew 11:19), and tact (Mark 12:34; John 4:7-30).

## 7. THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST

### 7.1 Meaning of the Humiliation of Christ

To humiliate someone is to "reduce [them] to a lower position." The word "humiliation" when applied to Jesus Christ describes the great step downward which He made in order to be the God-man.

### 7.2 The Biblical Evidence

There are two classical passages on this subject:

1. John 17:5, 24; and
2. Philippians 2:5-11.

#### *7.2.1 The Context of John 17:5, 24*

In John 17 we get a glimpse of the intensely loving relationship that existed between Father and Son before the incarnation. We also see some of the glory He left behind to become our Saviour (John 17:5, 24).

#### *7.2.2 The Context of Philippians 2:5-11*

The most significant Biblical passage dealing with this great condescension is Philippians 2:5-11.

Understanding the author's purpose in writing this chapter is crucial to our interpretation of his words. Paul begins chapter 2 with an appeal to the Philippians to be united (Philippians 2:1-2). He calls upon them to be absolutely selfless, putting other believers ahead of themselves (Philippians 2:3-4). Then, in Philippians 2:5-11 he sets up Jesus as our perfect example of humility and selflessness, and how, as a result of that kind of character, "God highly exalted Him."

The critical point in these verses is that believers are to place the interests of others ahead of their own *in the same way* Jesus did, that is, *He "emptied Himself"* (2:7). In the light of the context, the words "emptied Himself" cannot pertain to any change in Jesus' essential being, as is often erroneously taught. It pertains, rather, to Jesus' *attitude* toward who He was (2:5), and thus provides insight into what He thought about His dual nature.

Even though Christ "existed in the form of God," with all of the rights and privileges of God, He did not "grasp" selfishly for these privileges, but used His divine attributes for our benefit. He "emptied Himself" by refusing to use His divine powers in ways that could have eased His burdens, or eliminate the suffering He endured to provide our redemption. The God-man chose to become a servant first (2:7), over His rightful place as our king (2:10-11).

Only on the appropriate occasions did Christ employ His divine attributes in order to establish His deity and redeem sinners. For, in becoming man, the Son of God never ceased to be God.

In Philippians 2:6 it is to be noted that the humiliation began in Christ's attitude of mind; He thought that being equal with God was not a thing to be grasped or to be forcibly retained. His becoming man was no personal threat to Him. This is an attitude of humility, for the proud are not only anxious to keep everything which they possess, but also to get everything they do not yet have. Two primary things were involved in the incarnation:

1. Christ emptied Himself; and
2. He was made in the likeness of man.

### 7.3 The Implications of the Words "Emptied Himself"

In the first place, we are told that Christ "emptied Himself" (Philippians 2:7). The Greek word is *kenoo*, and from it comes the word *kenosis*.

***7.3.1 Wrong interpretations***

Unfortunately, many have wrongly interpreted the act which it describes. They say that Christ emptied Himself of His relative attributes:

1. omniscience;
2. omnipotence; and
3. omnipresence

while retaining His immanent attributes:

1. holiness;
2. love; and
3. truth.

It is taught that He had deep knowledge, but not complete; was powerful, but not all-powerful. This, however, is not the case.

***7.3.2 Christ asserted His divine knowledge***

As shown in the following Scriptures, Christ repeatedly asserted His divine knowledge:

1. We read that "He knew all men," that "He Himself knew what was in man" (John 2:24f), and that He knew "all the things that were coming upon Him" (John 18:4).

2. As for His power, we not only read that He rebuked the wind, miraculously fed the hungry, healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead, but that He frequently called on the people to believe Him for His works' sake, if they would not believe His words (John 6:36; 10:25, 37f; 14:11; 15:24).

3. John presented several selected miracles from the ministry of Christ so that His readers might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing" they might "have life in His name" (John 20:31).

4. Surely, the works of Elijah and Elisha did not indicate that they were God incarnate, since they performed them through the power of the Spirit; but we are called on to believe that Christ is God because of the works which He did. This can only be the case if He wrought them, at least many of them, by the power of His own deity. Christ worked miracles through His own inherent power (Matthew 9:28), the apostles performed them in the name of Christ, and Christ at times performed miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, and not His own (Matthew 12:28).

***7.3.3 Several things did happen in the humiliation of Christ***

Several things did happen in the humiliation of Christ:

1. In some manner His divine glory was veiled, but not surrendered (John 1:14; 2:11; 17:5).
2. He willingly left the riches of heaven to take on human poverty (2 Corinthians 8:9).
3. He took on unglorified human flesh which was subject to weakness, pain, temptation, and limitation.
4. He voluntarily chose not to use His prerogatives of deity, such as His omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience, to make His way easier.
5. He wearied, travelled from one point to another, and grew in wisdom and knowledge.
6. Though He did not surrender His divine attributes, He willingly submitted to not exercising certain attributes of deity so that He could identify with man.

As *Walvoord* writes,

> "The act of kenosis ... may ... be properly understood to mean that Christ surrendered no attributes of Deity, but that He did voluntarily restrict their independent use in keeping with His purpose of living among men and their limitations" (*John Walvoord*, **Jesus Christ Our Lord**, p. 144).

***7.3.4 Christ merely surrendered the independent exercise of some of His relative attributes***

It is evident that the Scriptures teach that Christ merely surrendered the independent exercise of some of His relative or transitive attributes. He did not surrender the absolute or immanent attributes in any sense; He was always:

1. perfectly holy;
2. just;
3. merciful;
4. truthful;
5. faithful; and
6. loved with all the intensity of His being.

But He emptied Himself by giving up the independent exercise of His relative attributes. Thus He was omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent as the Father granted Him the exercise of these attributes. This is involved in:

1. His giving up the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5); and
2. His taking on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:6).

That this is the true view is evident from the fact that Jesus speaks of the things that the Father had:

1. shown Him (John 5:20; 8:38);
2. taught Him (John 8:28);
3. given Him to do (John 5:36); and
4. given Him certain authority (John 10:18).

The Father had "anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38), that He:

1. cast out demons by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:28);
2. by the Holy Spirit gave commandments to the apostles (Acts 1:2); and
3. offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14).

As *Muller* observes:

> "By taking the form of a servant He emptied Himself. Nothing is mentioned of any abandonment of divine attributes, the divine nature or the form of God, but only a divine paradox is stated here: He emptied Himself by taking something to Himself, namely the manner of being, the nature or form of a servant or slave. At His incarnation He remained in the form of God and as such He is Lord and Ruler over all, but He also accepted the nature of a servant as part of His humanity" (*Muller*, **The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon**, p. 82).

**7.4 He Was Made in the Likeness of Men**

As mentioned in the following Scriptures, Christ was made in the likeness of men:

1. Though He existed in the form of God, He came to be in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:7).
2. The one who was and is by nature God, became man. John declared that "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14; cf. 1 John 4:2f; 2 John 7).
3. Christ was given a human body (Hebrews 10:5) so that God could dwell among us (John 1:14).
4. In Christ "all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9).

**7.5 Christ Took on Flesh Does Not Mean that He Took on Sinful Flesh**

That Christ took on flesh does not mean that He took on sinful flesh. Paul asserts that God sent "His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). Concerning the expression "sinful flesh," *Murray* clarifies it,

> "Paul is using the word 'likeness' not for the purpose of suggesting any unreality in respect of our Lord's human nature. That

> would contradict Paul's express language elsewhere in this epistle and in His other epistles. He is under the necessity of using this word here because He uses the term 'sinful flesh' and could not have said that Christ was sent in 'sinful flesh'. That would have contradicted the sinlessness of Jesus for which the New Testament is jealous throughout (*Murray*, **The Epistle to the Romans**, I, p. 280).

**7.6 Christ Took the Form of A Servant While He Retained the Form of God**

Other Scriptures which speak of the incarnation are Romans 1:3; Galatians 4:4; 1 Timothy 3:16; and Hebrews 2:14. Not only did Christ become man, but while being in the form of God, He took on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7). *Hendriksen* explains,

> "The text cannot mean that 'he exchanged the form of God for the form of a servant,' as is so often asserted. He took the form of a servant while He retained the form of God! It is exactly that which makes our Salvation possible and achieves it" (*Hendriksen*, **Exposition of Philippians**, p. 109).

**7.7 Jesus Christ Was A Living Example of Humility**

In the words "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29), Jesus gave us a glimpse into His inmost heart. If pride is the greatest and essential sin, then humility is the supreme virtue; and if humility was the distinguishing feature of the Master, then it must characterize the disciple, for "servant is not greater than his lord" (John 13:16). Jesus Christ was a living example of humility.

*John Ruskin* writes,

> "I believe the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility doubt of his own power, or hesitation in speaking his own opinions; but a right understanding of the relation between what he can do, and the rest of the world's sayings and doings ... only they do not expect their fellow-men therefore to fall down and worship them."

**7.8 A Despised Grace**

The works of the great philosophers of past days will be searched in vain for the exaltation of humility as a virtue. There is no word in either Greek or Latin that expresses the Christian idea of humility. The word "lowly," which Jesus appropriated to Himself, is employed by ethical philosophers in the sense of "pusillanimous."

Not until Jesus came with His peerless life and matchless teaching was humility elevated to the level of a primary virtue. Humility as a grace is the creation of Christianity. Our Lord's pronouncements on the subject introduced His disciples to a startlingly new and revolutionary scale of values. "He that shall humble Himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:12). "He that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (Luke 9:48). It was a difficult lesson for them to master, that humility was to be desired, not despised.

Meekness plus lowliness constitutes humility. Meekness is humility in relation to God. Lowliness is humility in relation to man. It is possible to be meek and not lowly. Jesus was just as meek toward God as He was lowly before man.

*Otto Borchert* contrasts the genuine humility of the Lord, which manifested itself in the utter absence of any striving after effect or originality, with Mohammed, who was always sensitive to his personal appearance. The vanity of Buddha peeps through the rags of his beggar's cloak. But Jesus moved about in the unaffected guise of ordinary folk. "He humbled Himself."

This other-worldly humility that was "an effluence and an ally of His love," was seen most clearly in His giving up the outward manifestation of His deity and taking His place in humanity, and then giving up even His place in humanity! This was humility indeed.

Think of His attitude toward worldly position: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:55). Toward earthly riches: "For your sakes He became poor" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Toward service: "I am among you as He that serveth" (Luke 22:27). Toward suffering: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50).

The completeness with which Jesus laid aside the independent excercise of His divine attributes and subordinated Himself to His Father is seen in the following passages: "I seek not mine own will" (John 5:30). "I seek not mine own glory" (John 8:50). "My doctrine is not mine" (John 7:16). "The Son can do nothing of Himself" (John 5:19). "I am not come of myself" (John 7:28). "The word which ye hear is not mine" (John 14:24). "I do nothing of myself" (John 8:28). Christ was willing to be nothing, in order that His Father might be all.

Jesus' humility was so absolute that His Father was able to achieve His whole will through Him. Because He so humbled Himself, "God also hath highly exalted Him" (Philippians 2:9). Because His humility was the expression of His innermost attitude and not a temporary pose, He unostentatiously donned the slave's apron, and moved in and out among men as the servant of all. He drew attention to neither His achievements nor His humility.

Nowhere was His humility more strikingly displayed than in the way in which He bore insult and injury. During His brief years of ministry almost every form of trial assailed Him. A dozen times plots were laid against His life. What would be the attitude of a modern dictator to a would-be assassin? They said He was demon-possessed. They said He was mad. They slandered Him as a glutton and a drunkard. They impugned His motives and cast aspersions on His character. But all those combined failed to elicit one drop of bitterness or draw forth one word of complaint or self-justification from His lips. He was "as a sheep before her shearers ... dumb" (Isaiah 53:7).

**7.9 He took a towel**

There are only two places in Scripture where it is explicitly stated that our Lord left us an example, and one of them was an example of unparalleled humility.

The disciples had gone to a room where the Last Supper had been prepared. On the way, the ambitious disciples had been quarreling over who should be the greatest and who would have precedence in Christ's kingdom. When they entered the room, there was apparently no slave to perform the customary washing of the feet of the guests. The disciples probably took turns when there was no slave, but on this occasion none would condescend to do the menial task. Their minds were full of the subject of their bitter contention, and none was willing to be servant of all. Each feigned unconsciousness of the neglected duty.

When Jesus entered, He found them seated in sulky silence, and supper must have been a gloomy meal. The scene that followed is described in moving words: "And supper being ended ... Jesus knowing ... that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself ... and began to wash the disciples' feet, and wipe them with the towel" (John 13:2-5).

The quality of this act of humility is heightened by the fact that Jesus performed it while vividly conscious of His divine origin and nature. He knew that He came from God's presence. None of the disciples would confess himself inferior to another, but when the divine Lord remembered who He was, He rose up and performed the lowliest of tasks. And it was no act of ostentation; He did it just because He liked to do this for His disciples. On the other hand we should not overlook the fact that when people fell in worship at His feet, Jesus did not bid them stand up. He accepted their worship as His due (Luke 7:38).

**7.10 Jesus' teaching on humility**

A selection of Scripture passages will reveal the high place our Lord accorded to this grace:

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3).
2. Blessed are the meek (Matthew 5:5).
3. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest (Matthew 18:4).
4. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 14:11).
5. He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve (Luke 22:26).
6. I am among you as he that serveth (Luke 22:27).
7. Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29).
8. He that is least among you all, the same shall be great (Luke 9:48).

To read these passages thoughtfully is to be convicted of our own lack of humility. Our pride stands abashed in the presence of His utter humility. One fact stands out crystal clear - God's way up is down.

*Andrew Murray* indicates the way in which our Lord's humility may become ours:

> "It is only by the indwelling of Christ in His divine humility that we become truly humble. We have our pride from another, from Adam; we must have our humility from another too. Pride is ours, and rules us with such terrible power, because it is ourself, our very nature. Humility must be ours in the same way; it must be in our very self, our very nature. The promise is, 'where,' even in the heart, 'sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly.'"

## 8. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY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# Chapter Nineteen - The Temptation and Sinlessness of Christ

There was a time in the history of the church when the sinlessness of Jesus was almost universally admitted, but that is not so today. This fundamental truth of Christianity has been denied by false cults and unbelievers. This chapter, divided into five major divisions, is a careful study of the Biblical truth which support for the doctrine of the sinlessness of Christ:

1. We will discuss the temptation of Christ.
2. We will examine the doctrine of the sinlessness of Christ.
3. We will provide the testimony to the sinlessness of Christ.
4. We will discuss the question: "Could Jesus have sinned?"
5. We will provide a solution to the question.

## 1. THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

Read Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.

The words "Immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan" (Mark 1:12-13), assure us that in the temptation of Christ the initiative was on the side of the divine instead of diabolical.

### 1.1 A Personal Tempter

An objective reading of the relevant Scriptures leaves no doubt that there was a personal agent in the temptation instead of a personification of evil. In the wilderness Jesus was not engaged merely in an inner conflict with His own desires and ambitions, but in a desperate, long, drawn-out struggle with the external adversary of God and man, the devil.

The place where the Second Adam met and vanquished the tempter is in striking contrast to that in which the first Adam succumbed to his subtlety - the arid wilderness, not luxuriant Eden. Jesus was tempted in solitude. The monastic life cannot save from satanic assaults.

### 1.2 Tempted in All Points

Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). It would mean that Jesus was tempted in every part of His humanity, as we are. The surrounding circumstances and incidentals of the temptation of Christ may differ, but temptations are essentially the same for all men and women in all ages.

The temptation of Christ may be classified in the following three categories:

1. Appetite: the desire to enjoy things (Matthew 4:2-4; Luke 4:2-4) or John refers to this as "the lust of the flesh" (1 John 2:16);
2. Ambition: the desire to achieve things (Matthew 4:5-6; Luke 4:9-11) or John designates "the pride of life" (1 John 2:16); and
3. Avarice: the desire to obtain things (Matthew 4:8-11; Luke 4:5-7) or John designates "the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16).

### *1.2.1 Appetite*

At the end of the forty days, Jesus became hungry. Since He was hungry, Satan made his first approach on the physical plane and in the realm of legitimate appetite. Satan came in the role of a benefactor. *Why not turn these stones into bread?* Desire for food is God-given and innocent. Since Jesus was the Son of God, why not use His inherent power to gratify His legitimate desire? The temptation was so plausible, so specious, that few if any of us would have detected in it the satanic attack.

The whole point of the test focused on the Lord Jesus' submission to the will of God. In each temptation Satan endeavored to induce Jesus to act in a manner contrary to complete dependence on God, by asserting a measure of independence springing from self-interest.

Jesus' method of resisting the temptation was simple, yet most effective. *"It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4; cf. Deuteronomy 8:3). These words expressed His utmost confidence that His Father would supply Him with needed bread in His own way and time. This trust crushed the very suggestion of distrust and thus overcame the temptation.

He refused to employ His divine prerogatives to gratify His own natural desires. To yield to the satanic suggestions would be a denial of His incarnation, because He would be calling into His service powers which His brethren could not employ.

Further, it would have been satisfying a legitimate craving in an illegitimate way. He preferred remaining hungry to moving out of line with His Father's will. Had He yielded and provided Himself with bread by a miracle, His call to discipleship would have been out of the question for those who possessed no such powers but must earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow.

### *1.2.2 Ambition*

The scene changes. Satan takes Jesus up to a pinnacle of the Temple. The pinnacle was in all probability the southern wing overlooking the Kidron valley hundreds of feet below, the sheerest depth well-known to the Jews. Satan's suggestion was that Jesus should leap into this abyss, not into the crowded Temple court. Had not God promised in Psalm 91:11-12 that He would preserve the Messiah?

The focus of this temptation was on His confidence in God, and the tempter supported his proposition by a misquotation from Scripture, from which he omitted a vital phrase found in the original of Psalm 91:11, *"in all your ways"* (Luke 4:10-11; cf. Psalm 91:11-12). The real subtlety lay in the misapplication of the passage. Jesus was challenged to prove His faith by putting God's promise to the test. Perhaps Satan was tempting Jesus to

present Himself as Messiah by performing a sensational stunt. Malachi had predicted the Messiah would suddenly come to His Temple (Malachi 3:1). Here then was Jesus' opportunity to obtain fame and notoriety as the promised Deliverer without going to Calvary.

Jesus resisted temptation by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16, *"On the other hand, it is written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test."* Jesus' reply clearly revealed that for Him to act thus would be not faith but presumption. He avoided the peril of fanaticism, refusing to go beyond the limits God had laid down and thus tempting God, for God is not bound to respond to every irresponsible whim of the want of faith. Stunting was not one of the ways of God. The Jews sought a Messiah who would work dazzling wonders and establish a worldwide empire with Jerusalem as its centre, and this was a temptation to yield to their carnal expectations.

Note the repeated use of *"It is written"* in Jesus' replies to the devil. Jesus knew how to use the sword of the Spirit. He would not presumptuously run into danger, unless clearly in the will of His Father. He refused to attempt to dazzle people into faith. He would not establish His kingdom by display and outward show.

Foiled again, the tempter makes a last attempt to seduce Jesus.

### *1.2.3 Avarice*

The first temptation was on the physical plane, the second on the mental. In the third, Satan invades the realm of the spiritual - the giving to him a place that belongs to God alone.

This time Satan takes Jesus to a high mountain. Apparently in a vision (for *"all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them"* could not be seen *"in a moment of time"* from any mountain in Palestine) the glory of world-domination was brought vividly before the Son of Man. Satan offered Him an outward kingdom with its outward splendor.

It is noteworthy that Jesus did not challenge Satan's boast of the power to give Him the kingdoms of the world or charge him with falsehood. Notice the world itself was not offered, but the kingdoms of this world. There is a sense in which Satan does have authority over the kingdoms of this world. Originally these kingdoms and this glory were given to Adam. Man's sin has made Satan *"the prince of this world"* (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), *"the god of this world"* (2 Corinthians 4:4), and *"the prince of the power of the air"* (Ephesians 2:2).

God purposed the kingdoms of this world will one day become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:15). So Satan was offering Christ what would eventually be His anyway. But there could be no short cut to the Throne. The Cross had to come first. In the counsels of God, the Lord Jesus had to suffer before He could enter into His glory. He perceived that Satan was offering Him the Crown without the Cross. The devil focused his last temptation on the possibility of an evasion of the Cross by a compromise with him. Jesus would not achieve a legitimate end by a wrong means.

What a preposterous insult! A rebel-spirit, asked his sinless Creator to bow down and worship him! Could anything be more blasphemous? For the third time our Lord Jesus draws the sword of the Spirit from its sheath and uses it expertly. Jesus quoted, *"It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only"* (Deuteronomy 6:13; cf. Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8) showing that as a Man He should worship and serve God alone.

Having failed to storm the citadel of Christ's loyalty and absolute obedience to His Father's will, the adversary departed from Him "for a season," but only for a season. Later Satan returned to the attack with greater fury.

### 1.3 The Spiritual Lessons Which Can be Learned From the Temptation

#### *1.3.1 The essence of the three temptations*

The first temptation concerned the body, the second the soul, the third the spirit. They appealed respectively to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. These revolve around three of the strongest drives of human existence - physical appetite, desire for power and possessions, and desire for public recognition. How often disciples are tempted to choose a pathway of comfort and ease, to seek a prominent place in the world, and to gain a high position in the church.

In other words, the essence of the three temptations may be summarized:

1. The first was the temptation to satisfy a legitimate appetite by illegitimate means.
2. The second was the temptation to produce spiritual results by unspiritual means.
3. The third was the the temptation to obtain a lawful heritage by unlawful means.

#### *1.3.2 Satan's methods of temptation*

Satan's methods are varied, and we need to be on our guard constantly lest we be caught by them:

1. First Satan tempts us to act independently of God, to take things into our own hands, to act in our own behalf.
2. Then he misapplies the Scriptures. Scriptures are wrested from their setting and given a false application, the unwary are deceived and misled. The devil is never more subtle than when he comes to us with a Bible under his arm!
3. Finally he plays up self-advantage, the avoidance of the painful path of suffering down which God would lead us toward the final goal.

#### *1.3.3 The correct approach to resist temptation*

It is not without significance that each of the answers of Jesus to Satan was a quotation from the the Word of God (i.e. the Holy Bible). They were simple enough for the average child to understand. They were authoritative, not in the form of submitted suggestions. Human reasonings and arguments are weak in conflicts with Satan because they lack authority.

#### *1.3.4 The reliability of Old Testament Scripture*

Jesus quoted the book of Deuteronomy to resist Satan's temptation. It is a book that has been so strongly assaulted by destructive critics. Our Lord Jesus thus stamped the Pentateuch as the Word of God.

### *1.3.5 Additional points in connection with the temptation*

Several additional points should be mentioned in connection with the temptation:

1. Temptations usually come in suddenly rather than in streams.
2. In all three cases, the end held out was right enough but the means was wrong.
3. In all three cases, Satan used religious language and thus clothed the temptations with a garb of outward respectability. He even quoted Scripture.
4. It is always wrong to obey Satan, to worship him or any other created being.
5. It is wrong to tempt God.

### *1.3.6 We can share Christ's victory over Satan*

Jesus gained a stunning victory over His enemy, the benefits of which can be shared today by every tempted soul. Because the Christ to whom we are united by faith was victorious over every class of temptation, we may share in His triumph as we appropriate it by faith.

## 1.4 The Issue of the Temptation

In relation to Christ, the temptation issued in unqualified triumph. The suggestions of the evil one left Him untainted by sin. His filial relationship with His Father remained undisturbed. He entered on the temptation *"full of the Holy Spirit."* He returned *"in the power of the Spirit"* (Luke 4:1, 14); enriched, not impoverished, by the experience.

In relation to Satan, the temptation meant disgrace and utter defeat. Each reply of Jesus dealt another stunning blow. His subtleties and sophistries were ruthlessly exposed. His defeat in the wilderness foretold his final and absolute defeat at the consummation of the age.

In relation to the believer, the temptation victory gave assurance of the possibility of personal triumph over Satan and his wiles. The weapon used by our Lord in the contest is equally available to the believer, so that he need be *"in nothing terrified by his adversaries"* (Philippians 1:28).

# 2. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

## 2.1 Definition of the Sinlessness of Christ

*"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).*

*"For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).*

Sinlessness in Jesus was not merely a neutral quality of innocence as it was in the first Adam. The New Testament speaks of His overcoming temptation. Temptation means nothing if it does not comprise striving against sin. The words "has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" must mean that, although He was tempted to sin, the conflict left Him faultless.

Jesus as High Priest is described as being "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). He was holy in character, utterly devoted to God. He was harmless in the sense of being free from malice. He was undefiled, free from all moral impurity and defilement, He was separate - set apart permanently - from the sinners for whom He lived and died.

### 2.2 The Fact that Jesus Did Not Sin

At His conception Jesus was described as "holy" (Luke 1:35). Hebrews 4:15 affirms that He was tempted, "yet without sin," and 1 Peter 2:22 states that He "committed no sin." The Gospels record the fact that at every point, especially under stress and hostility, Jesus always did what was right. He expressed anger, but He did so righteously, for examples:

1. His closest friends called Him "holy and just" (Acts 3:14).
2. Judas admitted that he had "betrayed innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4).
3. Even Pilate pronounced Him "just" (Matthew 27:19).

There was not a trace of selfishness in Him. The testimony of those who observed Him was uniform: He was without fault.

### 2.3 The Importance of the Sinlessness of Christ

The mystery of Jesus' sinlessness lies in the combined facts that He is fully human, yet completely faultless. His humanity has practical value in the sympathetic relationship we are able to have with Christ, yet we have absolute confidence in Him as Saviour and example because of His blamelessness.

### 2.4 Objections to the Sinlessness of Christ

It is argued that on philosophical grounds there is an antecedent improbability of such a perfect life as that portrayed in the gospels. We should be compelled to admit the validity of this objection if deity be left out of account.

The presence of a sinless man among universally sinful men would be as much a miracle in the moral realm as would a virgin birth in the physical realm. But in spite of this improbability, if sufficient evidence is adduced, is it reasonable to reject it? And we submit that sufficient evidence has been adduced.

Other objectors assert that since we have no record of the thirty years of obscurity, it is impossible to claim sinlessness when we are ignorant of His actions. To this we answer that we prove Christ's deity and base His sinlessness on that fact. Further, the claim is confirmed by those who lived closest to Him and were thus in the best position to know. The quality of His life during the thirty hidden years is best evidenced by the life He

lived during His years of public ministry.

### 3. THE TESTIMONY TO THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

The testimony to the sinlessness of Christ is divided into the following three major categories:

1. the witness of Scripture;
2. the witness of Christ Himself; and
3. the witness of friends and foes.

#### 3.1 The Witness of Scripture

The fifteenth of the thirty-nine articles of faith of the Church of England sets out clearly a truth that finds consistent support in the Scriptures:

> *"Christ, in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things, sin only except, from which He was clearly void, both in His flesh and in His spirit."*

There is not one statement of Scripture which, consistently interpreted, can be made to imply less than sinlessness for our Lord. Four affirmations by different New Testament writers are unequivocal in their testimony:

1. "in Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5).
2. "He did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22)
3. "He knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21)
4. "Tempted ... yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15)

#### 3.2 The Witness of Christ Himself

The challenge flung out to His carping critics by the Lord still remains unanswered, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46). His sinlessness was unimpeachable or they would have brought a charge against Him. Even hell could bring no accusation. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me," Jesus claimed (John 14:30).

A study of His life reveals a consistent sense of immunity from sin. Never did He evince the slightest discontent with Himself - a grave fault in any other man. Never did He shed a tear over conscious failure. He demanded penitence of others, yet was never penitent Himself. Nor can this self-satisfaction be explained on the grounds that His standard of duty or sense of moral obligation was less exacting than that of His contemporaries. The reverse was the case. His code of ethics was immeasurably higher than theirs, yet not once does He admit that He has in any degree fallen short of His own exacting standards.

At the end of His life, as He communed with His Father in His moving sacerdotal prayer, He claimed to have

accomplished perfectly the work entrusted to Him (John 17:4). In any other case than His, we would be justified in regarding such claims as obnoxious pride and arrant hypocrisy. In His case the facts substantiated the claim.

To quote *T.C. Edwards* in this context, "The fact that Jesus never confessed sin implies in His case that He never did sin. In every other good man, the saintlier he becomes the more pitiless is his self-condemnation, and the more severe he is on certain kinds of sin, such as hypocrisy. But Jesus, if He were a sinner, was guilty of the very worst of sin, which He rebuked with burning anger in the Pharisees of His day. Yet He never accuses Himself ... He never speaks about redeeming Himself, but declares Himself to be the paschal lamb 'whose blood of the new covenant is shed for many unto the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:28).

While painting the doom of the impenitent in awful colors, He is quite unconcerned about His own Salvation. He prayed, "Father, forgive them," but never, "Father, forgive me."

It is a striking fact that the Scriptures that so faithfully record the sins and failures of their most notable heroes, such as Abraham and Moses and David, have no record of His sins or failures.

### 3.3 The Witness of Friends and foes

That Jesus was sinless appears to be the conviction of His contemporaries, whether friends or foes, including:

1. His disciples;
2. Judas;
3. the criminal;
4. the centurion;
5. Pilate and his wife; and
6. the demons.

#### *3.3.1 His disciples*

For more than three years His disciples had daily opportunity to observe His actions and reactions under all possible circumstances. Had there been discrepancy between His talk and His walk, they would have been the first to observe and note it. But they consistently found in His life the embodiment of His teaching.

As honest men, had they detected any flaw or shortcoming, they would have recorded it as they did their own. But with one voice they exalt their Master as the perfect example of a holy life: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just" (Acts 3:14). They openly declared of Him that He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22).

#### *3.3.2 Judas*

Tthe testimony of Judas is of peculiar importance. After he had betrayed his best friend, he found he could not retain the wretched price of blood. Remorse compelled him to fling the silver at the feet of the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4). So violent was the panic in his breast, that he

could bear life no longer, "and he went away and hanged himself." We may depend upon it that if Judas had ever seen, in public or in private, anything in the character of Jesus inconsistent with His claims, he would, if only to mitigate the poignancy of his remorse, have dragged it into the light of day. But conscience compelled him to testify that He whom he betrayed was innocent. He was unable to extract a single crumb of comfort from any inconsistency in the life of Jesus.

#### *3.3.3 The criminal*

The criminal, deeply impressed by the words and demeanor of the Lord under the most agonizing conditions, gave as his testimony, "This man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41).

#### *3.3.4 The centurion*

The centurion, similarly impressed, could find no explanation for such serenity and triumph in the hour of suffering and death, except in the conviction that "Truly, this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

#### *3.3.5 Pilate and his wife*

Both Pilate and his wife united to pronounce Him a just man (Matthew 27:19, 24).

#### *3.3.6 The demons*

Even the demons were forced to add their unwilling testimony, "I know who You are, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).

It should be borne in mind, however, that Jesus' perfection of character did not consist in merely **negative faultlessness**. Throughout His whole life He was characterized by **positive and active holiness**. There is no perfection of character of which we can conceive that does not find its ideal fulfillment in Him. The more closely His life is analyzed, the more completely His perfection shines out.

#### *3.3.7 Conclusion*

Throughout His earthly life, and through the succeeding centuries, hostile men have been searching for some flaw in His character, but in vain. I conclude that Christ is sinless.

## 4. COULD JESUS HAVE SINNED?

### 4.1 The Purpose of the Temptation

Sometimes it is suggested that the temptation would have been meaningless if Jesus was not able to sin. What is the value of the Temptation?

Some Bible scholars think that God has publicly demonstrated the perfection of the Man, Christ Jesus. The temptation was designed, not to determine if He could sin, but to demonstrate that He could not! Just as gold is subjected to the acid and the scales to demonstrate its purity, so the "holy, harmless and undefiled" One was tested by Satan. Adam was innocent but Jesus was holy. Adam's innocence was like a blank white sheet of paper which Satan soon befouled. But the Lord Jesus was like a sheet filled with God; Satan could not put a mark on it.

Some say as God Jesus could not sin but as Man He could sin. But He is still both God and Man, and it is unthinkable He could sin today. The purpose of the temptation was not to see if He would sin but to prove that He could not sin. Only a holy, sinless man could be our Redeemer.

If it be asked that if Jesus was not able to sin, how could He have suffered in the temptation? We would reply that suffering is most poignant in those who do not sin, not in those who yield. The suffering of temptation lies in our resistance to it. Yielding to it means giving up the struggle.

We will discuss the question of: "Could Jesus have sinned?" in detail in the following sections.

### 4.2 Definition of Impeccability

The word "impeccable" means "unable to sin." The consensus of orthodox Christianity is that the God-man was not only **able not to sin**, but absolutely **unable to sin**. The union of the divine with the human imparted to His whole being the quality of sinlessness we associate with God who "cannot be tempted by evil" (James 1:13). Thus the answer to the question, Could Jesus have sinned? is an emphatic No!

### 4.3 Problems with the Concept of Impeccability

All believers affirm the fact that Jesus **never committed sin**. But not all are agreed that He **was unable to sin**. The issue involves the question, Why did Jesus never sin? Two answers could theoretically be given:

1. He never sinned because, being God, He was unable to sin (In other words, Jesus could not sin.); or
2. He never sinned because He faced temptation and fought off its inducements, emerging victorious (In other words, Jesus could sin, but He didn't).

#### *4.3.1 Problems with the position of "Jesus could not sin"*

The problems with this position may be summarized as follows:

1. The thought of temptation without the possibility of sinning seems unreal. But Scripture affirms that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are (Hebrews 4:15), yet never for a moment did He entertain temptation.

2. If we say that Jesus was unable to sin, we appear to be saying that Jesus was never really tempted. This contradicts Scripture which clearly says that He was "tempted by the devil" (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:2).

3. This seems to threaten Jesus' ability to sympathize with the human plight, an ability achieved by His temptation (Hebrews 4:15). Some say that "tempt" really means "test," and this is sometimes true, depending on the context. The same Greek word is used for a "trial" and for a "temptation" (James 1:12-18). But Jesus' temptation was a solicitation by the devil to break the Word of God, not merely a trial which He encountered to test His faith (James 1:2-8).

4. By reducing the Temptation to a demonstration of sinlessness, the nerve connection is cut with believers, for then it would be logically impossible for New Testament writers to appeal to Jesus' temptation as a ground of confidence for the believer's overcoming of temptation by His sympathetic help (Hebrews 2:18; 4:14-15). If we affirm the inability of the man Jesus to sin, we are affirming a qualitative difference between the humanity of the first Adam and that of the Last Adam."

### *4.3.2 Problems with the position of "Jesus could sin, but didn't"*

The problems with this position may be summarized as follows:

1. If we say that Jesus fought and overcame temptation, we may be leaving out careful consideration of His deity. How could "that holy thing" that was conceived by the Holy Spirit be susceptible to sin?

2. Consider the implications of the possibility of His being able to sin. He was the God-man - divine and human natures indissolubly united in one personality - and if He could have sinned then God could sin, which is unthinkable.

3. Again, if Jesus could have sinned when on earth, He could sin now, for is He not "the same yesterday, and to day and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8)? And would this not place the whole work of redemption on a very shaky foundation?

4. Raising a serious question about the meaning of "overcoming" temptation. James 1:14 teaches that one is tempted by being "led away" by his own lust (evil desire) and "enticed." This experience leads to sin as an overt act (James 1:15). Was Jesus thus tempted? If so, He would have been sinning in His mind before He committed the overt act of sin, according to His own teaching (Matthew 5:22-28), and He would have had evil desire. That is impossible to reconcile with other evidences of His holiness.

## 5. SOLUTION TO THE QUESTION OF IMPECCABILITY

Let's arrange the Biblical data in the following table in order to put this problem into perspective:

# Jesus was both God and Man

| God | Man |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| He is union with the Father, thus He always does what pleases the Father (John 8:29) | He "emptied" Himself of the privileges of His divine attributes (Philippians 2). |
| God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13). | He was truly tempted (Matthew 4:1). |
| Jesus did not sin (Hebrews 4:15), not even in His mind (Matthew 5:22, 28). | Jesus is able to sympathize with those who are tempted (Hebrews 4:15). |

**5.1 We Fail to Think of Jesus as Both God and Man**

Most of the problems that we raised earlier are created by the fact that we fail to think of Jesus as both God and man. We tend to look at Him as one or the other, independently.

**5.2 Jesus Never Ceased to Want to Please His Father**

First, Jesus is one with the Father in essence and purpose, and while on earth always sought to please the Father. This probably provides one of the best answers to the original question, Why did Jesus not sin? It is not sufficient to say "because He is God," for such a statement, though true, does not reveal the real dynamic, and we find Him impossible to identify with. What we can identify with since we have become believers, is that a desire to please the Father is now **our** motivation for not sinning. (The difference is that Jesus, who had no sinful inclinations, **never ceased** to want to please His Father). Our first point also shows that Jesus did not attempt to escape the human condition, but willingly exposed Himself to the temptation, and truly knows what our temptation is like.

**5.3 Jesus Was Tempted to Bring About Rightful Ends By Sinful Means**

The next two points on the chart fully explain what it was like for Jesus to be tempted. James 1:12-18 views temptation as it occurs with sinful humanity. When a person is tempted, then "led away by his own lust and enticed," he sins. Such an experience, according to Hebrews 4:15, could not be that of Jesus, because He had no lust or evil desires. The question is, In what sense was Jesus tempted?

Our answer is that Jesus was "tempted" to the extent that Satan made appeals to His human needs and divine rights. He was tempted to turn stones into bread to relieve His hunger (a human need). He was tempted to achieve the kingdoms of the world (that will someday be His by divine right - Luke 4:5-6), but to achieve them in a sinful way. Finally, He was tempted to use His divine power (to leap from the pinnacle of the temple - Luke 4:9), but in a sinful manner, acting presumptuously apart from the purpose of His Father. In summary, He was tempted to bring about rightful ends by sinful means.

**5.4 Jesus Was Truly Tempted and He Can Sympathize With Us**

Being **exposed** to sinful alternatives is not sin, but the experience is nevertheless painful, because it involves legitimate needs or goals. Thus Jesus was tempted and, like us, He felt the "pull" of legitimate needs. He was tempted "in all things as we are" in regard to real needs that we ourselves have - bodily desires, decisions toward legitimate goals, and use of abilities. In short, He can sympathize with us. Unlike us, though, He never seriously considered the sinful alternatives for fulfilling His legitimate ends. Thus, He never sinned, not even in

His mind.

### 5.5 Summary

Neither of the statements, "Jesus could sin, but He did not," nor "Jesus could not sin, because He was God," is satisfactory as an answer to the question of Jesus' sinlessness. The latter statement is true as far as it goes, but it does not adequately answer the question, Why?

| Jesus could sin, but didn't. | Jesus could not sin. |
|---|---|
| This threatens the concept of Jesus' deity. | This may threaten Jesus' ability to sympathize and power to choose. |

### 5.6 Conclusion

Jesus was truly tempted because, though He was without sinful inclinations, He had legitimate human needs and divine rights that were appealed to. However, while the choice was actually available, His deity meant unbroken desire to please the Father; thus, He did not sin.

## 6. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


1. **Survey of Theology I**, Lesson 9, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
2. **The Incomparable Christ - The Person and Work of Jesus Christ**, Chapters 8 and 13, Moody Press, 1971 Edition, by John Oswald Sanders.
3. **The Gospel of Luke**, Lesson 2, Emmaus Bible College, 1974 Edition, by William MacDonald.
4. **The Gospel of Matthew**, Lesson 2, Emmaus Bible College, 1972 Edition, by C. Ernest Tatham.


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Go to Chapter Twenty

# Chapter Twenty - The Trial, Crucifixion, Dead and Burial of Christ

This chapter, divided into fourteen major divisions, is a careful study of the sequence of events of the trial, crucifixion, dead and burial of Christ:

1. We will examine the soul-anguish of Christ at Garden Gethsemane;
2. We will examine the trial of Christ;
3. We will examine the majestic silence of Christ;
4. We will examine the word of forgiveness of Christ;
5. We will examine the word of assurance of Christ;
6. We will examine the word of devotion of Christ;
7. We will examine the word of dereliction of Christ;
8. We will examine the word of agony of Christ;
9. We will examine the word of triumph of Christ;
10. We will examine the word of confidence of Christ;
11. We will examine the Calvary miracles;
12. We will examine the atoning work of Christ;
13. We will examine the dead and burial of Christ; and
14. We will examine what Christ accomplished when He died and went to Hades.

The order of narration in any Gospel is not necessarily chronological, for each Gospel has its own objective and organizes its material for effect rather than for temporal sequence. The below table provides the chronological order of events in the life of Christ in the Passion week. I hope that it can help the readers to understand the order of events in the trial, dead and burial of Christ.

(References: *Merrill C. Tenney*, Revised by *Walter M. Dunnett*, **New Testament Survey**, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Inter-Varsity Press, 1985 Edition, pp. 206-210; *Irving L. Jensen*, Lesson 10, **The Life of Christ**, Moody Bible Institute, 1993 Edition; *James Stalker*, **The Life of Jesus Christ**, Rev. Ed., Old Tappan, N.J. Revell, 1891, p. 146)

## The Gospels: The Chronological Order of Events in the Life of Christ during the Passion Week

| THE HARMONY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS | MATTHEW | MARK | LUKE | JOHN |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **The Passion Week** | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Sunday - Day of Demonstration*** | | | | |
| The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem | 21:1-9 | 11:1-10 | 19:29-40 | 12:12-19 |
| Jesus' View of the City | 21:10-11 | 11:11 | 19:41-44 | - |
| ***Monday - Day of Authority*** | | | | |
| Cursing of the Fig Tree | 21:18-19 | 11:12-14 | - | - |
| Second Cleansing of the Temple | 21:12-13 | 11:15-19 | 19:45-48 | - |
| Healings in the Temple | 21:14-17 | - | - | - |
| ***Tuesday - Day of Conflict*** | | | | |
| The Withered Fig Tree | 21:19-22 | 11:20-25 | - | - |
| Christ's Authority Challenged | 21:23-22:46 | 11:27-12:37 | 20:1-44 | - |
| Condemnation of Scribes and Pharisees | 23:1-39 | 12:38-40 | 20:45-47 | - |
| Jesus' Observation of the Widow | - | 12:41-44 | 21:1-4 | - |
| The Visit of the Greeks | - | - | - | 12:20-36 |
| Jewish Rejection of Jesus | - | - | - | 12:37-50 |
| The Apocalytic Discourse | 24:1-25:46 | 13:1-37 | 21:5-38 | - |
| Prediction of the Cross | 26:1-5 | 14:1-2 | 22:1-2 | - |
| Anointing by Mary | 26:6-13 | 14:3-9 | - | 12:2-8 |
| The Betrayal Offer of Judas | 26:14-16 | 14:10-11 | 22:3-6 | - |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Wednesday - Day of Rest (no record)*** | | | | |
| ***Thursday - Day of Preparation*** | | | | |
| The Passover Meal | 26:17-25 | 14:12-21 | 22:7-18, 21-30 | 13:18-30 |
| Foot Washing | - | - | - | 13:1-17 |
| Lord's Supper | 26:26-29 | 14:22-25 | 22:19-20 | - |
| Farewell Discourse on Way to Gethsemane | 26:31-35 | 14:27-31 | 22:31-38 | 13:33-16:33 |
| The High-Priestly Intercessory Prayer | - | - | - | 17:1-26 |
| ***Friday - Day of Suffering*** | | | | |
| In the Garden of Gethsemane (12 a.m. - 2 a.m.): | | | | |
| (a) Prayer | 26:30, 36-46 | 14:26, 32-42 | 22:39-46 | 18:1 |
| (b) Betrayal and Arrest | 26:47-56 | 14:43-52 | 22:47-53 | 18:2-12 |
| Trials Before Jewish Authorities (3 a.m. - 5 a.m.): | | | | |
| (a) Trial Before Annas | - | - | - | 18:12-14, 19-23 |
| (b) Trial Before Caiaphas | 26:57, 59-68 | 14:53, 55-65 | 22:54, 63-65 | 18:24 |
| (c) The Denials of Peter | 26:58, 69-75 | 14:54, 66-72 | 22:54-62 | 18:15-18, 25-27 |
| (d) Trial Before the Sanhedrin | 27:1 | 15:1 | 22:66-71 | - |
| (e) Suicide of Judas | 27:3-10 | - | - | - |
| Trials Before Roman Authorities (6 a.m. - 9 a.m.): | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) Trial Before Pilate | 27:2, 11-14 | 15:1-5 | 23:1-5 | 18:28-38 |
| (b) Trial Before Herod | - | - | 23:6-12 | - |
| (c) Return to Pilate | 27:15-26 | 15:6-15 | 23:13-25 | 18:39-19:16 |
| (d) Mockery by Soldiers | 27:27-30 | 15:16-19 | - | - |
| (e) The Way to Calvary | 27:31-34 | 15:20-23 | 23:26-32 | 19:16-17 |
| The Crucifixion (9 a.m. - 3 p.m.): | 27:35-56 | 15:24-41 | 23:33-49 | 19:18-30 |
| (a) Jesus spoken from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.: | | | | |
| *(i) "Father, forgive them"* | - | - | 23:34 | - |
| *(ii) "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"* | - | - | 23:43 | - |
| *(iii) "Woman, behold thy son"* | - | - | - | 19:26 |
| (b) Jesus spoken from 12 p.m. - 3 p.m.: | | | | |
| *(i) "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?"* | 27:46 | 15:34 | - | - |
| *(ii) "I thirst"* | - | - | - | 19:28 |
| *(iii) "It is finished"* | - | - | - | 19:30 |
| *(iv) "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit"* | - | - | 23:46 | - |
| The Burial Before Sunset | 27:57-60 | 15:42-46 | 23:50-54 | 19:31-42 |
| ***Saturday - Jesus' Entombment*** | | | | |
| The Women at the Tomb | 27:61 | 15:47 | 23:55-56 | - |
| The Guard | 27:62-66 | - | - | - |

## 1. THE SOUL-ANGUISH OF CHRIST AT GARDEN GETHSEMANE (12 a.m. - 2 a.m. Friday)

*"Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38).*

Only a few minutes before entering the garden, Jesus had offered His high-priestly prayer (John 17). But what striking contrast there is between those two prayers. How can the serenity of the one and the agonizing of the other be explained? The first prayer was intercessory, this was personal, the prelude to Calvary. Before entering the garden of Gethsemane He had partaken of the Last Supper with His disciples, and they had joined in singing the Hallel (Psalms 115-118). The hearts of the disciples were heavy with foreboding. The heart of Jesus was weighed down with the anticipation of the Cross.

He took with Him His three dearly loved intimates, that they might share with Him the midnight vigil. Alas, His sentinels slept at their post. Luke tells us that they were "sleeping for sorrow" (Luke 22:45). We should be charitable in our judgment of them, however, for their Lord did not judge them harshly. "The spirit indeed is willing," He said, "but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). He commended their willingness of spirit while marveling at the weakness of the flesh in such an hour of crisis. We must remember that it was long past the retiring hour of these erstwhile fishermen, and the past few days had held tremendous emotional stress for them.

The place of His prayer was named most appropriately - Gethsemane, the oil press. Did not our Saviour under the pressure of a great agony yield here precious oil that has been the balm of many a wounded soul? The garden was well-known to the traitor who had already departed on his last dastardly errand. Leaving His disciples, Jesus penetrated a little farther into the garden. "He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast" (Luke 22:41). The word "withdrew" means literally "tore himself away," evidence of what it cost Him to leave His disciples and fight the dread battle alone. He "began to be sorrowful and very heavy" (Matthew 26:37).

**1.1 The Poignancy of His Sufferings**

At least six statements, each presenting a different facet of our Saviour's suffering in the garden, are preserved in the Gospel records:

1. *He became "exceeding sorrowful"* (Matthew 26:38). He had always been a "man of sorrows," but now He enters on sorrow so intense that everything He had suffered in the past seemed as tiny ripples when compared with the curling billows that now engulfed Him.

2. *He "began to be sore amazed"* (Mark 14:33). Long as He had forseen the Passion, when it came closely into view, its terrors exceeded His anticipations. His human soul received a new experience, and the last lession of obedience began with a sensation of inconceivable awe. As He saw the ingredients of the terrible cup that was being mixed for Him, He was dazed and overwhelmed.

3. *He "began to be ... very heavy"* (Mark 14:33). This word points to a confused, restless and half-

distracted state. The root idea is being "away from home." And was He not in a very real sense away from home? And did that fact not make His sufferings the more poignant?

4. *He was "exceeding sorrowful, even UNTO DEATH"* (Matthew 26:38). The word used here indicates "an unfathomable depth of anguish and sorrow." Satan, who had left the Lord for a season after the encounter in the wilderness (Luke 4:13), had now returned, and endeavored to terrify Him with "all painful things, as before with all pleasurable," in the hope of turning Him aside from His allegiance to God and truth. Since he could not allure Him, he would terrify Him. The significance of the words "unto death" might be that the weight of sorrow and agony was so great that He feared His physical frame might collapse before He reached the Cross. In order that this might not take place, God sent an angel to infuse fresh strength (Luke 22:43).

5. *He was "in an agony"* (Luke 22:44). The Hebrews epistle tells us that He prayed "with strong crying and tears" (Hebrews 5:7). As the powers of darkness closed in on Him, and the imminence of the Cross pressed upon Him, He found Himself in a conflict the like of which He had never before experienced.

6. *He sweat "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"* (Luke 22:44). It was a cold night, but as He prayed in agony, the course of nature was reversed. The blood, instead of rushing to the aid of His overburdened and breaking heart, forced its way out through the pores to fall in great drops to the ground. We stand in awe and magnify this evidence of His matchless love.

There will always be mystery in the agony of Gethsemane, because the mystery of the hypostatic union is involved.

### 1.2 The Ingredients of the Cup

These were at least three:

1. *The renewed attack of Satan.* "This is your hour, and the power of darkness," He said to the chief priests (Luke 22:53). Foiled in every previous attempt to deflect the Lord from the way of the Cross, the massed powers of darkness launched a terrific blitzkrieg during the next hours in one final attempt to overthrow Him. This was no mock battle, but a struggle to the death of Light with darkness.

2. *The anticipated assumption of the guilt of a world of men.* "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" spoke Isaiah prophetically of the Messiah (Isaiah 53:6). Nothing less than penal suffering for our sin can explain this unparalleled agony. Our sin being imputed to Christ, and Christ being made sin and a curse for us. He drank a cup of wrath without mercy, that we might drink a cup of mercy without wrath. The agony was not the fear of death but the deep sense of God's wrath against sin that He was to bear. His pure and holy nature shrank, not from death as death, but from death as a curse for the world's sin.

3. *The anticipated averting of His Father's face.* Before many hours He would be asking, "My God,

my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). It was bad enough that He should be in an alien country, about to be betrayed by His friend, deserted by His followers, denied by one of His intimates - and this was not hidden from His knowledge - but to be forsaken by God because He was being "made ... to be sin for us!" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This was an utterly new and bewildering experience, the anticipation of which produced the blood-letting agony.

### 1.3 The Prayer in Gethsemane

Expositors differ in their interpretation of the verse "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Hebrews 5:7), or "for His godly fear." In considering our Lord's petition that the cup might pass from Him (Luke 22:42), it is certain that He was not seeking some alternative to what He knew to be His Father's plan for Him. Had He not insisted on the necessity of His being uplifted on a Cross? Is He now trying to escape it? Unthinkable!

It has been suggested that a fourth ingredient in "the cup" may have been not the future Cross, but the possibility of death in Gethsemane before He reached Golgotha. This suggestion is based on Christ's statement "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death" (Mark 14:33-34). If that was indeed the case, His prayer was answered by His Father sending an angel to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43). His strength was renewed, and He went forward to accomplish our redemption, and finally to dismiss His Spirit by an act of His will.

## 2. THE TRIAL OF CHRIST

Never were legal proceedings more irregular or verdict more unjust than in the trial of Jesus. From arrest to crucifixion every principle of justice was violated, and provisions of both criminal (Romans) and ecclesiastical law (Jewish Mosaic) flouted. We shall consider some of the irregularities:

1. the arrest;
2. the ecclesiastical trials and the verdict;
3. the Roman trials; and
4. Pilate and Herod.

### 2.1 The Arrest

The irregularities of the arrest are as follows:

1. The arrest that was instigated by the ecclesiastical authorities was effected through a **bribed** traitor (Matthew 26:14-16), contrary to the Mosaic law, which prohibited the taking of a gift (Exodus 23:8).

2. The **judges themselves participated in the arrest** (Matthew 26:47), for some members of the Sanhedrin, in their anxiety to see that their schemes did not fail, had joined in the crowd that intruded on the Saviour's agony in the garden.

**2.2 The Ecclesiastical Trials and the Verdict (3 a.m. - 5 a.m. Friday)**

The irregularities of the ecclesiastical trials are as follows:

1. inappropriate place;
2. inappropriate time;
3. inappropriate legal procedure;
4. false witnesses;
5. unfair trial;
6. the judges were not neutral and impartial;
7. the judges failed to exercise their duty;
8. inappropriate voting procedure; and
9. inappropriate verdict.

***2.2.1 Inappropriate place***

As today, secret trials were illegal. All criminal cases had to be heard in public. In this case the Sanhedrin conducted a secret trial in a private place.

***2.2.2 Inappropriate time***

Jews could not hold court on a feast day-Passover (see John 18:28, 39) any more than our courts sit on Sunday. Three ecclesiastical trials before the religious authorities, including Annas, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin were not conducted at daytime. According to the laws of the Sanhedrin, the taking of any steps in criminal proceedings after sunset was expressly prohibited. Each ecclesiastical trial was illegal because it was conducted before the morning sacrifice.

***2.2.3 Inappropriate legal procedure***

Between the arrest and the death of our Lord were only 18 hours. The Mishna wisely provided that in a case involving capital punishment, the verdict could not be given on the same day. At least 24 hours must elapse between trial and verdict, thus guarding against arriving at a hasty decision.

***2.2.4 False witnesses***

The trials before Annas and Caiaphas, when they sat alone, violated the legal provisions (Deuteronomy 19:15-18). The requirement of two or three witnesses was conveniently ignored (Deuteronomy 17:6). The

witnesses against Him were known perjurers (Matthew 26:59-60), were not sworn, and their evidence was not consistent (see Deuteronomy 19:16-21).

### *2.2.5 Unfair trial*

Jesus' words were distorted (John 2:19-21; cf. Matthew 26:60-61) and His defense was not heard.

### *2.2.6 The judges were not neutral and impartial*

The charge of blasphemy against Jesus actually originated with His judges (Matthew 26:59; John 18:19)! The Sanhedrin did not and could not originate charges, it only investigated those that were brought before it. Caiaphas contravened the provisions of the Mishna by seeking to get Christ to incriminate himself (Matthew 26:63). The judges were to be humane and kind, but Caiaphas was abusive and Jesus was struck over the mouth before any charge against Him was proved (Matthew 26:65-67; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63-64; John 18:22). The high priest defied the Levitical code by rending his garments (Leviticus 21:10).

### *2.2.7 The judges failed to exercise their duty*

The function of the Jewish judge was not merely to try the case, but to defend the prisoner who was presumed to be innocent until proved guilty. Thus every accused person should be given every opportunity of establishing his innocence. Between Jewish and Western jurisprudence there are many differences, and one of those is that if the vote of condemnation of the judges was unanimous, it was considered that the judges had failed in their duty of defending the accused, who would be released. Instead of releasing Jesus, however, they unanimously condemned Him on His own unsupported testimony (Deuteronomy 19:15).

### *2.2.8 Inappropriate voting procedure*

The voting in a capital case was to be individual, beginning with the younger men, lest they be influenced by the voting of their elders. But they voted simultaneously in contravention of their own law (Matthew 26:66).

### *2.2.9 Inappropriate verdict*

Thus the ecclesiastical trials were shot through with prejudice, fraud, and illegality. The religious leaders were determined to secure a conviction at all costs, whether the evidence justified it or not.

## 2.3 The Roman Trials (6 a.m. - 9 a.m. Friday)

Fearing that Jesus might appeal to Pilate, the Jews sought to forestall Him by changing their charge from blasphemy - the issue in the ecclesiastical trials, which they knew would be rejected by Pilate - to that of

sedition (Luke 23:2). Jesus, they alleged, was establishing a rival empire, a charge any Roman governor must seriously examine.

The devout and punctilious Jews were too pious to enter a Gentile dwelling on a feast day! This is the culminating instance of religious scrupulosity going hand in hand with cruel and bloodthirsty criminality. Respecting their scruples, Pilate came out and asked, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" Their answer made it clear to Pilate that they desired him not so much to give justice to the accused, as to confirm their own condemnation of Him. Pilate was joking that, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law." But this was not to their liking, for they had no power of capital punishment (John 18:31). Finally Pilate demanded a formal accusation, which they brought under three counts:

1. He perverted the nation.
2. He forbade tribute to Caesar.
3. He claimed to be their king (Luke 23:2).

The first two unsubstantiated counts were dismissed by Pilate, but the third was so serious that he could not ignore it, since it was treason against Rome. Contrary to Roman law, however, Pilate attempted to make the prisoner incriminate Himself. Having heard Jesus (John 18:34-37), Pilate brought the trial to an end by the prouncement, "I find in Him no fault" (John 18:38).

That acquittal should have been followed by the immediate release of Jesus, but no! Instead, it brought a fresh violent outburst of accusations that caused the weak Pilate to change his mind. A chance mention of Galilee afforded the welcome opportunity of passing on his problem to Herod, who had jurisdiction over that district and who by a happy chance was in Jerusalem at the moment (Luke 23:5-7).

Herod had long wished to see this miracle-worker, but Jesus' refusal to perform to his order hurt his royal pride. Since no evidence was adduced that would warrant a conviction, he contented himself with mocking Him, and sent Him back to Pilate.

### 2.4 Pilate and Herod

A significant sentence occurs in Luke's record of that important day. "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together" (Luke 23:12). Why? Secular history supplies the answer. Pilate and Herod, it appears, were fellow-conspirators against Caesar, hence Pilate's concern when the Jews said, "If thou let this man go, thou are not Caesar's friend." Had news of his participation in the conspiracy leaked out? He must not do anything that would seem in any way disloyal to Caesar. The prisoner (whether innocent or guilty matters not) must be sacrificed to save his own skin.

Then followed a travesty upon law as well as upon justice. Pilate resorted to every stratagem to secure the release of Jesus and yet not endanger his own position at Rome. He endeavored to get the Jews to consent to His release, since none of the charges against Him had been substantiated, but all to no avail. They would be appeased by nothing less than blood. Barabbas the murderer was much to be preferred to Jesus,

the sinless Son of God. Though declared innocent, He was scourged, clothed in purple, crowned with thorns. Only at the last did the true charge come to the surface. "By our law he ought to die," cried the Jews, "because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7).

At last the craven Pilate yielded to their threats and delivered Him up to be crucified. But he took his revenge by placing upon the Cross the superscription that was so galling to them, "The king of the Jews." Then he washed his hands, according to the Jewish custom, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man. See ye to it." "His blood be on us and on our children" was their fateful response.

On what legal grounds was Jesus condemned? None! He was four times tried and three times acquitted, and yet was condemned to die. The Light of the world had shone with such a searching beam that a guilty world must extinguish it.

### 2.5 The Importance of the Trial

Wherein does its importance consist? *W. Robertson Nicoll* say,

> "It lies in the fact that the issue raised was Christ's claim to be the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel, and a King. He was tried unfairly and judged unjustly, but the true issue was raised. He died, then, because before the Jews He claimed to be the Son of God and the Messiah, and before Pilate to be Christ and King."

## 3. THE MAJESTIC SILENCE OF CHRIST

> *"Jesus answered nothing" (Mark 15:3-4).*

With the background of our Lord's trial and all its irregularities and illegalities, His silence is all the more vocal. His bearing and deportment during those proceedings were worthy of His Father. He maintained the dignified calm, the loving forbearance that had always characterized Him. An examination of the gospel records reveals:

1. His dignified bearing;
2. His eloquent silence;
3. His consistent claims;
4. His sublime indifference; and
5. His perfect composure.

### 3.1 His Dignified Bearing

Throughout the biased proceedings of His trial, Jesus was never other than calm and dignified. No matter

how great the provocation, He never descended to abuse or retaliation. Even when struck in the face by a minion of the high priest simply because He had rightly suggested the propriety of calling witnesses to establish the Sanhedrin's case, Jesus replied with dignity and restraint (John 18:21-23).

A comparison of Paul's reaction under similar circumstances is very revealing. Paul could not resist hurling back a stinging rejoinder that conveyed his contempt and indignation. He quite lost his temper (see Acts 23:1-5), but Jesus maintained a sublime calm.

### 3.2 His Eloquent Silence

It is always more difficult to remain silent than to speak. But on three occasions it is recorded of the Lord that He was silent before His enemies:

1. before the Jewish rulers (Matthew 26:62-63; Mark 14:61);
2. before Pilate (Mark 15:3-5); and
3. before Herod (Luke 23:8-11).

In each case His silence was immeasurably more eloquent than any spoken word could possibly have been.

#### *3.2.1 Before the Jewish rulers*

When the bitterly prejudiced Sanhedrin with its perjured witnesses endeavored to make Him incriminate Himself, "Jesus held his peace" (Matthew 26:63). He listened in silence to the witnesses contradicting each other but volunteered no reply to the high priest's interruption. When the high priest said to Jesus, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Now he was at the heart of the matter, and in those words clearly revealed his secret purpose. If he could induce Jesus to assert His deity, then He was in their power.

Knowing that His answer would without doubt seal His doom, Jesus answered, "Thou hast said." But He added these prophetic words, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." It was as if to say, "You are My judges now, but the hour is coming when roles will be reversed, and it will be you who will stand before My bar to answer for your action in condemning Me."

#### *3.2.2 Before Pilate*

When He appeared before Pilate, "He answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled" (Mark 15:3-4). His silence was more crushing than a spate of words.

In the silence of this interior hall, Jesus and Pilate stood face to face, He in the lonely prisoner's place, Pilate in the place of power. Yet how strangely, as we look back at the scene, are the places reversed. It is

Pilate who is going to be tried. All that morning Pilate is being judged and exposed; and ever since he has stood in the pillory of history, with the centuries gazing at him.

### *3.2.3 Before Herod*

Before Herod, whom Jesus called "that fox" (Luke 13:32), Jesus maintained a similar lofty silence. Herod had long desired to see this man of whom he had heard so much perform some miracle. Herod "questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing" (Luke 23:9). Jesus had counseled His disciples not to waste their pearls of truth on those who would not appreciate them (Matthew 7:6), and He was practicing His own precept. Herod was merely seeking entertainment, and Jesus refused to gratify his vulgar desire.

## 3.3 His Consistent Claims

Throughout the crowded closing hours of His life, Jesus did and said nothing that could in any way be construed as a withdrawal or watering-down of the astounding claims to kingship and deity He had made. Although He did not disallow the claim that He was King, He hastened to make clear that His kingdom was not of this world, but a spiritual one (John 18:36). Nor did He deny that He was "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed" (Mark 14:61), but quietly accepted the ascription. He always spoke and acted in a manner entirely consistent with such a claim.

## 3.4 His Sublime Indifference

Nothing could be more impressive than His total indifference to the threats of his unscrupulous judges. For various reasons Pilate obviously desired to release Jesus, but He did nothing to make it easy for Pilate to do so, or to assist him to this end. An unusual prisoner this!

When for the last time Pilate sought to release Jesus, he said, "Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee?" (John 19:10). Jesus answered, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above." Both by His silence and His words, Jesus made clear that it was Pilate and the Jews who were on trial before Him, and not He before them.

## 3.5 His Perfect Composure

Jesus said but little, but He said enough, and no word of His ever bore testimony to the truth, or revealed more fully the majesty of His divine life than the uncomplaining patience and self-possession and composure of His conduct under the hideous treatment to which He was subjected.

When, after the surrender of Pilate, the whole band of the governor's soldiers took Him, stripped, put on Him a scarlet robe, with a crown of acanthus thorns still piercing His brow and staining His face crimson like His robe, and giving Him a reed for a sceptre, played with Him as a mock king, spitting on Him and

seizing His sceptre from His hand and smiting Him on the head with it, driving the thorn's cruel spikes deeper into His bow; when at last they led Him away to Calvary, stripped of His robe, but still wearing His crown.

"Behold the man!" was Pilate's jeer. That is what all the ages have been doing since, and the vision has grown more and more glorious. As they have looked, the crown of thorns has become a crown of golden radiance, and the cast-off robe has shined brightly like the garments He wore on the night of the Transfiguration.

**4. THE WORD OF FORGIVENESS OF CHRIST (9 a.m. - 12 p.m Friday)**

> *"And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:33-34).*

Jesus is now being impaled on a Cross, the most shameful punishment to which a criminal could be subjected. The Roman soldiers callously drive the spikes through His quivering flesh and raise aloft the instrument of torture. While they are still engaged in their grim task, the lips of the victim are seen to move. But that is by no means uncommon. It was usual for the victims of that dread doom, frenzied with pain, spit at, and curse the spectators.

But what is He saying! Is it some word of righteous indignation because He Knew His own innocence? Is he hurling maledictions at His torturers? Is He pleading for mercy? No, none of these. He is praying.

For whom does He pray? For Himself? Again, no. We are privileged to listen in to those gracious words of intercession. Had Isaiah not prophesied that the coming Messiah would make "intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12)? This is what He is praying, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34).

The consistent habit of a lifetime persisted even in the hour of death. His first word was a word of prayer. His hands can no longer perform acts of love for friend or enemy. His feet can no more carry Him on errands of mercy. But one form of ministry, and the highest, it still open to Him. He can still pray.

**4.1 Father - the Invocation**

How natural and appropriate it is that this should be the first word to fall from His lips. The sufferings He was enduring could not prevent Him from holding fast to His Sonship. The indignities and injustices surrounding His arrest and trial have in no degree shaken His faith in the love and approval of His Father. Break His mortal body they may, but they cannot break His communion with His Father. Although the dread cup does not pass from Him, He is still able to say, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy

sight" (Matthew 11:26).

### 4.2 Forgive them - the Petition

In the manifesto of His Kingdom, our Lord had said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Now He is putting His own precept into practice, leaving an inspiring example of the way in which trouble can be turned into treasure.

The time element of this petition is significant. When? When man's enmity and hatred for God and holiness reached its climax in the rejection and crucifixion of His Son! In such an hour as this the holiest of men, conscious of their sinfulness, would have prayed, "Father, forgive me." But Jesus did not do so. There was no consciousness of guilt in Him that called for forgiveness. He prayed, "Father, forgive them."

During His ministry Jesus had claimed that as Son of Man He had "power on earth to forgive sins." Why, then, does He now call on His Father to exercise this prerogative instead of exercising it Himself, as He had done when He said to the palsied man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"? The answer is that on the Cross He was taking the place of sinful men and expiating their guilt. They could be forgiven because He was standing in their place as their representative. He had "power on earth to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6), but now He is "lifted up from the earth" (John 12:32). He is no longer in the place of authority, but of condemnation, numbered with the transgressors, yet making intercession for them.

Here is seen love triumphant over evil. His heart overflowed its banks in a prayer that must have caused the amazed angels to burst into doxology as He prayed for His persecutors.

What Jesus' prayer really meant was, "Father forgive them and condemn Me." The word "forgive" has the meaning of "remit, dismiss," but the divine dictum is, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). With the words of this petition, He covered the heads of His murderers with the shield of His love, to secure them from the storm of the wrath of God.

"Forgive them." To whom did our Lord intend His prayer to apply? His petition included not only those around the Cross, but also the world of sinful men.

### 4.3 For They Know Not What They Do - The Plea

Jesus was trying to find some extenuating circumstance that might lessen their guilt. This plea limits His "forgive them," so that Judas and Pilate and some of the religious leaders are excluded from the benefits of His intercession. Unlike the majority, they had not acted in ignorance. Judas and Pilate knew what they were doing. They had both weighed Jesus' claims and had acted deliberately. But to the minds of many of the Jews, blinded by hatred, Jesus was no more than a blasphemous impostor. He therefore pled that their action was due to ignorance not of the fact of their crime, but of its enormity. Their ignorance did not

make their sin excusable, but it meant that they themselves were forgivable.

### 4.4 The Answer

Our Lord has never offered a prayer that went unanswered. "I knew that thou hearest me always," He claimed (John 11:42). In this case the answer was not long delayed. Before His body had been committed to the tomb, the centurion in charge of the execution squad had confessed his faith in Christ's deity (see Luke 23:47). Many see in the three thousand converts on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41) not so much the response to Peter's eloquence as the answer to Jesus' prayer. Not long afterwards, "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7), and doubtless among them some of the very priests who hurried Him to His death.

It may be objected that not all who participated in the crucifixion were forgiven. The answer is that every act of forgiveness, two persons are involved. Forgiveness must be accepted as well as bestowed. The prayer of Christ made forgiveness available to every sinful man, but not all availed themselves of it.

## 5. THE WORD OF ASSURANCE OF CHRIST

*"Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).*

Three men were hanging upon three Crosses. All three appeared to be criminals, for around the neck of each hung a board on which was written a record of their crimes. Two of them were patriots, doubtless associates of Barabbas in his ill-starred insurrection. In order to achieve their ends, they had resorted to robbery and even to murder.

And the One on the centre Cross, what was His crime? "He went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). "They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Luke 4:22). Even before He died, one of those hardened, blasphemous criminals who was crucified with Him said from deep inner conviction, "This man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:41).

One of the most incredible facts of the whole event is that those seasoned criminals became anxious for their reputations through being crucified in His company! Lest they be credited with being His friends or associates, they joined company with the passersby, the chief priests, scribes and elders. As they taunted and mocked Him, the thieves "cast the same in His teeth" (Matthew 27:44). Hurling their abuse at a fellow-sufferer when they were so near their own end indicated the depth of their depravity. Their animosity toward One who had done them no ill was a revealing demonstration of the enmity toward God of the carnal mind (Romans 8:7).

A sudden change of attitude came over one of the thieves. He turned on his brother-robber:

> "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly, for we receive the due rewards of our deeds. But this man hath done nothing amiss." Then, turning to Jesus he pleaded, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom" (Luke 23:40-42).

## 5.1 The Thief's Rebuke

In his rebuke to his companion, the dying thief revealed a state of heart that made it possible for the Lord Jesus to answer him as He did. In the thief's statement, three elements are present:

1. reverence;
2. self-accusation; and
3. vindication.

### *5.1.1 Reverence*

"Dost not thou fear God?" He showed not merely fear of the due reward of his deeds, but fear and reverence for God, the supreme Judge and Ruler of the universe. The fear of God is indeed the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10).

### *5.1.2 Self-accusation*

"We receive the due reward of our deeds." He acknowledged the justice of his sentence - "we indeed justly" - and attempted no extenuation of his crime. A self-confessed sinner is not far away from a forgiving Saviour.

### *5.1.3 Vindication*

"This man hath done nothing amiss." The deeper the conviction of his own sinfulness, the more sure he was of the innocence of the Lord Jesus.

Now that Jesus hung on the Cross, God opened the eyes of this robber to see the faultlessness of His beloved Son, and opened his lips so that he bore witness to His excellence.

## 5.2 The Thief's Prayer

We can find the following points in the thief's prayer:

1. a confession of Christ's deity;
2. a confidence in Christ's saviourhood; and
3. a conception of Christ's royalty.

### *5.2.1 A confession of Christ's deity*

"Lord." His faith may have had only a small content of knowledge, but what a faith it was to see in a fellow-convict one who was worthy of his faith and devotion. And this in spite of the mocking challenge he had heard from the priests: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross." Even that sarcasm and sneer had been unable to quench the spark of faith that had been kindled in his heart.

### *5.2.2 A confidence in Christ's saviourhood*

"Lord, remember me." To be remembered is the opposite of being forgotten, which means being excluded from the Kingdom. He had heard the Saviour pray for the forgiveness of those for whom His death would avail, and he dared to include himself in its wide embrace. Had He not believed in the Lord's Saviourhood, what would be the point of appealing to Him for remembrance?

### *5.2.3 A conception of Christ's royalty*

"Thy kingdom." The superscription, The King of the Jews, placed in irony over His head, did not serve to make likely any imminent coronation, but the thief's faith pierced through the appearances of the moment. Dim though it was, he saw a vision that far outdistanced that of the Lord's intimate disciples. He anticipated the day of His coming to His kingdom. All the disciples saw was His imminent descent into a dark tomb.

## 5.3 The Lord's Response

"Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). It should be noted that Jesus did not answer the exact petition of the thief. He did something better. He granted the desire of his heart. The thief little knew that his request, as he had worded it, postponed the desired boon for the two millennia that would elapse before Christ came into His kingdom. And what an answer it was.

> What certainty! "Verily I say unto thee"
>
> What speed! "Today"
>
> What glory! "In paradise"
>
> What company! "With me."

There is a divergence of view among Biblical scholars concerning "paradise" here (please read Section 4 of Chapter 8: Death, Hell and Resurrection, for more information on this topic). Some saying it refers to:

1. the bliss of Heaven; or

2. the paradise was one part of Hades to which the blessed went, the other part, for the wicked to stay.

That paradise in Paul's time is said to be in Heaven, implies that at the resurrection a change took place, and Hades was emptied of paradise. If correct, this view would seem to explain the following passage:

> "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all Heavens, that He might fill all things)" (Ephesians 4:8-10).

**5.4 The Related Truths**

Among others, these comforting truths emerge from this second word from the Cross:

1. the survival of the soul after the death of the body;
2. the separate existence of soul and body;
3. the sudden entry of the redeemed upon the bliss of eternity; and
4. the Saviour's prompt response to penitence.

***5.4.1 The survival of the soul after the death of the body***

This word refutes the dogma of soul-sleep. Death is no sleep of the soul. Death is not the end of life, but the gateway to new life. It also deals a deathblow to the doctrine of purgatory preached by the Roman Catholic Church. If ever a man needed the cleansing of the purgatorial flame, it was this man.

***5.4.2 The separate existence of soul and body***

"With me." The body of the thief was not in the tomb with that of Christ, but his soul was in conscious presence with Him in the place of departed spirits. This was Paul's longing. "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23). What a joyous anticipation - not unconscious sleep with conscious union. If the dead are unconscious, this assurance would afford little comfort.

***5.4.3 The sudden entry of the redeemed upon the bliss of eternity***

"Today." Absent from the body, present with the Lord. Not purgatory but paradise.

***5.4.4 The Saviour's prompt response to penitence***

Our Lord Jesus can never resist the plea of the penitent. To the taunts and jeers of the mob He deigned to give no answer, but the plea of the repentant thief drew an immediate response. The thief asked only a place in Christ's memory. He was granted a place in His Kingdom.

## 6. THE WORD OF DEVOTION OF CHRIST

> *"Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home" (John 19:25-27).*

Stunned at the ghastly scene being enacted before their very eyes, a group of Jesus' devoted followers are clustered at the foot of His Cross. They are Mary, His mother; Mary, wife of Cleophas (whom Hegesippus tells us was brother of Joseph), an aunt of Jesus'; Salome, John's mother; and Magdalene.

If the previous word from the Cross struck a deathblow at the errors of soul-sleep and purgatory, this demolishes the system of Mariolatry. If, as is asserted, Mary is queen of heaven and mother of God, then surely Jesus should have committed John into her care, not her to John.

It is significant that He does not now address her as "mother," but merely uses the courteous title "woman," a highly respectful mode of address. He refrained from using a word that would spring naturally to His lips, but that could be twisted into authorizing idolatry through rendering worship to Mary as Mother of God. There is no ground here for the doctrine that Mary is patroness of the saints and protectress of the church. On the contrary, she needed protection herself.

### 6.1 Filial Devotion Exemplified

There is a yet deeper significance in Jesus' refusal to use the word "mother," the word above all others she would be longing to hear once again from His lips. Jesus was breaking to her the painful truth that henceforth the special relationship between them no longer obtained. From that moment she could be to Him no more than any other woman. He must have no rival in His mediatorial ministry. Was this the sharpest shaft that pierced her heart? But after Pentecost she was to have sweet compensation when she discovered "that she had been led from the natural union with Jesus to the mystical union with Christ."

In every relationship of life Jesus was the pattern Man. As child and as man He always honored His father and mother. His last thought was to make suitable provision for the one from whom He had derived His human nature. Her husband was dead. He could no longer make provision for her Himself. His brothers were evidently still unbelieving. He had nothing to bequeath to her. Mary would find a congenial home with the disciple who dearly loved Him. These two, of similar temperament and united by a common love, would be able to live over again together the hallowed days of His companionship and derive comfort from their recollection. It would appear that John was wealthy and could make ample provision for her needs. Tradition has it that they lived together for twelve years in Jerusalem, and that John refused

to leave the city as long as she survived.

Our Lord left an example for all whose parents are still living. He honored His mother (Exodus 20:12). The growing disregard on the part of young people of their obligations to their parents is fraught with serious social consequences. There is no excuse that is valid before God for neglecting one's parents, and if there has been such neglect, the path of blessing will be to make amends at once. Read 1 Timothy 5:4, 8.

### 6.2 Natural and Spiritual Relationships

Jesus may well have been excused had He been so engrossed in His own sufferings as to overlook the future of His mother. Or He might have been so occupied with the stupendous work of redemption that He was achieving as to forget the ties of nature. But such was not the case. Although He was in extremis, He had leisure of heart to attend to a detail of ordinary family life. In His dying moments He made His verbal last will and teatament - almost a legal directive, yet prompted by tender love.

Jesus had a true conception of the relationship of the natural to the spiritual. He demonstrated that the fact of our having responsibilities in spiritual work does not relieve us of our natural obligations. It is never justifiable to sacrifice our families on the altar of meeting attendance. Holiness never thrives on neglected duties.

## 7. THE WORD OF DERELICTION OF CHRIST ( 12 p.m. - 3 p.m. Friday)

> *"Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).*

God forsaken God! Who can understand that? We need the Holy Spirit's enlightenment if we are to enter into their sacred mystery.

The first three words from the Cross were addressed to men. Now Jesus addresses Himself to God. For the previous three hours (9 a.m. - 12 p.m.), His body had been exposed to the burning rays of the pitiless Eastern sun. During the three hours of darkness (12 p.m. - 3 p.m.) His soul had been exposed to the merciless assaults of the powers of evil. Worse, infinitely worse than that, He had for the first time experienced the averted face of His Father. At the end of the sixth hour, the moment when He reached the very nadir of His misery, He broke the silence with the shuddering cry of desolation, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

### 7.1 The Mysterious Darkness

The darkness was not caused by an eclipse of the sun. The Passover was celebrated at the time of full

moon, when the moon is opposite the sun.

The experience of an eclipse by a Norwegian astronomer brought home to him something of the poignancy of the Lord's experience in the darkness. I watched the instantaneous extinction of the light, and saw the glorious scene on which I had been gazing turned into darkness. All the horizon seemed to speak of terror, death and judgment; and overhead sat, not the clean flood of light which a starry night sends down, but there hung over me dark and leaden blackness, which seemed as if it would crush me into the earth.

As I beheld it I thought, how miserable is the soul to whom Christ is eclipsed! The thought was answered by a voice; for a fierce and powerful seabird which had been sweeping around us, apparently infuriated by our intrusion into its domain, poured out a scream of despairing agony in the darkness. It is the picture of an eclipsed God and a lost soul; it is the hour and the power of darkness: the hosts of hell filled it, and the opaque sins of a world thickened it: it is Jesus bearing My sin in His own body on the tree. It is Jesus taking the place of a lost soul.

**7.2 My God, My God**

In His prayers, Jesus almost invariably addressed God as His Father, but here He does not say, "My Father," but, "My God." In this we discern the triumph of a sublime faith. Though forsaken by God, His faith did not suffer an eclipse, but rather laid firmer hold on the eternal. Feeling forsaken of God, He rushed into the arms of God and these arms closed around Him in loving protection.

The consciousness of His personal relation to God never for a moment left Him - "My God, My God," was His cry. In the gloom of His tragedy Job cried, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15), and the divine Lord does not fall behind His creature in the sublimity of His faith.

**7.3 Why?**

We can find in part the answer to His question in the very psalm from which He quoted (Psalm 22:1, 3). The question of verse 1 is answered in verse 3: "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." He was forsaken that we might learn from the anguish of His experience the greatness of our sin that made it necessary, and that we might know how entirely He took it and bore it away. During the hours of darkness He "who knew no sin" was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). That was the cause of His Father's averted face. It was not that God was ever hostile to His well - beloved Son - it was holiness turning away from sin.

**7.4 Hast**

We should never think that this was not an actual experience of the Christ of God. He could redeem us from the curse of the law only by "being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). This necessarily involved His being forsaken by the God who "hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

### 7.5 Thou

It was no new experience for the Lord to find Himself forsaken. His own brothers neither believed in Him nor followed Him. His fellow-citizens in Nazareth had tried to kill Him. The nation to which He came would not receive Him. Many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Judas betrayed Him. Peter denied Him. They all forsook Him and fled.

But in this cry it is as though He was saying, "I can understand my kinsmen and fellow-citizens and my nation forsaking Me, for darkness has no fellowship with light. I can even understand My own disciples, because of the weakness of the flesh, forsaking Me. But this is My agonizing problem, "Why hast THOU forsake me?"

Up till this moment, when He was forsaken by men He had been able to turn to His Father, but now even that refuge is denied Him, and He is absolutely ALONE. Who can plumb the depths of that anguish?

### 7.6 Forsaken

The word "forsaken" means the forsaking of someone in a state of defeat or helplessness, in the midst of hostile circumstances. Who can assess the content of that word when applied to our Lord? A child forsaken by its parents, a friend forsaken by a friend in the hour of need - those are poignant enough sorrows. But a man forsaken by his God! And what shall we say of the sinless Son of Man when He was forsaken by the God with whom He had enjoyed eternal fellowship?

For the first time, an eternity of communion had been broken. The wrath of hell had already broken upon His soul in wave upon wave, but now it is the wrath of heaven. The psalmist claimed, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken" (Psalm 37:25), but the only One who was truly righteous is now forsaken. Ineffable love made Him willing to endure even this desolation of soul for our Salvation.

### 7.7 Me

There would be no mystery in God's forsaking us, for we would be receiving only "the due reward of our deeds." But why should God forsake His son who "knew no sin," "did no sin," "in whom was no sin," the Son in whom He testified that He found perfect delight? There is only one explanation. He was taking my place - and yours. He was being forsaken that we might be forgiven.

## 8. THE WORD OF AGONY OF CHRIST

*"Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, ... saith, I THIRST" (John 19:28)*

The previous word from the Cross, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was a cry of spiritual anguish; this word, "I thirst" was the sob of physical agony. The climax of spiritual anguish synchronizes with the zenith of physical pain. The Maker of heaven and earth with parched lips! The Lord of glory in need of a drink! The Beloved of the Father crying, "I thirst!" What a word is this!

### 8.1 An Exclamation of Physical Agony

A review of the events crammed into the preceding hours will suffice to explain the acuteness of His physical suffering. After the tension of the mock trials came the merciless lashes of the whip, an instrument of torture in which were usually imbedded pieces of iron and bone. The blows were sometimes so severe that they issued in the death of the victim. Then followed the crucifixion itself with its varied and excruciating pains - hands and feet pierced with spikes, brow encircled with fierce thorns, limbs distended, bones dislocated, and all the time the relentless sun blazing overhead. But surpassing them all was the raging burning fever that consumed Him, until from swollen and cracked lips there fell one word of pent-up agony, "I thirst!"

### 8.2 An Evidence of Real Humanity

If the mediator was to fully enter into the experiences common to humanity, the experience of pain must of necessity be an ingredient of His own life-experience. Remarkably enough, up to the time He uttered this cry, Jesus had given no indication of physical pain. Was He immune to pain, and thus above the level of the human? This cry dispels such a thought.

God does not thirst. The Man, Jesus Christ, did thirst, for He was God "manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). While not ceasing to be all that He was before the incarnation, so really did He partake of our humanity that all the sinless infirmities inherent in being man became His. "In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren" (Hebrews 2:17).

There is nothing in the realm of pain that was not experienced to the full by the Son of Man. It was this that qualified Him to be "a merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:17).

This word from the Cross refutes the error of a denial of the real humanity of Christ. In the days of the early church, the Docetists taught that Jesus was not a real man, but God dwelling in a semblance of mortal flesh; that His body was a phantom, that the reality was God. But a phantom does not thirst. It is the Man Christ Jesus who thirsts.

### 8.3 An Example of Fulfilled Prophecy

"Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." So runs the record (John 19:28).

Our Lord met the qualifications of the blessed man described in the first psalm, of whom it was said that

his delight was in the law of the Lord, on which he meditated day and night. In common with other Jewish boys, Jesus had committed to memory large portions of the Old Testament, if not the whole. On every possible occasion He resorted to the synagogue, so that He might immerse Himself in the sacred Scriptures. The prophets had become His own familiar friends, while in the psalms He found the expression of every mood and aspiration of His soul.

Now every prediction of Scripture concerning the Messiah had been fulfilled in Him - except one. In the prophetic word of the psalmist, He saw an indication of His Father's will. Had he not written, "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psalm 69:21)? Then it would not be contrary to His Father's will if He gave vocal expression to His physical agony.

When hungry in the wilderness, He had resisted the seduction of the Satan and had refused to perform a miracle for His own benefit, for He had no indication of the divine will. But now He was free to open His parched lips and cry, "I thirst!" Thus naturally an opening was given for the prophecy to be fulfilled.

Vinegar was the common drink of the Roman army, and was likely to be at hand among a company of soldiers. Already one draught had been offered to Him - the medicated potion to which myrrh had been added to deaden the pain, but this He had rejected (Matthew 27:34; Mark 15:23). The Son of Man refused to meet death in a state of stupefaction. But He accepted the sour wine as a refreshing draught. He would not allow one drop of the cup of agony His Father had placed in His hand to trickle down the side untasted. He refused the anodyne, yet did not refuse the natural solace which His Father's hand had placed before Him. He did not want to lapse slowly into unconsciousness, but to be able to utter a shout of triumph.

### 8.4 An Expression of Spiritual Thirst

Are we wrong in thinking that He was consumed by a thirst even more intense than that of which we have been thinking? Did He not thirst to be thirsted after? He is still athirst for the fellowship and devotion of those for whom He thirsted on the Cross. His was a thirst that could assuage the thirst of the whole world.

"I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink," He said to His surprised listeners. "Lord, when saw we Thee athirst and gave Thee drink?" they replied in amazement. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

We can still hold the cup to His lips by going to those who are needy and ministering in His name.

## 9. THE WORD OF TRIUMPH OF CHRIST

*"It is Finished" (John 19:30).*

"When Jesus received the vinegar, He said, It is FINISHED." The two previous words from the Cross voiced its tragedy. This saying shouted its triumph. The three English words, "it is finished," are the equivalent of a single Greek word, *tetelestai*. With ample justification, this has been called the greatest single word ever uttered.

It was a priestly word. When some devout worshipper overflowing with gratitude for mercies received brought to the Temple a lamb without blemish, the pride of the flock, the priest, more accustomed to seeing blind and defective animals led to the altar, would look admiringly at the pretty creature and say, "*tetelestai*.

And when the Lamb of God offered Himself on the altar of the Cross, a perfect, flawless sacrifice, He cried with a loud voice, "*tetelestai*!" and yielded up His Spirit.

### 9.1 Suffering Was Ended

Some have read Christ's "It is finished" as a cry of despair, "It is all up! I have tried and failed!" But that is exactly the reverse of its significance. True, there would be in it a sigh of relief in that the eternity of anticipation of the Cross was now over; that His absence from His heavenly home was now at an end; that never again would He experience the averted face of His Father; that the burden of a world's sin had been removed. But there was in this cry no note of disappointment or despair.

To Him it had been a foregone conclusion that He must suffer, and that on Him would meet the accumulated guilt and sin of a lost world. He must experience the loneliness and rejection, the desolation and desertion, the sneering and scoffing, the physical agony and mental anguish incidental to His taking our humanity and our guilt. The cup of suffering was indeed full for Him. Having drained the cup, He held it up inverted when He said "It is finished!" and not a drop trickled down the edge. He drank it all that we might never need to drink it.

### 9.2 Revelation Was Finalized

John affirmed that "no man hath seen God at any time," but he added a statement indicating the purpose of Christ's advent. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," or made Him known (John 1:18). Our Lord confirmed this when He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

In Jesus, God became visible and tangible. In His humanity He interpreted the Father to us in terms of human life. To discover what God is like, all we need to do is to look at Jesus. If we desire to know how God would act, we need only turn the pages of Scripture and discover how Jesus acted in similar circumstances.

### 9.3 Shadows Became Substance

The types and shadows of the Old Testament had been necessary and had fulfilled an invaluable ministry in the education of God's people. But they were temporary, transient. The very constancy of the animal sacrifices was a declaration of their insufficiency and imperfection. The fire must burn and the blood must flow - and yet the sacrifice of an irrational creature could never make satisfactory atonement for the sin of a rational being.

But in the death of Christ the centuries of sacrifice found their culmination. The letter to the Hebrews speaks of "sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:11-12). Never again need one drop of sacrificial blood be shed.

Jesus had offered up the perfect sacrifice. Every Mosaic sacrifice was a type and symbol, and there remained no more need of offering for sin. The old covenant was finished.

### 9.4 The Father's Will Was Fulfilled

Early in His ministry He had claimed, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish the work" (John 4:34). At the close of His ministry He claimed, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). He alone could review His whole life approvingly, conscious that in every detail His Father's will had been faithfully carried out. He had done what the first Adam had failed to do - He had kept the law of God perfectly, and so obtained a righteousness that is now available for all who believe in Him.

Compare our Lord's triumphant "*telelestai*" with the great Cecil Rhodes's cry of frustration as he lay dying: "So much to do, so little done." Christ entertained no regrets, for no ground for regret existed.

### 9.5 Satan Was Defeated

The truceless conflict between God and Satan forms the unifying theme of the Scriptures. From the very hour of man's Fall in Eden, the adversary of God and man channeled all his hellish ingenuity into an endeavor to frustrate God's purpose of grace for mankind.

His slimy trail may be traced throughout the Old Testament, but with the advent of Christ, his assaults became more direct and open. On the Cross he launched his final attack against the seed of the woman who was to deal him his deathblow (Genesis 3:15), and at first it looked as though he had been the victor. But it only seemed so. The resurrection demonstrated that Christ was Victor. The moment of Satan's triumph was the moment of his defeat. The Victim on the Cross became the Victor through the Cross.

### 9.6 Redemption Was Accomplished

God had entrusted to His Son the most stupendous task of the ages - the redemption of a world of lost and enslaved men. What irrepressible joy must have surged through Him as He cried in triumph, "It is

finished!" Every obstacle standing between man's fellowship with God was removed, every demand of His law satisfied. There was nothing to add - the redemption He had secured was perfect and complete. Henceforth the way to God was open to all men. Henceforth they would know Him as a God of love.

The joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2) was already in sight, and now He could gladly summon His servant, death, and dismiss His Spirit.

## 10. THE WORD OF CONFIDENCE

*"Father, into Thy Hands I Commend My Spirit" (Luke 23:46).*

The eternal Son of God dismisses His Spirit. "When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46). The body that had housed the Christ was about to be laid in Joseph's tomb, but before He took leave of the earth, Jesus uttered His last word from the throne of His Cross, and not in subdued tones, but with a loud, triumphant voice.

### 10.1 His Death Was Voluntary

The word "commend" could be translated "lay down." When opening His heart to His disciples, the Saviour had said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17-18).

In Matthew's account of the crucifixion (Matthew 27:50), it is stated that He dismissed His Spirit. Although from one point of view it is true that man did take His life from Him, it was only by His permission. Before allowing His tormentors to arrest Him, Jesus demonstrated His innate power by causing them to fall backward to the ground (John 18:6). But having done this He steadfastly refused to exercise this power to deliver Himself from death. He chose the death of the Cross. He could have saved Himself, but for our sakes He refused to do so.

The bitterest ingredient in the cup of His suffering had been the midnight gloom that enveloped not only His body but also His soul, when His Father made the iniquity of us all to meet on Him (Isaiah 53:6). Three hours of torture at the hands of His creatures were succeeded by the infinitely darker three hours into which an eternity of suffering was compressed.

But now He is in the light again. In the midst of His awful desolation there came the renewed realization of His indissoluble union with His Father. "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). He does not now cry, "My God, my God!" but, "Father." The communion He had enjoyed from eternity is restored, never again to be interrupted. Small wonder that He cried with a loud and triumphant voice.

### 10.2 His Trust Was Unshaken

It is to be questioned whether Christians realize sufficiently that our Lord's life on earth was a life of momentary faith and trust in His Father. John's gospel especially reveals the extent of His dependence on His Father. Such characteristic statements as "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30) and "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself" (John 14:10) reveal the important part trust played in His relationship with His Father.

Will Jesus trust Him fully in the hour of death? Has His trust been impaired by the awful experience of the Cross? Here as everywhere He is our example. He will show His disciples in every age how to deport themselves in the hour of death - no yielding to craven fear, but an attitude of calm, assured confidence.

### 10.3 The Secret of Our Security

Our Lord obviously entertained no thought that death ended all. Already He had assured the penitent thief of a place with Him in paradise. Now He speaks as though "He was making a deposit in a safe place, to which, after the crisis of death was over, He would come and recover it. Such is the force of the word.

Who would be afraid of death when it means that our spirits are in His hands? How safe and strong they are! "My Father, which gave them [His sheep] me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29). When we are called upon to face that last enemy, death, let us look on it in the same manner as did our Lord.

As our Lord closed His eyes in death, a truly human death, His Spirit reposed in His Father's hands as restfully as a babe on its mother's breast. His final act of self-committal was a simple and genuine act of faith. Nothing more remained to be done. All was completed perfectly according to the divine planning, so by a definite act of His will He dismissed His Spirit. Redemption was completed, awaiting only the resurrection as God's seal of final acceptance of His Son's sacrifice.

## 11. THE CALVARY MIRACLES

> *"There was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour" (Matthew 27:45). "And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent" (Matthew 27:51). "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose" (Matthew 27:52).*

It was perfectly appropriate that a career ushered in by a miracle, and a ministry replete with miracles, should conclude with a series of miracles. Jesus was dead and His lips silenced, but now God spoke in an awe-inspiring language of His own. The accompaniments of His death were startling signs to an

unbelieving world, each of which underlined the tremendous significance of the Saviour's death.

### 11.1 The Mysterious Darkness

> *"There was a darkness over all the earth" (Matthew 27:45; Luke 23:44).*

In a previous chapter, attention has been drawn to the fact that this was no ordinary darkness. God darkened the sun by means of His own. It was not caused by an eclipse. The longest eclipse can last but a few minutes, but this darkness continued for three hours. Again, it occurred during the Feast of the Passover, the time of full moon, when the moon is opposite the sun (i.e. the moon was at her farthest from the sun).

This unique occurrence is not without extra-biblical historical support. In Egypt, when *Diogenes* saw the darkness, with unconscious insight he exclaimed, "Either the Deity Himself suffers at this moment, or sympathizes with one that does."

This darkness was unique and symbolical. The darkness was not caused by the absence of the sun. It was darkness at noon-time, a darkness in the presence of the sun, and while the sun was uneclipsed by the intervention of another celestial body, a darkness we might say, which was the antagonist of light and the overcomer of it. The darkness of Calvary smothering the sun at noon! What an impressive thing! What a trembling conception of the almightiness of God!

But why this darkness? Darkness and judgment go together. It assuredly was an awesome sign to the sign-seeking but Christ-rejecting Jews. It was an inspired commentary on the character and extent of His sufferings for us, while He was being "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4).

The onlookers might well be smitten with fear at this divine and miraculous intervention. "All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned" (Luke 23:48).

### 11.2 The Miraculous Rending of the Veil

> *"And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:51).*

The Holy Place in the Temple was divided from the Holiest of All by a great and beautiful veil. It was suspended by hooks from four pillars of gold. It measured sixty feet long by thirty feet wide, worked in seventy-two squares, and was reputed to be as thick as the palm of the hand. So heavy was it that the priests claimed it took three hundred men to handle it.

The purpose of the veil needed no explanation. It was not a gateway, but a barrier. It effectively excluded the ministering priests from entering the Holiest of All. Only once a year was it drawn aside to admit the

high priest - on the Day of Atonement. He entered the sacred presence-chamber to sprinkle the Mercy Seat with blood, making atonement for his own sins and those of his people.

For centuries the veil had hung gracefully in its place, but suddenly, at the very moment the Crucified uttered His loud, expiring cry, the ministering priests heard a tearing sound, and as if an unseen hand severed it by starting at the top, the veil fell apart before their awe-stricken gaze.

Who could express the solemnity of the moment when they found themselves gazing into the sanctuary where for centuries God had deigned to dwell, and into which none had dared enter under pain of death. Tradition has it that the priests, unwilling to accept the implications of this divine act, sewed up the curtain and resumed their ritual, as though no world-shaking event had taken place.

That this was a miraculous act of God was evident, for the rent was from top to bottom. Some have seen in the earthquake that accompanied the rending of the veil the cause of the phenomenon. One writer suggests that a cleavage in the masonry of the porch, which rent the outer veil and left the Holy Place open to view, would account for the language of the gospels, of *Josephus*, and of the *Talmud*. But the thickness of the veil would make that seem most unlikely. That some great catastrophe had occurred in the sanctuary at this very time is confirmed by *Tacitus*, and the earliest Christian tradition, as well as by *Josephus*, and the *Talmud*. So widespread a tradition must have some historical basis.

Again, if the earthquake rent a veil of such thickness, why did it not disintegrate the building at the same time? Be that as it may, it was a deeply significant sign wrought by the finger of God.

The rending of the veil signified the end of the old order and the ushering in of the new. *J. Gregory Mantle* sees in it a four-fold significance:

1. *It was the end of symbolism.* The old economy had fulfilled its purpose and yielded place to the new. Christ, the great High Priest, was the perfect fulfillment of the shadows and ritual of the law.

2. *It envisaged the end of sin.* The veil was rent at the very moment Jesus, who was "made ... to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21), "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

3. *It was the end of sacerdotalism.* No longer was there any need for a priesthood and sacrificial system. The ministration of the priesthood that had held a central place in Jewish national life had come to an end.

4. *It betokened the end of separation.* The veil that had for a millennium and a half been a barrier to God's presence now became a gateway. Every penitent soul is now invited to enter the Holiest of All by virtue of the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19).

### 11.3 The Mighty Earthquake

*"And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent" (Matthew 27:51).*

Our Lord's victorious shout was followed immediately by a shattering earthquake. Earthquake shocks are not uncommon in Jerusalem, but through divine overruling this particular quake synchronized with the tremendous event that had just transpired in the spiritual realm, as though to attest the might and majesty of Him whose lifeless body now hung limp on the Cross.

This was no small earth tremor, for "the rocks rent," and not merely lined across with just perceptible cracks, but wrenched asunder into such fissures as to lay open the interior of the rocky graves which abounded in Golgotha. The visitation was of such magnitude that even the Roman soldiers "feared greatly."

This was not an isolated phenomenon attributable to natural causes. The coincidences are too striking. It exactly coincided with two other miraculous manifestations, the mysterious darkness and the rending of the veil. It coincided with the loud cry and the death of the Son of God. It coincided with the opening of certain graves, apparently only the graves of saints.

### 11.4 The Momentous Appearance of Dead Saints

> *"And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:52-53).*

The earthquake shock and the rending of the rocks resulted in the opening of the rock-tombs similar to that of Joesph of Arimathea, in the vicinity of Calvary. It was not blind force that rent the rocks. They were rent with rare discrimination, for there was every evidence of intelligent design. Only selected graves were opened, the graves of saints. There is no evidence that graves other than these were breached by the quake.

It must be noted that, while the tombs were opened at the moment of Christ's death, the bodies of the saints are recorded to have come "out of the graves after His resurrection." The tombs thus remained exposed for the period the body of Christ remained in the grave. The later appearance of the saints would be all the more striking and significant, showing as it did the "better resurrection" yet to come, of which Christ was the first-fruits.

The opening of the graves was a vivid and eloquent symbolic demonstration that by His death Christ had for ever broken the bonds of death. His death by dying slew and for ever robbed the grave of its terror and victory.

The resurrection of these saints was a clear indication that the prison doors of hades had been wrenched from their hinges. The words "they were raised" surely mean what they say. They rose, but not in order that they might have again on earth. They "appeared to many," but not to stay.

That this event is mysterious and difficult of explanation we concede. But must it therefore be apocryphal? Would not the same mode of reasoning discount our Lord's own resurrection? It is no more miraculous than the mysterious darkness, or the rending of the veil. It gives point to the opening of the graves, for the saints who appeared were not "risen" saints but "revived" saints, as was Lazarus when called back to life. Their bodies were apparently revived for this purpose, but it was not their final resurrection.

In this momentous event we have a sign that Jesus had conquered death, and a foreshadowing of the glorious resurrection that awaits the believer.

## 12. THE ATONING WORK OF CHRIST

*"The Son of God ... loved me, and gave Himself for Me" (Galatians 2:20)*

In the words "The Son of God ... loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20) lies the heart of the atonement. In love, the Son of God literally gave *Himself for me*. This puts in personal terms the great transaction of Calvary. It is as true today as when it happened. Inexhaustible in depth and meaning it may be, but it is neither irrational nor beyond comprehension when the illumination of the Spirit is present.

In the three simple words, *Himself for me*, is enshrined the great mystery of the ages. They declare that "the forfeiting of His free life has freed our forfeited lives." The most astute intellects of all time have delved into the inner meaning of Christ's death on the Cross, but all have failed to plumb its infinite depths. Like Paul, they have withdrawn with the cry of bafflement. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). The sin of the first Adam posed a stupendous problem. How could God let His heart of love have its way in justifying guilty men and women, without condoning their sin and thus violating His own holiness? It was a problem to which only His own infinite wisdom could find a solution.

At the Cross, God took the initiative and so dealt with sin in His Son, that now He can justify the repenting sinner and not compromise His holy character. The death of our Lord was unlike every other death. It was not an incident in His life, but the very purpose of it. It was the chosen vocation of the God-man. In this section we shall present some of the main features of the atonement.

### 12.1 Theory of the Atonement

According to *W.H. Griffith Thomas,* in order to be satisfactory, any theory of the atonement must include and account for these three factors:

1. The proper and adequate interpretation of the Old Testament sacrificial system.
2. The full meaning of Christian experience. One of the great essentials is a working theory adequate

to the experience of ordinary men and women.
3. The adequate exegesis of the New Testament teaching, both Godward and manward. Every theory must start with the Godward side or it will go wrong (Romans 3:25).

### 12.2 Methods of Presentation

In presenting a truth of such vast reach and with such tremendous implications, the Holy Spirit employs a variety of figures of speech, each of which emphasizes a fresh facet of truth. Here are some:

1. *The atonement is moral in character,* for it originates in and manifests the unselfish and disinterested love of God. This love as manifested in the voluntary death of His only Son, is a source of moral stimulus to man, and has broken the resistance of the hardest hearts (Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 4:9).

2. *It is represented as a commercial transaction.* A ransom paid to free men from the slavery of sin. In those passages which represent Christ's death as the price paid for our deliverance from sin and death, the preposition of bargain and exchange - *anti* - is used (Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6).

3. *It has a legal significance,* for Christ's death was an act of obedience to the law that sinning men had violated (Galatians 4:4-5; Matthew 3:15). It was a penalty borne in order to rescue the guilty from their merited punishment (Romans 4:25).

4. *It is medicinal in its effects.* In Scripture sin is frequently represented as a hereditary and contagious disease (Isaiah 1:5-6), for which Christ's atoning death provided a panacea (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24). Jesus Himself presented His work under this figure (Matthew 9:12-13).

5. *It is sacrificial in nature*. The atonement is described as a work of priestly mediation that reconciles man to God (Hebrews 9:11-12, 14, 22, 26). This is the consistent and prevailing conception throughout both Old and New Testaments. Hence any view of the atonement that does not provide a sufficient place for this aspect is inadequate.

### 12.3 Substitutionary/Vicarious Atonement

This view of the atonement may be summarized in the words of *F.F. Bruce*:

> "At the Cross, all the sin of the ages was placed on the heart of the sinless Son of God, as He became the racial representative of all humanity."

It is our belief that this is the only theory that meets all the conditions suggested above, and that it is the true Bible doctrine. Although not a Bible word, substitution is certainly a Bible idea. By substitution we do not mean the saving of a life by mere assistance, as in the throwing of a rope to a drowning man; or by the mere risking of one life to save another; it is the saving of one life by the loss of another. As substitute, Christ took on Himself the sinner's guilt and bore its penalty in the sinner's place.

Substitution is a law of nature as well as of grace. Before there can be harvest, the grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die (John 12:24). The lion lives only because a weaker animal has died. This law has been instinctively felt from the earliest days of human history and can be seen in operation the world over.

It is the teaching of Scripture that there are two principles in God, the proper relation between which must be born in mind in our theology. They are the principles of love and justice. The former desires to save sinners. But since God is the eternal, infinite, and ethically perfect being, He cannot and will not violate the latter. Some way must be found for mercy and justice to meet - and this they did in the transaction of the Cross.

When approached without preconceived theories, the Scriptures relating to this subject appear clear and unequivocal. Christ taught His disciples that He came to give His life "a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). He told them He would give His flesh and blood for the life of the world (John 6:51-55). He said that as the Good Shepherd He would give His life for the sheep (John 10:11), and the great Shepherd of the sheep did actually take the place of the sheep. He said that His blood would be shed for the many (Matthew 26:28). This is also the consistent teaching of the epistles. Of these examples, these three are presented:

1. He who knew no sin was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).
2. He who was under no curse was made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13).
3. He who had done no sin, bore our sin in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:22, 24).

### 12.4 Objections to the Substitutionary Idea

Among the objections advanced to the foregoing view of the atonement are these:

1. it is unnecessary;
2. it is impossible; and
3. it is immoral.

#### *12.4.1 It is unnecessary*

*It is unnecessary*, since God might well forgive sinners upon repentance and without any additional requirement.

We reply that in asserting that the objector is really assuming for himself the knowledge of deity. Who can say that God can or cannot do? And is repentance in fact all that is necessary to forgiveness? Does it remove the consequences of sin? In ordinary life, does repentance ward off just punishment or remove past guilt? Though repentance is necessary to forgiveness, it is not all that is necessary. Do not the expiatory sacrifices offered by men the world over bear mute testimony to the universal consciousness that sin demands the punishment of the offender or the death of a substitute? And in the act of

forgiveness, is it not the one against whom the offense has been committed who suffers?

### *12.4.2 It is impossible*

*It is impossible,* for guilt cannot be transferred from one person to another, nor can punishment and penalty be transferred from a guilty person to an innocent person. An innocent person may suffer, but his suffering will not be punishment or penalty.

It may be true that punishment for personal blameworthiness cannot be transferred from the wrongdoer to the well-doer. But the world is so constituted that it bears the idea of substitution engraved on its very heart. Wives suffer to deliver husbands from sufferings richly deserved. Are we wrong in teaching what Christ Himself taught, that He suffered in order to deliver us from sufferings we richly deserved? Furthermore, if we understand that Christ is both God and man and He is the Creator of the Universe, then nothing is impossible for Him to do.

### *12.4.3 It is immoral*

*It is immoral* for the innocent to suffer for the guilty.

Our answer is that if this is the case, then sympathy is immoral, and love too, for this is what they do. It is not immoral for the innocent to suffer for the guilty when the innocent one by His own free-will assumes the burden (Hebrews 10:7) and retains the power to relinquish it at will (John 10:18). Since Christ did this voluntarily, no injustice is done to anyone. Nor is it immoral when He has power to bear the penalty to the uttermost, and having exhausted it to be free Himself and bring deliverance to others. And we may add, not when the redemption scheme provided an ample and unparalleled reward (Hebrews 12:2; Philippians 2:8-11). Christ was not permanently a loser.

Again, is it possible that an immoral doctrine should be the supreme cause of morality among men? History witnesses that the great moral advances of the human race have been brought about by the preaching of substitutional atonement.

It is a matter of question whether those who deny the element of substitution in the death of Christ reflect deeply on the logical consequences of their denial. There are only two possible alternatives presented in Scripture. Either Christ bore the burden and penalty of our sin, or we bear it. To deny that Christ bore our sins in His body on the Cross means that the idea of Christianity as a redemptive religion must be abandoned.

It remains to be said that the vicarious view of the atonement is not an optional alternative, one of several interesting theories that can be adopted or rejected at will. The whole tenor of Scripture is that this view lies at the very heart of the atonement.

The words of *J.S. Stewart* find the fullest support in Scripture:

"Not only had Christ by dying disclosed the sinner's guilt, not only had He revealed the Father's love: He had actually taken the sinner's place. And this meant, since 'God was in Christ,' that God had taken that place. When destruction and death were rushing up to claim the sinner as their prey, Christ had stepped in and accepted the full weight of their inevitable doom in His body and soul."

## 13. THE DEAD AND BURIAL OF CHRIST

### 13.1 The Burial of Christ

After the death of Christ on the Cross, John gives a detailed description of what happened to the body of Christ:

*And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body. And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there" (John 19:38-42).*

It was two members of the Sanhedrin who cooperated in the burial of the Lord. Neither of these two were known to be courageous or bold in their faith (John 19:38-39), but their love of Jesus outweighed their fear of their colleagues or of Rome. Joseph of Arimathea provided the tomb, while Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloes, spices customarily used in the preparation of the body for burial. Due to the lateness of the hour, things were done somewhat hastily (Luke 23:54-56; John 19:42), and the final preparations would be made after the Sabbath.

### 13.2 Evidences for the Actual Death of Christ

*"The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath for that Sabbath was a high day, asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows*

*that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." And again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced" (John 19:31-37).*

The Bible gives us the evidences for the actual death of Jesus Christ. We may be assured that Christ physically died for the following reasons:

1. **The appearance of Christ (John 19:30).** Christ cried out; it was a cry of relief. He bowed His head and He expired for the last and final time. His actions signify death.

2. **A lot of people witnessed His crucifixion (Matthew 27:35-36; Mark 15:24-41; Luke 23:33-49; John 19:18-30).** The death of Jesus was undisputed by everyone who witnessed His crucifixion.

3. **The legal expert announcement (John 19:31-33).** The very fact that the Lord's legs were not broken was because legal experts on the subject of death knew He was dead already. They witnessed to this fact by not breaking the Lord's legs.

4. **The dead was certified by the Roman soldiers (John 19:34).** The Roman soldiers, who were experts in this field, were satisfied. Not only had they witnessed the unusual dismissal of His own spirit, but a spear was thrust into the side of our Lord, piercing the vital organs, probably including both His lungs and His heart. Since these soldiers dare not make a mistake, and since it would not hurt a dead body to have a sword thrust into His heart cavity to make certain He was dead, the Roman soldier did just that. Now there can be no question about it. Life as we know it could not function in a body with a gash into the heart sac large enough for a man to thrust his hand.

5. **The medical evidence (John 19:34-35).** Due to the fact that both blood and water pour forth from the spear wound, it medically verified that death had already occurred. Here was the postmortem performed upon the body of Christ. Since the blood had already separated or coagulated into the red clot "blood" and the limpid serum "water", it proves that Christ had not only died, but He had been dead some time.

6. **The handling of the body (John 19:38-42).** Anyone who has handled a corpse knows what I mean. There is no guesswork involved as to whether they are dead or not. There are two valid witnesses in Israel, both members of the Sanhedrin, who handled His body and they can witness to the fact that this man was dead. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepared the corpse, which would have revealed the normal evidences of death.

7. **The dead was certified by the religious leaders and Pilate (Mark 15:43-45).** All the Gospel writers mention Joseph of Arimathea and Luke tells us that he was a member of the Sanhedrin (Luke 23:50). Given the fact that all the writers implicate the religious leaders in Jesus' death, it seems rather odd that a member of the Sanhedrin should offer to bury Jesus, unless it really happened.

8. **The dead was witnessed by the eleven disciples.** None of the eleven disciples were there to claim

the body of Jesus. They were afraid of the Jewish religious leaders and Pilate. They were hopeless because they thought that Jesus was actually dead and none of them believed that He would arise from dead.

9. **The dead was witnessed by the women (Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55).** The women planned to return at a later time to further prepare the body (Luke 23:55-56). There was not one glimmer of hope that life remained in our Lord's body.

10. **Jesus was buried in a sealed and guarded tomb with a stone rolled over the entrance (Matthew 27:62-66).** Why would the religious leaders still be wary, unless the way our Lord died evidenced a most unusual happening, the end of which was not yet in sight? (cf. Luke 23:44-48.)

11. **The dead and burial were foretold in Bible Prophecies (Isaiah 53:5, 9, 10-11, 12; Psalm 22:16-18; 34:20; 69:21; Zechariah 12:10).** Whatever man willed he did to the Son of God, but after Christ died, no unbeliever ever touched the body of Christ. Both Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus were believers, and their claiming Christ's body forced them to expose themselves as His followers. This caused the Lord's body to be buried in a rich man's tomb in a garden that was close to Calvary.

12. **The earliest church tradition affirms that Christ was buried in a tomb after He had died (1 Corinthians 15:3-6; Acts 13:28, 29).** The expression, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried" indicates the emphatic nature of each part of the tradition. The tradition that Paul received indicated that Jesus had indeed been buried. The information supplied by Paul, which appears to be an early tradition in the church, along with the Gospel records, unanimously affirms that Jesus was buried in a tomb after He had died. Therefore the criterion of multiple attestation argues for the authenticity of the event. That the tradition is early (A.D. 30-36) negates the possibility of the development of a legend concerning his death and burial—there were still eyewitnesses living (1 Corinthians 15:6). Some of those eyewitnesses were indeed women (Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55) who played a role in the early church in which the traditions developed (Acts 1:14; cf. with Luke 8:2, 3; 23:49 and 23:55-24:10).

13. **The tomb in which Jesus was laid meets with archaeological discoveries.** The "criterion of Palestinian environment" is satisfied in that the tomb in which Jesus was laid meets with archaeological discoveries, and the fact that Jesus, accused as a criminal, was buried in a *new* tomb coheres with the Jews not wanting to pollute other family members interred there. Also, it was Preparation day (Mark 15:42), the day before Passover, and Jesus' body would not have been allowed to remain on the Cross until the next day, lest the corpse defile the land (cf. Numbers 9:6-10). Therefore, the fact that Joseph was allowed to bury him is reasonable. And since he died around the sixth hour (Mark 15:33-37), Joseph probably had time to accomplish the burial before nightfall and the beginning of the Sabbath (*Joel B. Green,* **Burial of Jesus," in Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels**, ed., Intervarsity Press, 1992, 89).

### 13.3 Conclusion

Now by the mouth of two or three witnesses, the truth may be established. Here are many witnesses. All who were there at the Cross saw how He died. The soldiers witness to His death by not breaking His legs. The crowd again can testify as to the spear piercing His side. The writer of the Gospel is an eyewitness of the blood and water coming from His riven side. Finally, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus are witnesses that they prepared a corpse for burial. There has never been another conflicting tradition about the fact of Jesus' burial. Therefore, it seems reasonable, based upon this and the foregoing discussion, to assert that the burial of Jesus Christ, as outlined in the New Testament, is a true and accurate account of what actually happened.

## 14. WHAT CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED WHEN HE DIED AND WENT TO HADES?

(Note: Please read Section 4 of Chapter 8: Death, Hell and Resurrection, for more information on this topic.)

### 14.1 Where Did Christ Go?

This brings us to the question: Where did the soul and human spirit of Christ go at death? The person of Christ was together in one place. He said to the thief on the cross in Luke 23:43, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Did Christ and the thief on the cross go to heaven when they died, or did they go somewhere else? In order to answer this question it is necessary to understand what is spoken about the place of the departed spirits both in the Old Testament and also in the New.

#### *14.1.1 Both just and unjust go to "Sheol" (Genesis 37:35)*

Read Genesis 37:35. The place where the soul or spirit of man went at death was called by the Hebrews 'Sheol.' It meant simply, "the place of the departed spirits." The Greeks had the word Hades for identically the same concept. Neither the term Sheol nor Hades designated anything concerning the righteousness or unrighteousness of the person involved. All - righteous and unrighteous - went to Sheol or Hades before the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### *14.1.2 Sheol is in the earth (Numbers 16:29-33; Matthew 12:40)*

We learn further in both the Old and New Testaments that Sheol and Hades were within the earth itself. One passage in both Testaments will suffice. In Numbers 16:29-33 we have the rebellion of Korah. From this it may be seen that Sheol is in the earth. The Lord Himself verified this, and said: "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the sea monster's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Thus Sheol or Hades is not only a place in the earth, but

it is in the heart of it.

### *14.1.3 The place where believers are sent after death is described as "Abraham's Bosom" or "Paradise" (Luke 16:19-31)*

From the teaching of the Lord in Luke 16 concerning the rich man and Lazarus we learn that there are two compartments to Hades. There is an upper portion where the righteous go which is a place of bliss, and a lower portion for the unrighteous which is a place of torment. In this place where there is full capacity of personality with intellect, emotion and will, the righteous and unrighteous sections are divided by a great gulf fixed so that none can traverse from one to the other.

With this background we are ready to consider where Christ went when He died. He went to Sheol or Hades which was in the heart of the earth. But He went to the upper portion of this place. It may be called "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22) because it is a place of endearment and blessing. It was called by Christ, speaking to the thief on the Cross, "paradise." The Lord told this man: "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). This again signifies a place of bliss. Paradise is a word of Persian origin signifying "a royal park or garden." Paradise, then, is equivalent to Abraham's bosom or the upper portion of Sheol or Hades.

### *14.1.4 The just will not remain forever in "Sheol" (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:29-32)*

Peter is quoting from Psalm 16 which speaks of the Messiah, and there the Hebrew word is "Sheol." The soul of Christ did go to Sheol or Hades, but it was not left there.

> *"Brethren, I may say to you confidently of the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that He would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:29-32).*

### *14.1.5 Christ descended into Hades when He died on the Cross*

The Lord Himself said: "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the sea monster's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). This is the reason the Apostles' Creed says: "He descended into Hades." Christ definitely descended into Hades when He died on the Cross (cf. Romans 10:6-7).

## 14.2 Where Did Christ Do?

This brings us to what did Christ do there in Hades? The Lord never went anywhere but that He did something. He had a purpose and a plan, and He accomplished it. We find that there was both a

proclamation and a liberation performed by Him. He both spoke a message and did a work.

### *14.2.1 Christ proclaimed a message to the spirits who were in prison in the upper portion of Hades*

> *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that Je might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:18-19).*

It was by His death He went and proclaimed a message to the spirits who were in prison in the upper portion of Sheol or Hades. This verse has nothing to do with offering Salvation a second time to the lost. The word “preach” means to make a proclamation. Christ told them that the sacrifice for their sins had been made. He had made it on the Cross (cf. Romans 3:25). All through the Old Testament sins were only "atoned" or covered over temporarily. Now there had been a complete taking away and remission of sins that are past. They were saved by grace through faith, and Christ’s death had made their Salvation complete.

### *14.2.2 When Christ ascended He took with Him all of those that were held captive in the upper portion of Hades to Heaven*

The passage that tells us about what Christ accomplished when He died and went to Hades is Ephesians 4:7-10:

> *"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, 'When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men.' Now this expression, 'He ascended,' what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things" (Ephesians 4:7-10).*

Verse 7 states that the church, the body of Christ, has received grace gifts from the head of the church that ascended on high. Verse 8 then states that when Christ ascended, He did two things. First He led captivity captive (we will come back to this in a moment), and second, He gave gifts unto men. These gifts given to the church on earth are enumerated in verse 11 as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors-teachers. Completing the passage we find in verse 9 that before Christ ascended He first descended. Furthermore, His descent was into the lower parts of the earth. It was not into the lowest parts for He did not descend into the lower part of Sheol or Hades, but was in the upper portion. Verse 10 gives the wonderful truth that the Lord’s ascending was not half way from Sheol, but all the way above all heavens. Christ ascended, not just to the earth’s surface after being in the heart of the earth, but He ascended to the highest heaven, even to God’s throne where He sat down. He assumed His original position in the trinity.

With this background, let us consider the phrase, "He led captivity captive." Literally, "He captivated captivity." When an Old Testament believer died, he could not go into heaven because the way had not yet been provided. The blood was not on the mercy seat. Christ had to die and be resurrected and He has

provided a new and living way whereby we may approach the Father on the basis of the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:19). But more than this, Christ had to be the firstfruits of death. No one could enter in God's presence through death before the Son did. He is "the forerunner" (Hebrews 6:20), and the leader of many others being their Captain (Hebrews 2:10).

Thus believers in the Old Testament died in hope of a future day of victory and of resurrection (cf. Hebrews 6:2), yet they had to wait in the upper portion of Sheol until the blood was on the mercy seat and until Jesus Christ led the way. The Old Testament believers were held captive then in Sheol, but Christ came and proclaimed that they were able with His resurrection to go free from their prison house, and when Christ rose from the dead He took all those held captive in the upper portion of Sheol to Heaven with Him. He captivated captivity.

Thus the Lord's ministry was not only on earth, but under the earth. With this in mind we can understand what we read in Isaiah 61:1:

> *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me … to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."*

This is exactly what Christ did. He first made the proclamation and then He captivated captivity. When He ascended, He took with Him into God's presence all of those that were held captive in the upper or righteous portion of Sheol. He emptied it completely of any inhabitant.

### *14.2.3 Christ closed down Hades from receiving any more righteous souls when they die*

But this is just the beginning. Not only did Christ empty the righteous portion of Sheol or Hades, and lead them all to Heaven, but He closed down Hades from receiving any more righteous souls when they die. He changed the place where the righteous go at death.

When a righteous person dies, he no longer descends into Hades, but he immediately goes to be with Christ. The moment the believer is absent from the body, he is present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Paul was "hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better" (Philippians 1:23). Furthermore, he was one who was caught up into paradise and this was none other than God's throne or the third Heaven (2 Corinthians 12:24). Paradise was no longer a place in the heart of the earth, it was up in Heaven (cf. Revelation 2:7). Christ had changed its location by His work in death and His work through death.

This is why Christ said: "I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Not one person will ever be saved and descend into Hades where the gates of Hades will open to receive this person. The Lord will not lose one. Thus through death Christ destroyed both the power and the fear of death.

## 14.3 Conclusion

Thank God for the deaths Christ died. He tasted death for every man. He through death has conquered death, and stands the Victor over death. He is the One who could say: “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26). He said: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death” (John 8:51). Christ has changed death for every believer.

## 15. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


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3. **The Death of Death**, Biblical Studies Foundation, Internet Edition, 1998, by John W. Lawrence.
4. **The Life of Jesus Christ**, p. 146, Rev. Ed., Old Tappan, N.J. Revell, 1891, by James Stalker.
5. **The Life of Christ**, Lesson 10, Moody Bible Institute, 1993 Edition, by Irving L. Jensen.
6. **New Testament Survey**, pp. 206-210, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Inter-Varsity Press, 1985 Edition, by Merrill C. Tenney, Revised by Walter M. Dunnett.


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# Chapter Twenty One - The Resurrection of Christ

For nearly 2000 years there has been the historical phenomena of Christianity. In spite of the fact that the church throughout its early years suffered intense persecution at the hands of both the Jews and the Romans, it flourished. Many of the first missionaries of the Christian faith died a martyr's death because of their belief in Jesus Christ.

Why were these early Christians willing to face death for their belief in Jesus Christ? It was because they were convinced of the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that this proved without a doubt that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and the one and only Savior of the world. And, so for them, death was not the end. The resurrection is a historical fact - not just some philosophical ideal or idea.

Our faith, our entire system of beliefs, rests on the fact that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. This is the hinge upon which our faith hangs! This chapter, divided into six major divisions, is a careful study of the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ:

1. We will provide the secular sources of information relating to the life of Christ;
2. We will rebuke the false theories against the resurrection of Christ;
3. We will provide the objective evidences for the resurrection of Christ;
4. We will provide the expert evidences for the resurrection of Christ;
5. We will examine the theological significance of the resurrection of Christ; and
6. We will discuss whether or not the Shroud of Turin is the burial cloth of Christ.

The below table provides the chronological order of events of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ as recorded in the four gospels.

(References: *Merrill C. Tenney*, Revised by *Walter M. Dunnett*, **New Testament Survey**, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Inter-Varsity Press, 1985 Edition, pp. 206-210; *Irving L. Jensen*, Lesson 10, **The Life of Christ**, Moody Bible Institute, 1993 Edition; *James Stalker*, **The Life of Jesus Christ**, Rev. Ed., Old Tappan, N.J. Revell, 1891, p. 146)

## The Gospels: The Chronological Order of Events of the Post-Resurrection Appearances of Christ

| THE HARMONY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS | MATTHEW | MARK | LUKE | JOHN |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Saturday - Jesus' Entombment*** | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Women at the Tomb | 27:61 | 15:47 | 23:55-56 | - |
| The Guard | 27:62-66 | - | - | - |
| ***Sunday - Day of Resurrection*** | | | | |
| Tomb Opened | 28:2-4 | - | - | - |
| The Women's Visit | 28:5-8 | 16:2-8 | 24:1-8 | 20:1-2 |
| The Peter and John's Visit | - | - | 24:12 | 20:3-10 |
| The Appearances of Jesus to Women: | | | | |
| (a) Mary Magdalene (in the morning) | - | 16:9-11 | - | 20:11-18 |
| (b) Other Women | 28:9-10 | - | - | - |
| Report of the Guard | 28:11-15 | - | - | - |
| The Appearances of Jesus to Disciples: | | | | |
| (a) Peter (probably in the afternoon) (see also 1 Corinthians 15:5) | - | - | 24:33-35 | - |
| (b) The Two Disciples on the Emmaus road (toward evening) | - | 16:12-13 | 24:13-32 | - |
| (c) The Ten Apostles in the Upper Room (Thomas was absent) | - | - | 24:36-43 | 20:19-25 |
| ***The Next Sunday - Post-resurrection Appearances*** | | | | |
| The Eleven Apostles (Thomas was present) (see also 1 Corinthians 15:5) | - | 16:14 | - | 20:26-31 |
| ***The Next Four to Five Weeks - Post-resurrection Appearances*** | | | | |
| The Seven Apostles Beside the Sea of Galilee | - | - | - | 21:1-14 |
| Conversation with Peter | - | - | - | 21:15-25 |
| Disciples on a Mountain in Galilee (see also 1 Corinthians 15:6) | 28:16-20 | 16:15-18 | - | - |
| More than Five Hundred Brethren (1 Corinthians 15:6) | - | - | - | - |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| James, the Lord's half brother (1 Corinthians 15:7) | - | - | - | - |
| Eleven at Olivet in Jerusalem | - | - | 24:44-49 | - |
| The Great Commission and Ascension (Acts 1:6-11) | - | 16:19-20 | 24:50-53 | - |
| Stephen (Acts 7:56) | - | - | - | - |
| Paul (1 Corinthians 15:8) | - | - | - | - |

## 1. SECULAR SOURCES OF INFORMATION RELATING TO THE LIFE OF CHRIST

One would naturally expect that the Lord Jesus Christ would be sufficiently important to receive ample notice in the literature of His time, and that extensive biographical material would be available. He was observed by multitudes of people, and His own followers numbered into the hundreds (1 Corinthians 15:6), whose witness was still living in the middle of the first century. As a matter of fact, the amount of information concerning Him is comparatively meager. There are a few references to Christ or Christianity recorded in secular history that can be cited:

1. *Josephus*, a Jewish historian;
2. *Tacitus*, a Roman historian;
3. *Suetonius*;
4. *Pliny*, a correspondent of *Trajan*; and
5. *Lucian*, the satirist.

### 1.1 Josephus

*Josephus*, a Jewish historian, in his **Antiquities**, made the following statement:

> "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day" (*Josephus*, **Antiquities XVIII.iii.3.**; see also *Philip Schaff*, **History of the Christian Church**, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950, I, 92ff.).

### 1.2 Tacitus

*Tacitus*, a Roman historian of the second century, in writing of the reign of Nero, alluded to the death of Christ and to the existence of Christians in Romans:

> "But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration. Hence, to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also ..." (*Tacitus*, **Annals XV.44.** The Oxford Translation, Revised, New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1858, p. 423).

### 1.3 Suetonius

*Suetonius'* testimony is brief:

> "Punishment [by Nero] was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition" (*Suetonius*, **The Lives of the Caesars, Nero XVI**. Loeb Classical Library. English translation by *J.C. Rolfe*, London: William Heinemann; New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, II, 111.).

### 1.4 Pliny

The younger *Pliny*, who was a correspondent of *Trajan*, spoke in one of his letters of the Christians as he had met them in Asia:

> "They affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor to deny a trust when they should be called on to deliver it up ..." (*Pliny*, **Letters X.xcvi.** Loeb Classical Library. English translation by *William Melmoth*, revised by *W.M.L. Hutchinson*, London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935, II, 403.).

### 1.5 Lucian

*Lucian,* the satirist of the second century, spoke scornfully of Christ and of the Christians. He connected them with the synagogues of Palestine, and alluded to Christ as:

> "The man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world ... Futhermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers one of another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws" (*Lucian,* **the Passing of Peregrinus 12-13.** Loeb Classical Library. English translation by *A.M. Harmon,* London: William Heinemann, Ltd.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936, pp. 13, 15).

### 1.6 Conclusion

These brief notices of Christ and of Christianity were penned by men who were ignorant of the history of the movement and hostile to its doctrines. They show that Christianity was already widespread by the second century and that the historic evidence of Christ was generally acknowledged even by his foes. The nature of these references proves that he was regarded as an obscure fanatic whose cult had attained a prominence far greater than might rightfully have been expected. Up to the time of Nero, and in the circle of the court, Christianity was looked on by Romans in much the same way that Americans would appraise an importation of Japanese Shintoism.

## 2. FALSE THEORIES AGAINST THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

From the beginning there have been those who have rejected the resurrection as a hoax, a tale, a lie or fiction. A number of theories have been advance to disprove the resurrection, but all of these have been solidly discredited by one historical scholar after another. So interestingly, not one shred of solid evidence has ever been given to support these claims. Then why do men make these claims?

It would appear that attempts to explain away the physical resurrection of Christ or to deny its factuality have their rise more in unbelief of the supernatural than in an objective examination of the evidence for it. In this connection, *W. Graham Scroggie* wrote:

> "The resurrection is not denied because the evidence is regarded as insufficient, but the evidence is rejected and repudiated because the resurrection is denied. A resurrection is regarded as impossible and little attempt is made to explain away the evidence on which it rests. But the improbability of supernaturalism is one of the most arrogant assumptions ever made. It takes for granted what still needs to be proved. Such a method is utterly unscientific. The true scientific method is to examine the facts and then form a theory; not first to form a theory and then flout and repudiate and deny the facts."

This study will cover only a few of the most popular theoretical explanations that have been set forth,

generally by unbelievers or liberal theologians who very often operate out of a moral twist to explain away the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They reject the evidence not because it is insufficient, but because of its moral implications on their lives. It is only to be expected that the archenemy of God and man would do all in his power to discredit this event, which inflicted such disastrous defeat on him. The denials began the very day He rose and have recurred periodically ever since. The plain fact was that the tomb was empty. How could such a damning piece of evidence be explained away?

In summary, men make false theories against the resurrection of Christ because of :

1. unbelief of the supernatural;
2. their prejudice;
3. their philosophical bias;
4. they have never examined the evidence carefully;
5. its moral implications on their lives; and
6. the attack of Satan.

The most popular false theories against the resurrection of Christ are as follows:

1. flattly denies the fact;
2. the theft theory;
3. the swoon theory;
4. the mistaken tomb theory;
5. the unknown tomb theory;
6. the hallucination theory;
7. the impersonation theory;
8. the spiritual resurrection theory;
9. the mythical theory;
10. the subjective vision theory; and
11. the objective vision theory.

**2.1 Flattly Denies the Fact**

The infidel's attitude is at least honest and simple. He just flatly denies the fact and possibility of resurrection. *Ernest Renan* declared,

> "I would not believe Jesus rose, even if I saw it."

This statement accords perfectly with our Lord's words: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). And yet those who cavil at the miracle of resurrection receive without question the mysteries of nature, compared with which, *Huxley* says, "the mysteries of the Bible are child's play."

## 2.2 The Theft Theory

### *2.2.1 The theory defined*

The chief priests' explanation was simple. The disciples themselves removed the body and then pretended He had risen.

> "Now while they were on their way, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. And when they had assembled with the elders and counseled together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' "And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble." And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day"" (Matthew 28:11-15).

### *2.2.2 The refutation*

Such theory is unreliable due to the following reasons:

1. it ignores the evidence of the linen wrappings and the empty tomb.
2. the testimony of sleeping witnesses is unreliable.
3. the probability of who could and would steal the body is extremely low.

#### *2.2.2.1 The linen wrappings and empty tomb*

It ignores the evidence of the linen wrappings and the empty tomb. If someone had stolen the body, they would have either taken the body and left the wrappings scattered or piled in a heap, but only resurrection could account for the position of the linen wrappings with the body absent (John 20:5-8; Luke 24:12).

#### *2.2.2.2 The testimony of sleeping witnesses is unreliable*

The Roman soldiers testified, "they stole Him away while we were asleep" (Matthew 28:13). But the testimony of sleeping witnesses to what took place during their slumbers is hardly acceptable:

1. If a man is sleeping, then it is impossible for him to know what is happening during his sleeping period because he is unconscious.
2. Even had the soldiers been asleep, think of the noise the disciples would have made trying to removed the huge stone covering the entrance to the tomb (Matthew 27:66)!

#### *2.2.2.3 The probability of who could and would steal the body is extremely low*

Further, there is the question of the probability of who **could** and **would** steal the body under the

circumstances:

1. The Romans would not; they were there to guard it with their lives by Roman law. They had sealed the tomb and were there to protect it against theft (Matthew 27:65-66). The religious leaders had provided their own refutation against such a theory (Matthew 28:11-14).

2. The women could not for they could not have removed the stone and were wondering who would remove it for them when they went early Sunday morning to finish burial preparations (cf. Mark16:3-4).

3. The disciples would not because they did not grasp the full import of His predictions of resurrection (John 20:9). They were perplexed and scattered, huddled together in hidden rooms (John 20:19). Two had even left town and were on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13).

4. If the disciples had indeed stolen the body, why would they be willing to experience torture and death for what they knew was a lie?

5. The Jewish crowd would not and had actually requested a Roman guard to protect the tomb against theft (Matthew 27:63-66). This last point is very significant because the presence of the Roman soldiers and the Roman seal over the door made the possibility of the religious leaders claims of theft a thousand times more difficult if not impossible.

### *2.2.3 Comments*

The likelihood of these timid, scared Galilean disciples stealing the body of Jesus out from under the noses of a guard of highly disciplined and skilled Roman soldiers while they all slept (an offense punishable by death) is ridiculous.

## 2.3 The Swoon Theory

### *2.3.1 The theory defined*

Crucifixion is a slow death, and victims have been known to live three days on the Cross, whereas Jesus hung there for only a few hours. Jesus did not really die, He only swooned, therefore the disciples saw only a revived or resuscitated Christ. Christ was nailed to a Cross and suffered from shock, pain and loss of blood. But instead of actually dying, He only fainted (swooned) from exhaustion. When He was placed in the tomb, He was still alive and the disciples, mistaking Him for dead, buried Him alive. After several hours, He recovered when placed in the cool air of the tomb, amid the fragrant spices, arose, and departed.

### *2.3.2 The refutation*

This theory completely ignores the evidences of His death and would require a greater miracle than the resurrection. According to this theory, the cool damp air of the tomb, instead of killing Him, healed Him,

He split out of His garments, pushed the stone away, fought off the guards and shortly thereafter appeared to His disciples as the Lord of life. Do you believe such ridiculous theory?

This theory is unreliable due to the following reasons:

1. the linen wrappings;
2. the circumstances of the Cross;
3. the obstacles to His escape from the tomb; and
4. the physical condition of Christ after crucifixion.

### *2.3.2.1 **The linen wrapping***

> *"He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying" (Matthew 28:6).*
>
> *"And he said to them, 'Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him'" (Mark 16:6).*
>
> *"But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at that which had happened" (Luke 24:12).*
>
> *"stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed" (John 20:5-8).*

The swoon theory cannot answer the problem of the linen wrappings lying undisturbed, exactly as they had been when around the body of Christ. Christ would have had to perform a miracle of wiggling out of the wrappings which were wound tightly about the body with over a hundred pounds of spices in the wrappings without someone to help unwrap Him, as in the case of Lazarus in John 11:41-44.

### *2.3.2.2 **The circumstance of the Cross***

> *"The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the Cross on the Sabbath for that Sabbath was a high day, asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows*

*that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe" (John 19:31-35).*

*"Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph" (Mark 15:43-45).*

These circumstances proved Christ died. Christ's body was pierced by the soldier's spear, and blood and water had gushed out. The centurion, experienced in crucifixions, gave a death certificate (John 19:33). He was dead in the judgment of the soldiers, in the judgment of Pilate, in the judgment of the Jews who requested the guard for the tomb, and in the judgment of the women who went to the tomb to further prepare the body by heaping spices over the body.

### *2.3.2.3 The obstacles to His escape from the tomb*

If Christ had only swooned, He still would have still been half dead. Even though it is difficult for a healthy man to escape from the tomb under these conditions. Think of the obstacles to His escape from the tomb:

1. split out of His garments;
2. the sealed door;
3. pushed the huge stone away; and
4. fought off the Roman guards over the tomb.

### *2.3.2.4 <u>The physical condition of Christ after crucifixion</u>*

His crucifixion had been preceded by the agony in the garden Gethsemane and the merciless scourging that had so exhausted Him that He staggered under the weight of the Cross. As the Lord Jesus Christ endured with the beatings and crucifixion, a great deal of time would have been needed for recuperation. It is impossible that one who had just come forth from the grave half-dead, who crept about weak and ill, who stood in need of medical treatment and bandaging, strengthening and tender care, could do the following things:

1. in His weakened condition He could not have walked the seven miles on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:13); and
2. shortly thereafter He could not have appeared to His disciples as the conqueror over death and the Prince of Life.

### *2.3.3 Comments*

It would have been impossible for someone, who had only resuscitated from the agonies, to so quickly

give the impression that He was the Conqueror of death and the Prince of Life. In fact it was this belief which turned the disciples around and became the foundation of the rest of their ministries. It is obvious that this theory is wrong.

### 2.4 The Mistaken Tomb Theory

#### *2.4.1 The theory defined*

It has been suggested that the women went to the wrong tomb because their eyes were blinded with tears.

#### *2.4.2 The refutation*

This is most unlikely due to the following reasons:

1. the women had been present at the entombment on Friday and had observed the tomb (Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55-56);
2. if the women mistook the tomb, then Peter and John must also have mistaken it (Luke 24:12; John 20:3-8); and
3. Jesus was buried in a private tomb (Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42), not in a public burial ground where such a mistake might be easy.

### 2.5 The Unknown Tomb Theory

#### *2.5.1 The theory defined*

The disciples did not know where the tomb was located and could not have found the empty grave. This theory depends on the belief that those who were crucified were tossed into a common pit and were not allowed to be buried.

#### *2.5.2 The refutation*

This theory also disregards totally the straightforward historical narrative about the events surrounding Christ's burial and the post-resurrection scene:

1. Joseph of Arimathea took the body to his own private tomb (Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42);
2. the body of Christ was prepared for burial according to the burial customs of the Jews (John 19:40);
3. the women sat opposite the tomb and watched (Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55-56); and
4. not only did Joseph of Arimathea and the women know where the tomb was, so did the Romans as they placed a guard there (Matthew 27:66).

## 2.6 The Hallucination Theory

### *2.6.1 The theory defined*

This theory says all of Christ's post-resurrection appearances were really only supposed appearances because actually the people only had hallucinations. In this way, all the post-resurrection appearances can be dismissed. Did the excitement of the disciples induce hallucinations? Did they only think they saw Jesus because they were already persuaded He was alive?

### *2.6.2 The refutation*

This theory is not plausible due to the following reasons:

1. Jesus appeared at least ten times in forty days;
2. the disciples were slow to believe in the resurrection; and
3. it contradicts laws and principles which psychiatrists say are essential to hallucinations.

#### *2.6.2.1 Jesus appeared at least ten times in forty days*

According to the Bible, Jesus appeared at least ten times in forty days, including:

1. to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18);
2. to other women (Matthew 28:9-10);
3. to the Roman guards (Matthew 28:11-15);
4. to Peter (Luke 24:33-35; 1 Corinthians 15:5);
5. to the two disciples on the Emmaus road (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32);
6. to the ten apostles excluding Thomas (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25);
7. to the eleven apostles including Thomas (Mark 16:14; John 20:26-31; 1 Corinthians 15:5);
8. to the seven apostles besides the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-14);
9. conversation with Peter (John 21:15-25);
10. to the disciples on the Galilee mountain (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:6);
11. to the five hundred brethren (1 Corinthians 15:6);
12. to James, the Lord's half brother (1 Corinthians 15:7);
13. to the eleven apostles at Olivet in Jerusalem (Luke 24:44-49);
14. at the Ascension (Luke 24:50-53; Mark 16:19-20; Acts 1:6-11);
15. to Stephen (Acts 7:56); and
16. to Paul (1 Corinthians 15:8).

How could so many people have the same hallucination at one time, especially the five hundred brethren (1 Corinthians 15:6)? Furthermore, the appearances happened under different conditions and were spread out over different times.

### *2.6.2.2 The disciples were slow to believe in the resurrection*

And, don't forget, the disciples were reluctant to believe in the resurrection in the first place! This involves a miracle of blindness to reason away the resurrection.

> *"And when they heard that He was alive, and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. And after that, He appeared in a different form to two of them, while they were walking along on their way to the country. And they went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either. And afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:11-14).*

> *"And these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at that which had happened" (Luke 24:11-12).*

> *"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' " (John 20:24-25).*

### *2.6.2.3 It contradicts laws and principles which psychiatrists say are essential to hallucinations*

This theory contradicts laws and principles which psychiatrists say are essential to hallucinations. Psychiatrists claim:

1. Only certain kinds of people have hallucinations. These are usually high-strung, highly imaginative, and very nervous people. In fact, usually only paranoid or schizophrenic individuals have hallucinations. But Christ appeared to many different types of people. His appearances were not restricted to people of any particular psychological make up.

2. Hallucinations are linked in an individual's subconscious - to his particular past experiences and this was certainly not a part of any past experience.

3. Hallucinations are usually restricted to when and where they occur. They usually occur in a nostalgic atmosphere or in a place of familiar surroundings which places the person to a reminiscing mood.

4. They occur in people when there is a spirit of anticipation or hopeful expectation. The historical record shows no such anticipation existed. They were prone to disbelieve even after they were told

of the resurrection.

5. Hallucinations increase in frequency and intensity, but in this case they decreased and shortly ceased entirely. Jesus appeared at least ten times in forty days, and then His appearances ceased as abruptly as they had begun.

## 2.7 The Impersonation Theory

### *2.7.1 The theory defined*

This is the view that the appearances were not really Christ at all, but someone impersonating Him. This, the opponents say, is evident because in some cases they did not recognize Him at first (or at all).

### *2.7.2 The refutation*

This theory is unsatisfactory due to the following reasons:

1. The disciples were reluctant to believe in the resurrection, were doubtful and would have been hard to convince unless it was really Him, as was the case with Thomas (Mark 16:11-14; Luke 24:11-12; John 20:24-25).

2. It would have been impossible to impersonate Christ's wounds. This was Christ's proof to Thomas that it was really Him (cf. John 20:24f).

3. At times their inability to recognize Him was a phenomenon of His glorified body brought about by His own purposes as in Luke 24:16, "But their eyes were restricted that they should not recognize Him."

4. These men had traveled with the Lord for three years and it is incredible that anyone could have gotten away with an impersonation particularly due to their reluctance to believe.

5. They were meeting in locked chambers in some instances, and He suddenly appeared in His glorified body. No one could impersonate such a miraculous act other than the resurrected Christ.

## 2.8 The Spiritual Resurrection Theory

### *2.8.1 The theory defined*

This is the view that Christ's resurrection was not a real physical resurrection. Proponents of this theory assert that Christ's body remained in the grave and His real resurrection was spiritual in nature. It was only told this way to illustrate the truth of spiritual resurrection.

### *2.8.2 The refutation*

This theory is unsatisfactory due to the following reasons:

1. A physical body did disappear from the tomb. If it was only a spiritual resurrection, then what happened to the body? History shows there was a body there and it disappeared. The enemies of Christ were never able to produce the body nor disprove the resurrection.

2. The resurrection accounts are not presented in parabolic or symbolic language, but as hard fact. John 20 is full of what Greek grammarians call vivid historical present tenses to stress the historical reality of the Gospel message.

3. Christ not only arose, but that He arose bodily. He possessed a glorified body which had unique capacities. The Scripture calls it a spiritual body, but it was nevertheless a physical body as well.(1 Corinthians 15:44).

4. His body was glorious and unique, but nevertheless, still a body according to which our bodies will one day be fashioned. So, it was spiritual, glorified, and yet a physical body of flesh and bone (Philippians 3:21).

5. The record states He was touched and handled, He could appear in different forms (Mark 16:12), He could pass through solid objects (John 20:19, 26), He could pass in a moment from one place to another (Luke 24:31), and He even ate with the disciples (Luke 24:30, 41f; John 21:12f).

## 2.9 The Mythical Theory

### *2.9.1 The theory defined*

This view asserts that Jesus' resurrection was a myth created by the early church to maintain and grow the significance of Jesus' teaching and death.

### *2.9.2 The refutation*

This was not just a theological myth which began circulating 20 or 30 years later among the followers of Jesus Christ. It was a message proclaimed immediately beginning with the morning of the third day. It was a message based upon the following incontrovertible evidences:

1. It was clearly recorded in secular history (see Section 1 of this Chapter).

2. It was clearly recorded in the New Testament (Matthew 28:9-20; Mark 16:9-20; Luke 24:9-53; John 20:11-31; 21:1-25; Acts 1:6-11; 21-22; 2:23-24; 31-32; 3:14-15; 7:56; 10:39-41; 13:29-39; 17:30-31; 26:22-23; 1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

3. Dr. Luke, who lived in the time of Jesus Christ and who had personally talked to many eye witnesses, tells us that he had carefully examined the evidence (cf. Luke 1:1-2).

4. Notice how the book of Acts begins, *"The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God"* (Acts 1:1-3). "**Convincing proofs**" in verse 3 is the Greek *tekmerion* means "a fixed and sure sign, evidence, or proof." The word was used of demonstrable proof and evidence in contrast to mere philosophical superstition or in contrast to fallible signs. Here Dr. Luke, the historical physician, chooses this special word for sure historical proof, the strongest type of legal evidence. In addition to this Luke adds to this word "**many**." Dr. Luke tells us that there were many demonstrable and incontrovertible proofs, not merely one or two, but many.

5. Jesus appeared at least ten times in forty days, the presence of a lot of eyewitnesses mitigates against such an interpretation (see Section 2.6.2.1 of this Chapter).

6. If the disciples had indeed invented such myth, why would they be willing to experience torture and death for what they knew was a lie?

7. The disciples, as portrayed in the Gospel records, appear to be less than able to spawn a movement based upon a myth (cf. Matthew 4:18; Acts 4:13).

8. This so-called "myth" began early in the church (1 Corinthians 15:3). If it began early in the church, and had no real basis in history whatsoever, it is difficult to see how it could have been propagated for any length of time.

## 2.10 The Subjective Vision Theory

### *2.10.1 The theory defined*

This view asserts that Jesus appeared to the disciples in dreams. From this, it is thought, the resurrection narratives developed.

### *2.10.2 The refutation*

The problems with this view are as follows:

1. There is no evidence that they had any dreams along these lines.

2. The disciples do not ever understand anything Jesus is supposed to have said about the resurrection during his ministry. It is unlikely, given the disciples lack of spiritual understanding during Jesus' life, that they would all of a sudden postulate a resurrection.

3. Their condition was one of defeat and discouragement and it is therefore difficult to think that they

would have become such great preachers of the faith on the basis of dreams.

4. It is difficult to believe that they would have dreamed of Jesus' personal resurrection when all they really had to go on was the general resurrection at the time of judgment spoken of in Daniel 12:2 (cf. John 5:28, 29).

5. Based upon the criterion of Palestinian environment and their religious knowledge and heritage, it seems unlikely that they would have dreamed such things.

## 2.11 The Objective Vision Theory

### *2.11.1 The theory defined*

This proposal claims that the resurrection appearances of Jesus were simply visions given by God to authenticate Jesus' spiritual resurrection. Some attempt to base this interpretation upon the use of the word "appeared" in 1 Corinthians 15:5 to refer to a vision, not a historical, bodily person.

### *2.11.2 The refutation*

This appears unlikely, given the context and argument of the passage:

1. It is the same Jesus who died (i.e. the literal man), who is said to have been buried and then risen (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4).

2. The hope of the believer's resurrection body is the resurrection of Jesus' body. This is clearly the argument of the passage (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:12, 15, 20 and especially v. 21) and rests upon the presupposition of a literal, bodily resurrection, not just a spiritual resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12-22).

## 2.12 Comments

It is noteworthy that none of these supposed explanations is accepted generally today by those who deny the resurrection. No single one has ever gained general and lasting approval. None of these natural theories adequately deals with the evidence of the known facts that surrounded the resurrection of our Lord. We are forced back to the simple conclusion that fits all the facts and agrees with all the records - the body of Christ was actually raised from the dead. His was no mere "spiritual resurrection," nor were His appearances mere spiritual manifestations (Luke 24:36-43).

## 2.13 The True Explanation

He appeared in His resurrection body, not in the dusk but in lighted rooms in the light of day, visible and tangible. He appeared in the same body in which He had been entombed, but possessed new characteristics. It was easily recognizable, but could become unrecognizable or invisible at will (John

20:14-15; 21:4, 12). It transcended doors (John 20:26). Unlike that of Lazarus, who was raised to die again, the body of Jesus was immortal (Romans 6:9-10).

The evidence says He arose and this resurrection marks Him out as the Son of God (Romans 1:4), as the Savior of the world and the means of justification and peace with God through personal faith in Christ (Romans 4:25-5:1). With Paul we can cry with glad assurance, "Now is Christ risen from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

## 3. OBJECTIVE EVIDENCES FOR THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

There are always those who say the historical fact of a physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is not important. Others have advocated "you do not need to believe in the resurrection, just accept Jesus as a great leader and as an example of love, kindness and peace."

This kind of thinking is pure non-sense, illogical, and contrary to the facts of the life of Christ. If we take away the resurrection, then Jesus Christ was not even a good human leader, but a human monstrosity who was on the level with a man who thinks he is Captain Marvel. Either he was the world's greatest deceiver and deserved to die, or He was who He claimed to be, the God-Man Savior of the world. And it is the resurrection which makes the difference.

I will concentrate on the following remarkable and important evidences:

1. the manner in which the event is recorded bears evidence of its truth;
2. the life of Christ demands such a climax;
3. the evidence of the empty tomb;
4. the evidence of the grave clothes;
5. the evidence of Christ's Appearances;
6. the evidence of the transformed disciples;
7. the evidence of Pentecost;
8. the transformation and witness of Paul;
9. the existence of the church;
10. the observance of the Lord's day (i.e. Sunday);
11. the New Testament itself;
12. the Old Testament prophecies; and
13. the prophecies of Christ Himself.

### 3.1 The Manner in Which the Event is Recorded Bears Evidence of its Truth

The manner in which the event is recorded bears evidence of its truth. Exaggeration is avoided, and the blindness and ignorance of the disciples are artlessly recorded. Referring to the records, *H.C.G. Moule*

wrote,

> "These unexplained details, just because they are unexplained, coming one after another as they do, set down so simply and without anxiety, yet minutely, carry the very tone and accent of eyewitnesses. We seem to stand there watching; the whole motion of the scene is before us. All is near, real, natural, visible."

### 3.2 The Life of Christ Demands Such a Climax

If we believe He was supernaturally conceived, lived without sin, died a voluntary, atoning death, then the resurrection is easy to believe. Without it, a perfect life would end in a shameful death, surely an inappropriate close. The resurrection cannot be isolated from all that preceded it.

### 3.3 The Evidence of Empty Tomb

> *"Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow; and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men" (Matthew 28:1-4).*
>
> *"And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?' And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large" (Mark 16:1-4).*
>
> *"And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb" (Luke 24:2).*
>
> *"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.' Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb. And the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did*

*not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (John 20:1-9).*

### *3.3.1 The seal on the stone*

The seal set on the stone (Matthew 27:62-66). As claimed by the Pharisees, this was requested of Pilate to guard against any kind of fraud or lies by the disciples of Jesus Christ. In doing this, however, they provided two more excellent evidences for Christ's resurrection. Unwittingly, they prepared an unanswerable refutation to their own claims in their attempt to discredit the account of the resurrection (cf. Matthew 28:11-15).

The seal included two things:

1. a Roman guard; and
2. a seal consisting of a cord set in wax around the stone where it was connected to the tomb.

*"You have a guard: go, make it as secure as you know how" (Matthew 27:65).*

Some have claimed that Pilate was refusing the request for a Roman guard and telling them to use their own temple guard. But the verb used can be an imperative, "take a guard, make it as sure as you know how." It can also mean he was giving them permission to have a Roman guard.

The word "guard" is the Greek word *kustodia*, from the Latin or Roman *custodia*. The use of this particular word would indicate a Roman guard and not the Jewish temple guard. This is further verified by the fact they ask Pilate for a guard. If they could have used their own guards why go to Pilate? Also, if only the temple guards were involved, the statements of verse 14 would have been unnecessary. No one would have to talk to the governor nor bribe anyone.

Why was this important? Because the presence of Roman soldiers at the tomb and the Roman seal over the stone door made the possibility of the religious leaders' claims many times more difficult, if not impossible. The likelihood that these timid, fearful Galilean disciples could or would steal the body of Jesus out from under the noses of a guard of highly disciplined and skilled Roman soldiers is not only ridiculous, but impossible. Even had the soldiers been asleep, think of the noise the disciples would have made trying to removed the huge stone covering the entrance to the tomb!

### *3.3.2 The stone rolled away*

The tombs in Palestine were somewhat like a cave hewn out of the rocky side of a mountain or hill. They consisted of a rectangular opening into a main room or central chamber with a niche carved into the side of one of the inner walls where the body was placed. At one end was a special elevated place for the head.

The opening of the central chamber was covered by a large circular stone or heavy disc of rock set in a slanting groove so that when the stone was released it would roll by its own weight and cover the

entrance. Because of its enormous weight (possibly several tons) it would require the combined efforts of several men to move the stone back up the groove and block it. But who would roll away the stone?

It has been pointed out that there are only two alternatives. The body was either removed by:

1. human; or
2. superhuman hands.

The former must have been the hands of enemies or of friends. The enemies (i.e. the Jewish religious leaders) **would not**, and the friends (i.e. the disciples and the women) **could not** remove it:

1. The Jewish religious leaders would not remove it for it was their purpose to keep His body there and the door sealed (Matthew 27:62-66).

2. The Jewish religious leaders could not remove it because of the Roman guards and the huge stone.

3. If the Jewish religious leaders had removed the body, then why did they not produce the body if it was not raised, and thus silence His disciples forever? To produce the body would be the end of Christianity, for "the church of Christ is built on an empty tomb."

4. The disciples would not remove it for they did not expect Him to rise (Mark 16:11-14; Luke 24:11-12; John 20:24-25).

5. The disciples could not remove it because of the Roman guards and the huge stone.

6. If the disciples had removed the body they did so without the knowledge of the women, why they came back to the tomb (John 20:2-4)? Please tell me why they did not escape? Since the Roman guards were present, the guards would arrest the disciples if they had stolen the body.

7. The women would not remove it. Upon seeing the stone removed, Mary's immediate reaction is that thieves, perhaps the Jews, have taken the body (John 20:1-2). Without entering as the other women did, she returns to Peter and John. Her conclusion - *"they have taken the Lord"* (probably referring to the Jews).

8. The women could not remove the huge stone. As they came to the tomb the morning of the resurrection, they were wondering, who would role away the stone for them (Mark 16:2-8).

According to the above reasons, the only possible option is by superhuman hands. Matthew 28:2-4 tells us the stone was removed by an angel of the Lord. This shows divine intention. It was not rolled away so Christ could leave because he could pass through the walls in His glorified body (cf. John 20:19-20). By divine purpose it was removed to call attention to the testimony of the empty tomb. **The tomb had been opened not to let Jesus out - but to let people in.**

Why did people need to get in? Because within the tomb itself lay some astounding evidence to the fact of

the resurrection of Jesus, the witness of the grave cloths.

### 3.4 The Evidence of the Grave Clothes

> *"Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb. And the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (John 20:3-9).*

#### *3.4.1 John's observations*

John arrived first and saw the linen wrappings. The verb used (the Greek *blepo*) describes the simple exercise of sight, a single look or glance. At just a casual glance what caught John's eye were the undisturbed wrappings, lying in their natural position as when around the body. The word order makes this evident, "lying" is first. Even a casual glance caught this.

When John enters the tomb, what he sees brings immediate understanding, intelligent comprehension of the facts. The word for sight in this verse denotes mental perception resulting principally from the vision.

Peter is pondering all he has observed, but not John. Having now seen the witness of the empty tomb, he understands that His Lord has risen from the dead. In verse 9 we are told he understands and believes. Now he understands the Old Testament Scripture and Christ's own words concerning Messiah being cut off, but returning and reigning by means of the resurrection. (cf. Psalm 16:10; Daniel 2; Daniel 7) Before they had not understood the Scripture or Christ's words. But now sight comes to John (cf. Luke 24:25-27, 44-47).

#### *3.4.2 Peter's observation*

Then Peter arrived and, in his impetuous way, entered immediately. The word "Beheld" is *theoreo.* This word denotes a purposeful and careful look, one which observes details, not just a casual look. What Peter observed were:

1. the linen wrappings lying undisturbed; and
2. the face napkin rolled up separately, as it had been when the body was prepared, suggesting that the head wrapping had partially retained its annular form.

Had a thief stolen the body he would have taken the body - linen wrappings and all.

Had the wrappings been removed from the body they would not have been in an undisturbed fashion. As previously described, there was a place for the body with an elevated ledge for the head. The head was wrapped separately from the body. If someone had removed these from the body, they would not have been lying as originally placed - the napkin separate in the place where the head had been and the other wrappings where the body had been - undisturbed.

Peter continued to ponder in his heart all he had observed.

### 3.5 The Evidence of Christ's Appearances

The personal appearances of Christ following His resurrection are another overwhelming historical proof. The women and the disciples saw, heard, and even touched the Lord. In fact, Jesus appeared at least ten times in forty days and at least 500 brethren saw him at one time, including:

1. to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18);
2. to other women (Matthew 28:9-10);
3. to the Roman guards (Matthew 28:11-15);
4. to Peter (Luke 24:33-35; 1 Corinthians 15:5);
5. to the two disciples on the Emmaus road (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32);
6. to the ten apostles excluding Thomas (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25);
7. to the eleven apostles including Thomas (Mark 16:14; John 20:26-31; 1 Corinthians 15:5);
8. to the seven apostles besides the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-14);
9. conversation with Peter (John 21:15-25);
10. to the disciples on the Galilee mountain (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:6);
11. to the five hundred brethren (1 Corinthians 15:6);
12. to James, the Lord's half brother (1 Corinthians 15:7);
13. to the eleven apostles at Olivet in Jerusalem (Luke 24:44-49);
14. at the Ascension (Luke 24:50-53; Mark 16:19-20; Acts 1:6-11);
15. to Stephen (Acts 7:56); and
16. to Paul (1 Corinthians 15:8).

### 3.6 The Evidence of the Transformed Disciples

A sudden change in people is a psychological fact that demands explanation. How can the radical change in the disciples be accounted for?

The disciples had seen their master die. And because of this, they had lost all hope. They were a demoralized band of men, plunged in despair. Yet they were down-trodden, utterly disheartened, and meeting in obscure places. They had lost faith in their cause.

But after the resurrection, shortly afterward, we find the disciples were joyous, fearless, again a united band, zealous for their cause, bearing public testimony, willing to suffer imprisonment and even death for

it. It is unlikely they would be willing to die for a lie.

Peter who denied the Lord when confronted by a young girl (Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:56-62; John 18:17, 25-27), boldly proclaimed the word at Pentecost in front of the same religious leaders who crucified Christ (Acts 2:14-42).

What produced this dramatic change? Overnight incredulous skeptics became ardent witnesses who never again yielded to doubt. Why, if not because Jesus did really appear to them?

When we consider the transformation of the disciples in connection with the silence of the Jews and their inability to produce the body of Christ or any evidence to the contrary, the events of Pentecost become another proof of Christ's resurrection.

### 3.7 The Evidence of Pentecost

Only 50 days following the death and resurrection, Peter preached the doctrine of the resurrection and thousands gathered to hear him. But the important point is he was preaching to people who had access to the tomb. The resurrection was not a new fact, and he was preaching its meaning from the Old Testament Scriptures (Psalm 16:8-10).

No one offered him a rebuttal. The Jews were silent - a silence which is as significant as the boldness of the speech of the disciples. Three thousand people who were in a position to know the facts about the resurrection of Christ believed and were saved. (Acts 2:41; 4:2-14).

### 3.8 The Transformation and Witness of Paul

Is it credible that a man of Paul's mentality and education, a man who had been a virulent persecutor of the church (Acts 7:57-60; 9:1-2, 21), should have come to believe the resurrection absolutely irrefutable if in reality it was not a fact? It was the fact that he had actually seen the Lord in His risen body (Acts 9:3-6) that provided the inspiration and motivation of his service (Acts 9:22, 28).

### 3.9 The Existence of the Church

The very existence of the church is tangible evidence. What brought into existence the first Christian community? It has been well said that Christianity died with Christ and was laid with Him in the tomb. The resurrection was accompanied by the indisputable resurrection of Christianity.

Great was the impression made upon the disciples by the life of Christ among them, but all their hopes were blasted when He was crucified. Nothing could have inspired these discouraged disciples to assemble themselves together for meditation and the worship of a master whom they regarded as dead. Their assemblies were the beginnings of the Christian church. Certainly nothing could have induced them to proclaim His name to their fellow Jews in the face of persecution but the absolute assurance that Christ

had risen from the dead.

Within fifty days of its occurrence, Peter was preaching the resurrection with great power and effect, and thereafter it became the most prominent theme of apostolic witness. If the risen Christ had not appeared to them, there would never have been a Christian church. This primitive belief is inexplicable if the resurrection is not a fact. Within twenty-five years of the event it was accepted as a fact by the whole church and in places as far removed from one another as Jerusalem and Rome.

The early church did not manufacture the resurrection belief, the resurrection created the church. Thus the Christian church can be accounted for only on the assumption of the physical resurrection of our Lord.

### 3.10 The Observance of the Lord's Day (i.e. Sunday)

The Lord's Day is another effect of the resurrection. Whence did this revolutionary idea derive? It is a remarkable thing that the apostles who were Jews should turn from the observance of their time-honored Sabbath Day, which had been given in Eden and been made a sign of their covenant relation with God (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12, 20), to Sunday worship. How came the day to be changed, not by decree, but by common consent? The origin of the Lord's Day can be accounted for only on the ground that the apostles changed it in honor of Christ's physical resurrection and with His approval. The event that achieved this revolutionary change was the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. The Lord's Day is the effect. The resurrection is the cause.

As early as AD 70, *Barnabas*, one of the early Fathers wrote:

> "We keep the Lord's Day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose from the dead."

### 3.11 The New Testament Itself

The New Testament itself is an effect of the resurrection. How could this book ever have been written if there had been no resurrection? If Jesus had remained buried in the grave, the story of His life and death would have remained buried with Him. The New Testament is obviously an effect of Christ's resurrection.

### 3.12 The Old Testament Prophecies

The manner of His death, burial and resurrection, had been clearly foretold in the Old Testament and were fulfilled in the following New Testament Scripture:

1. He was to die for others (compare Isaiah 53:5, 10-11 with Matthew 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-33);
2. He was to die with transgressors (compare Isaiah 53:12 with Matthew 27:38; Luke 23:32-33);
3. His enemies were to cast lots for His clothing (compare Psalm 22:18 with Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:23-24);
4. His hands and feet were to be pierced (compare Psalm 22:16 with Luke 23:33; John 19:23);

5. His side was to be pierced (compare Zechariah 12:10 with John 19:34);
6. vinegar and gall were to be given to Him (compare Psalm 69:21 with Matthew 27:34; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; John 19:28-30);
7. none of His bones was to be broken (compare Psalm 34:20 with John 19:33-36);
8. His burial in a rich man's tomb (compare Isaiah 53:9 with Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53); and
9. His resurrection (compare Psalm 16:8-10 with Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:1-7; Acts 2:25-32; 13:35-37).

### 3.13 The Prophecies of Christ Himself

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself predicted that He would be killed and be raised up on the third day (Matthew 12:39-40; 16:4, 21; 26:32; Mark 9:31; 10:32-34; 14:28; Luke 9:22, 44; 11:29-30; 18:31-33; John 2:19-22).

### 3.14 Conclusion

The evidences we've mentioned in this study are more than sufficient to show the validity of the resurrection. To deny it, in view of the evidence, one must not only deny his rational processes, but he must deny Christianity and the Scripture as valid and providing Salvation for mankind.

## 4. EXPERT EVIDENCES FOR THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Let’s consider the testimony of a few outstanding historians. These are testimonies of men who are some of the greatest minds of history - men who were specialists in gathering and evaluating historical evidence. Note the following six testimonies from the book **The Resurrection Factor**, pages 10-12:

1. Roman history scholar;
2. textual critic;
3. professor of ancient history;
4. legal authority;
5. attorney general; and
6. rationalistic lawyer.

### 4.1 Roman History Scholar

I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.

### 4.2 Textual Critic

*Brooke Foss Wescott*, an English scholar, said,

> "Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ. Nothing but the antecedent assumption that it must be false could have suggested the idea of deficiency in the proof of it."

### 4.3 Professor of Ancient History

*Dr. Paul L. Maier*, professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, concluded that,

> "If all the evidence is weighed carefully and fairly, it is indeed justifiable, according to the canons of historical research, to conclude that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was actually empty on the morning of the first Easter. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources, epigraphy or archaeology that would disprove this statement."

### 4.4 Legal Authority

One man who was highly skilled at dealing with evidence was *Dr. Simon Greenleaf*. He was the famous Royal Professor of Law at Harvard University and succeeded Justice *Joseph Story* as the Dane Professor of Law in the same university. The rise of Harvard law School to its eminent position among the legal schools of the United States is to be ascribed to the efforts of these two men. *Greenleaf* produced his famous three-volume work, **A Treatise on the Law of Evidence**, which still is considered one of the greatest single authorities on this subject in the entire literature of legal procedure.

*Greenleaf* examined the value of the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ to ascertain the truth. He applied the principles contained in his three-volume treatise on evidence. His findings were recorded in his book, **An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice**.

*Greenleaf* came to the conclusion that,

> "according to the laws of legal evidence used in courts of law, there is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than for just about any other event in history."

### 4.5 Attorney General

An Englishman, *John Singleton Copley*, better known as *Lord Lyndhurst*, is recognized as one of the greatest legal minds in British history. Upon *Copley*'s death, among his personal papers were found his comments concerning the resurrection in the light of legal evidence and why he became a Christian:

> "I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never broken down yet."

Lord Chief Justice of England, *Lord Darling*, once said that:

> "no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true."

### 4.6 Rationalistic Lawyer

*Dr. Frank Morrison*, a lawyer who had been brought up in a rationalistic environment, had come to the opinion that the resurrection was nothing but a fairy-tale happy ending which spoiled the matchless story of Jesus. He felt that he owed it to himself and others to write a book that would present the truth about Jesus and dispel the mythical story of the resurrection.

Upon studying the facts, however, he, too, came to a different conclusion. The sheer weight of the evidence compelled him to conclude that Jesus actually did rise from the dead. *Morrison* wrote his book - but not the one he had planned. It is titled, **Who Moved the Stone?** The first chapter, very significantly, is, "The Book That Refused to Be Written."

### 4.7 Conclusion

All this wonderful evidence exists in spite of the security precautions taken by both the Jews and the Romans to make sure Jesus was dead and remained in the tomb. These included things like the Roman seal that was broken, the heavy stone that covered the door but was removed, and the Roman guard of soldiers who were there to guard the tomb. All this makes the evidence that much more remarkable.

## 5. THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Does it matter very much whether or not Christ rose from the dead? To read Paul's letters will leave us in no doubt as to the centrality and importance of this article of our faith.

> *"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God ... ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:14-15, 17-19).*

The doctrine of the resurrection is central in the Christian faith, not peripheral. To deny it is to remove the keystone of the arch of Christianity. Without it, the crucifixion of our Lord would have been in vain, for it was the resurrection that validated and gave saving value to the atoning death.

Of all the great religious, Christianity alone bases its claim to acceptance on the resurrection of its Founder. If it is not a fact, our preaching is emptied of content. Instead of being a dynamic message, it merely enshrines a fragrant memory. Our faith is without a factual basis and is therefore empty. The Scripture writers become suppliers of intentional lies, and the Scriptures themselves unreliable. Deliverance from the penalty and power of sin is no more than a mirage, and the future life still shrouded in midnight darkness. Thus Paul makes Christianity answer with its life for the truth of the resurrection.

If this doctrine means much to the believer, it is no less important to the Lord Himself. If the resurrection can be disproved, He is for ever discredited as Redeemer and Son of God, for He frequently appealed to His future resurrection as evidence of the truth of His claims:

> *"As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40).*

### 5.1 The Importance of Christ's Resurrection

The resurrection of Christ is of paramount importance for the several reasons:

1. It is the central truth of the Gospel.
2. It is the central truth of Christianity.
3. It has an important part in the application of Salvation.
4. It is important as an exhibition of divine power.

#### *5.1.1 It is the central truth of the Gospel*

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul includes the resurrection as one of two essential truths of the gospel message; that He died and was buried, and that He was raised and appeared to many. Further, a casual glance at the preaching of the apostles in the book of Acts reveals the fact that the resurrection was not only a vital element, but was usually the emphasis of each message. This is not surprising, for only a living Jesus can save men from the penalty and the power of sin!

#### *5.1.2 It is the central truth of Christianity*

> *"... if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain ... and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins ..." (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).*

The resurrection is essential to the gospel message because it is the central truth of the Christian faith. In 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 Paul shows that everything stands or falls with Christ's bodily resurrection:

1. if Christ has not risen, preaching is vain (v. 14);
2. the Corinthians' faith was vain (v. 14);
3. the apostles were false witnesses (v. 15);
4. the Corinthians were yet in their sins (v. 17);
5. those fallen asleep in Jesus have perished (v. 18); and
6. Christians are of all men most to be pitied (v. 19).

All through the book of Acts the emphasis of the apostolic preaching was upon the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 10:40; 13:30-37; 17:31). This can be noted in Paul's Epistles as well (Romans 4:24f.; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:4; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 2:8), and other New Testament Epistles (1 Peter 1:21; 3:21; Revelation 1:5; 2:8). The resurrection is clearly the central truth of Christianity.

### *5.1.3 It has an important part in the application of Salvation*

God raised Him up and exalted Him to His own right hand that He might be the head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:20-22). It was necessary for Him to rise because He could baptize the believer in the Holy Spirit (John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 2:32f.; 11:15-17; 1 Corinthians 12:13; cf. John 14:16-19; 15:26; 16:7). His death, resurrection, and ascension are preparatory to His bestowing gifts on men (Ephesians 4:7-13). And He must rise to be a Prince and Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel (Acts 5:31). Paul sums it all up when he says that while Christ's death reconciled us to God, His present life perfects our Salvation (Romans 5:8-10). The resurrection is essential to the application of the Salvation provided for in the death of Christ.

### *5.1.4 It is important as an exhibition of divine power*

The standard of divine power often expressed in the Old Testament was the power with which the Lord brought Israel out of the land of Egypt. The annual Passover was a reminder of God's mighty hand (Exodus 12). In the New Testament the standard power is the power God exhibited in the resurrection of Christ. It was impossible for Christ to be held in death's power (Acts 2:24). This same power which raised Christ from the dead is available to Christians. Paul prayed that the believers might know "what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe ... in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the Heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:18-20).

## 5.2 The Nature of Christ's Resurrection

The nature of Christ's resurrection was as follows:

1. It was an actual resurrection.
2. It was a bodily resurrection.
3. It was a unique resurrection.

### *5.2.1 It was an actual resurrection*

Christ actually died, is evident from the fact that:

1. the centurion and the soldiers declared Him to be dead (Mark 15:45; John 19:33);
2. blood and water flowed from His opened side (John 19:34);
3. the women came with the expectation of anointing a dead body (Mark 16:1);
4. the disciples assumed He was dead and His resurrection greatly surprised them (Matthew 28:17; Luke 24:37f.; John 20:3-9);
5. He did not appear to His disciples on the third day in a weakened condition, but as a mighty conqueror of death; and
6. Christ Himself declared that He was dead but now is alive forevermore (Revelation 1:18).

### *5.2.2 It was a bodily resurrection*

Several things prove that Christ arose bodily:

1. Jesus Himself declared after His resurrection that He had flesh and bones (Luke 24:39).
2. Matthew declared that the women who met Christ on the resurrection morning held Him by the feet (Matthew 28:9).
3. David prophesied by the Spirit that Christ's flesh would not see corruption (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:31).
4. The tomb was empty and the grave-clothes were in order when the disciples examined the tomb (Mark 16:6; John 20:5-7).
5. Christ partook of food in the presence of His disciples after He had arisen (Luke 24:41-43).
6. Jesus was recognized by His own after the resurrection, even to the imprint of the nails (Luke 24:34-39; John 20:25-28).
7. Jesus predicted that He would rise bodily (Matthew 12:40; John 2:19-21).
8. The angels in the tomb declared that He had arisen as He had said (Luke 24:6-8).
9. Many Scriptures would be unintelligible on the theory that His was a spiritual resurrection (John 5:28f.; 1 Corinthians 15:20; Ephesians 1:19f.).

### *5.2.3 It was a unique resurrection*

The son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17-24), the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4:18-37), Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-43), the young man of Nain (Luke 7:11-17), Lazarus (John 11:1-44), Tabitha (Acts 9:36-43), and Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12) undoubtedly all died again. Surely, they did not receive the resurrection body as Christ did. Concerning Christ's resurrection body, several things must be mentioned:

1. It was a real body. It could be and was touched (Matthew 28:9); it had flesh and bones (Luke 24:39).

2. It was recognized as the same body, not another. Christ Himself mentioned His opened side (John 20:27). It appears that these marks of His passion will be visible even at His second coming (Zechariah 12:10; Revelation 1:7). At different times we are told that His own recognized Him after the resurrection (Luke 24:41-43; John 20:16, 20; 21:7).

3. Yet His body was in some respects different after the resurrection. He passed through closed doors (John 20:19), and undoubtedly He did not need to eat and sleep after that time.

4. He is now alive forevermore (Romans 6:9f.; 2 Timothy 1:10; Revelation 1:18).

### 5.3 The Results of Christ's Resurrection

The results of Christ's resurrection are as follows:

1. It proves the deity of Christ.
2. It assures the acceptance of Christ's work.
3. It has made Christ our high priest.
4. It provides a basis for justification.
5. It provides the basis for a new life for the believer.
6. It guarantees the resurrection of all believers.
7. It provides men with a living hope.
8. It prepares the way for Christ to sit on the throne of David.
9. It provides assurance of judgment.

#### *5.3.1 It proves the deity of Christ*

Jesus demonstrated His deity in the miracles He performed, in His authoritative teaching, and in His display of knowledge. But none of these demonstrations of deity would be remembered today if death had defeated Him. Paul teaches that Christ *"was declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4). Christ had pointed forward to His resurrection as a sign that would be given the people of Israel (Matthew 12:38-40; John 2:18-22), and Paul declares that it was a sign of His deity.

#### *5.3.2 It assures the acceptance of Christ's work*

Paul writes that Christ *"was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification"* (Romans 4:25). We can have the confidence that God has accepted Christ's sacrifice because He has risen from the dead.

#### *5.3.3 It has made Christ our high priest*

Through His resurrection from the dead, He became the intercessor, executive, and protector of His people (Romans 5:9f.; 8:34; Ephesians 1:20-22; 1 Timothy 2:5f.). He not only delivers from bondage, but He also intercedes for His people in times of need.

### *5.3.4 It provides a basis for justification*

The provision for justification was made when Jesus Christ died on the Cross. By paying the penalty (propitiation) for sin, He provided forgiveness for sinners. Thus, God can justly declare the one who repents righteous (justification) on the basis of his faith in Christ.

Romans 4:25 states that He was "delivered up **because of** our transgressions, and was raised **because of** our justification". His death was necessary to make payment for our sins, and according to this verse His resurrection was necessary for our justification.

### *5.3.5 It provides the basis for a new life for the believer*

First, Jesus' resurrection and ascension make Him the new authority ("head") over the believer (Ephesians 1:20-22). The authority of evil which used to bind us is broken, and our rightful authority is Christ.

Second, the believer participates in Jesus' resurrection by faith (Romans 6:1-11). God, by our faith, considers us to have died and risen again with Christ; His "death" removes us from the realm of sin, and His "resurrection" places us into the realm of righteousness. The believer must put himself into a frame of thinking in which this transfer from death to life is considered a fact every time he makes a decision (Romans 6:11). When this occurs, the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit is released to energize his efforts to obey God (Romans 8:1-11).

### *5.3.6 It guarantees the resurrection of all believers*

Paul actually argues in 1 Corinthians 15:12-18 that there is no point to the resurrection of Christ apart from the promise of the same kind of resurrection to those who belong to Christ.

Later, he declares, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

"First fruits" is an agricultural phrase for the early harvest which always served as a token and guarantee of the rest of the harvest. The first fruits indicated the quality and certainty of the rest of the harvest to follow.

### *5.3.7 It provides men with a living hope*

In 1 Peter 1:3 Peter points out we are begotten unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Thus we can see that by the resurrection, man is provided with a living hope because it depends on a living Savior. All other religious leaders are dead, Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius. The founders of religious cults are all in their tombs, their bodies rotting in the dust. Their followers have a dead hope, but they also have something else.

### *5.3.8 It prepares the way for Christ to sit on the throne of David*

The resurrection of Christ prepared the way for Him to sit on the throne of David in the coming kingdom (Acts 2:32-36; 3:19-25).

### *5.3.9 It provides assurance of judgment*

> *". . . according as He hath appointed a day in which he shall judge the inhabited earth by One whom He hath marked out having provided conviction for all men because he hath raised Him from the grave" (Acts 17:31).*

While the resurrection can provide assurance of salvation, a living hope, it also provides assurance of judgment because the resurrection marks Jesus Christ out as God's Son and God's provision of grace for our sin. The resurrection of Christ is God's concrete proof that there will be a judgment of the godly and ungodly (Acts 10:42; 17:31; cf. John 5:22). It assures the unbeliever of a second death just as it assures the believer of resurrection unto life. For those who reject Christ (God's manifested provision for Salvation) there is nothing left but to look fearfully for a day of judgment. The day of judgment has been appointed, and so has the judge.

The important question is, do you believe and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?

## 5.4 God's Solution for Man's Problem

God is perfect holiness (whose holy character we can never attain to by our own works of righteousness) but He is also perfect love and full of grace and mercy. Because of His love, grace and mercy He has not left us without hope and a solution.

> *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).*

This is the good news of the Bible, the message of the gospel. It's the message of the gift of God's own Son who became man (the God-man), lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sin, and was raised from the grave proving both the fact He is God's Son and the value of His death for us as our substitute (Romans 1:4; 4:25).

> *"He made Him who knew no sin {to be} sin on our behalf, that we might become the*

*righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).*

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

### 5.5 The All-Important Question

How then do we receive God's Son that we may have the eternal life God has promised us? What becomes the issue for us today?

*"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, {even} to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).*

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16-18).*

Because of what Jesus Christ accomplished for us on the Cross, the Bible states that *"He that has the Son has life."* We can receive the Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior by trusting in the person of Christ and His death for our sins. This means we must each come to God the same way - as a sinner who recognizes his sinfulness, repudiates any form of human works for salvation, and relies totally on Christ alone by faith alone for our salvation.

Would you trust in Christ today as your personal Savior? Just tell God that you know you need the Savior, Jesus Christ, and that you want to receive His Son by faith.

## 6. WHETHER OR NOT THE SHROUD OF TURIN IS THE BURIAL CLOTH OF CHRIST

This section is originated from **The Shroud of Turin and the Resurrection of Christ**, Biblical Studies Foundation, Internet Edition, 1998, by *J. Hampton Keathley III*. Below is a summary of the original passage.

### 6.1 What is the Shroud of Turin?

The Shroud of Turin is an ancient linen cloth 14 feet by 4 feet and hailed as the genuine burial garment of Jesus Christ. It supposedly contains the very image of Jesus Christ burned into the cloth by means of radiation created by His resurrection. The proponents of the Shroud claim the image stands up to

twentieth century analysis as being humanly impossible to "fake" or "duplicate."

The big question people are asking is, is it authentic? Many claim that it is. And many are claiming we have in it an outstanding proof for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, proof that has the seal of scientific research which ought to help skeptics to believe.

### 6.2 People's Problem

The problem people face concerning the resurrection is not the lack of evidence and never has been. People refuse to believe the resurrection of Christ because of their own **moral** and **spiritual** problems:

#### *6.2.1 Scripture teaches us the problem is moral*

> *"And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (John 3:19-21).*
>
> *"If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:17).*

#### *6.2.2 Scripture teaches us the problem is also spiritual*

> *"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 Corinthians 2:14).*
>
> *"in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4).*
>
> *"And he said, 'Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house - for I have five brothers - that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' "But he said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead'" (Luke 16:27-31).*

### 6.3 The Shroud of Turin Is Not a Sufficient Evidence to Prove the Resurrection of Christ

From the legal point of view, the Shroud of Turin is not a sufficient evidence to prove the resurrection of

Christ due to the following reasons:

1. Scientific methods, for example: radiocarbon-14 dating, may help us to determine the **approximate date** of the Shroud of Turin but it cannot be used to prove that the Shroud was the genuine burial garment of the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be a burial cloth of an **unknown corpse** in the 1st century.

2. Even though the Shroud was the genuine burial garment of the Lord Jesus Christ, it cannot be used to prove that He rose from the dead. It can only be used to prove that Jesus was really **buried**.

If we do not believe the resurrection of Christ as recorded in the Holy Bible, which is the Word of God, then how can we believe the resurrection event simply by a piece of burial cloth?

> *"'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead'" (Luke 16:31).*

### 6.4 Problems with Authenticity

Based on the historical evidence and the New Testament record, I think that the Shroud of Turin is not the burial cloth of Jesus Christ. Rather it is of human fabrication originally designed as a relic for personal profit by the exploitation of others. The reasons why I believe the Shroud of Turin is not authentic are as follows:

1. declared a forgery;
2. Jewish customs of burial speaks against it;
3. the problem of other shrouds; and
4. the problem of no New Testament witness.

#### *6.4.1 Declared a forgery*

About 1900, a letter was found in a collection of documents owned by Ulysse Chevalier. The letter was written in 1389 by the Bishop of Troyes, Bishop to the Anti-Pope of Avignon, Clement the VII. The letter explained that an investigation had exposed the artist who had painted the Shroud and he had confessed. Many were disturbed that the cloth was being used for financial gain. The letter further pointed out:

> "For many theologians and other wise persons declared that this could not be the real Shroud of our Lord, having the Savior's likeness thus imprinted upon it, since the holy Gospel made no mention of any such imprint; while, if it had been true, it was quite unlikely that the holy evangelist would have omitted to record it, or that the fact should have remained hidden until the present time."

#### *6.4.2 Jewish customs of burial speaks against it*

The Shroud of Turin is not authentic because it conflicts with Jewish customs of burial in the following ways:

1. the one burial cloth;
2. the separate cloth for the head;
3. the material and method of wrapping the body; and
4. the custom of washing the body.

### *6.4.2.1 The one burial cloth*

There is a conflict with the idea of only one burial cloth when it is clear that in the Jewish burial customs and in the New Testament record there were several pieces of cloth used in Christ's burial, not one 14 feet by 4 feet piece of material such as the Shroud.

### *6.4.2.2 The separate cloth for the head*

As was the custom of the day, John 20:5-7 shows that a separate piece of cloth was wrapped about the head of Christ. It was found by itself apart from the linen wrappings that were around the body of Christ. However, the Shroud of Turin is all one piece and depicts a face as well as the rest of the body on the cloth.

### *6.4.2.3 The material and method of wrapping the body*

Combining the accounts of the historical record of the New Testament teaches us that several pieces of cloth were used to wrap the body of Christ and they were in the form of "strips," and "wrappings," or "linen bandages" such as were used in the preparation of mummies.

Note the word "wrappings" is plural in John 19:39-42:

> *"And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen* ***wrappings*** *with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there" (John 19:39-42).*

"Linen wrappings" is the Greek word *othoniois* (plural of *othonion*) meaning "a piece of fine linen, a linen cloth."

"Linen wrapping" is the Greek word *sidon* meaning fine linen cloth used for swathing dead bodies or as a single garment or wrap as in Mark 14:51-52:

> *"And a certain young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he left the linen sheet behind, and escaped naked" (Mark 14:51-52).*

The Gospel accounts are all in agreement that the body was wrapped or enfolded (Matthew 27:59; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53; John 19:40). It is important to compare these accounts with John 11:42-44.

> *"And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me. And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.' He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'" (John 11:42-44)*

This was the Jewish custom. Even though when Christ was buried they had to hurry because of time, Joseph along with Nicodemus (and probably some servants since Joseph was a rich man) would have followed the Jewish custom of washing the body and wrapping it in mummy-like fashion with the spices between the folds of the wrappings.

The evidence of Scripture makes it clear that Jesus was wrapped in cloth when taken down from the Cross. That cloth was torn into strips, and then Jesus was bound with these linen strips, but He was not wrapped with a single piece of cloth like the Shroud.

The biblical authors of the Gospel accounts of the burial of the Lord never used two Greek words, *kalutto* (1 Kings 19:13) and *periballo* (Genesis 38:14). These words were used of garments such as the Shroud. Their failure to use these words is very significant and provide further evidence against the Shroud.

#### *6.4.2.4 **The custom of washing the body***

Another problem is that the Shroud proponents admit that its authenticity is dependent upon the body not being washed. This is important for two reasons:

1. The Shroud is supposed to contain dried blood. This alleged appearance of dried blood on the Shroud would suggest that the body was not washed.

2. Those who support the authenticity of the Shroud claim there is the need for morbid sweat to act as a refraction lens to focus the radiation, radiation that is supposed to have come from the risen body, to create the image on the cloth. This also would imply that the body was not washed.

It is claimed by proponents of the Shroud that there was not time to wash the body clean with water because of the approaching Sabbath. But this is a weak argument due to the following reasons:

1. The Scripture says they still had time to anoint the body with over a hundred pounds of spices.

2. In order to anoint the body with the spices, the body, according to Jewish custom, had to be washed.
3. A body could indeed be washed and anointed on the Sabbath according to Jewish law.
4. John would not and could not have said that the Jewish method of burial had been followed if it hadn't been washed.

### *6.4.3 The Problem of Other Shrouds*

Many people are not aware of the fact that after the Crusades many different Shrouds circulated throughout medieval Europe at the same time as the Shroud of Turin. It is estimated there are more than 40 "true shrouds" that were circulated. Many are still being displayed today.

### *6.4.4 The Problem of No New Testament Witness*

It is unthinkable that the Apostles and Christians of the first years of Christianity would not mention a cloth bearing the imprint of the crucified and resurrected Savior. The New Testament presents us with the evidences of the risen Christ. If this had occurred, it would have been mentioned with the other evidences such as the appearances of Christ and the description of the linen wrappings in the empty tomb.

## 6.5 Conclusion

The evidence from Scripture and from the facts surrounding the Shroud of Turin in no way support its authenticity. But we do not need it! The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was proved by the following remarkable evidences satisfactorily (see Section 3 of this Chapter):

1. the manner in which the event is recorded bears evidence of its truth;
2. the life of Christ demands such a climax;
3. the evidence of the empty tomb;
4. the evidence of the grave clothes;
5. the evidence of Christ's Appearances;
6. the evidence of the transformed disciples;
7. the evidence of Pentecost;
8. the transformation and witness of Paul;
9. the existence of the church;
10. the observance of the Lord's day (i.e. Sunday);
11. the New Testament itself;
12. the Old Testament prophecies; and
13. the prophecies of Christ Himself.

Indeed, Christ is risen from the dead and we do not need the Shroud of Turin to prove it.

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# Chapter Twenty Two - The Ascension and Present Ministry of Christ

Up to this point we have emphasized the work that Jesus Christ accomplished on earth. But His ministry to believers did not stop after His ascension. Jesus Christ entered Heaven to take His rightful place as Lord not only of the church, but of the entire universe. His position as our high priest means a great deal to our Salvation and Sanctification, and even now He is preparing an eternal place for us. These present ministries of Christ will be the central focus of this lesson.

This chapter, divided into six major divisions, is a careful study of the doctrine of the ascension of Christ:

1. We will examine the ministry of Christ during the period between His resurrection and His ascension;
2. We will examine the theological significance of the ascension of Christ;
3. We will examine the doctrine of the exaltation of Christ;
4. We will discuss the high priestly ministry of Christ;
5. We will discuss Christ as the head of the church; and
6. We will discuss Christ is preparing a place for believers.

## 1. THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST DURING THE PERIOD BETWEEN HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION (40 DAYS)

The activities of our Lord during the period between His resurrection and His ascension are not always accorded the place of importance they deserve. It will be our aim in this section to indicate the main purpose of His actions and appearances during those forty momentous days.

### 1.1 An Evidential value

His primary objective was to provide His disciples with incontrovertible evidence that death had not held its prey. "He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). He lingered long enough on earth to satisfy His followers of the truth of His resurrection, and they were not easily convinced. They had been "slow of heart to believe" (Luke 24:25) that the tomb was indeed empty, so He provided them with impressive proof of His survival.

The phrase "many infallible proofs" signifies the strongest proof of which a subject is capable. The very fact that the disciples were not in the least credulous and had to have their doubts thoroughly removed is

in itself proof of the most convincing kind that Jesus did rise and appear to them as Scripture records. And they were so completely convinced that they never doubted again.

Although it was at great cost and often against their personal interest, they bore courageous testimony to the resurrection, simply because their experience and observation compelled them to do so. He presented them with the signs of bodily identity in the scars in hands and feet and side - an evidence of identity that would be accepted in any court of law (John 20:27).

### 1.2 An Explanatory Value

The passage in Acts 1:1-8 is obviously a greatly condensed summary of Jesus' instructions to the men to whom He was entrusting the evangelization of the world. Luke, guided by the Spirit, has preserved for us the following important themes around which His teaching revolved:

1. **He gave a hint as to the nature of His kingdom in verses 3 and 7.** His appearances, disappearances, and re-appearances were designed to impress on them the fact that His kingdom was "not of this world" (John 18:36). They were anticipating a nationalistic kingdom of earthly glory. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Jesus would have them learn that henceforth their relationship with Him would be entirely on a spiritual basis. They must divest themselves of the idea of an immediate defeat of Rome and establishment of a Jewish kingdom. The timing of that event was God's concern, not theirs (Acts 1:7).

2. **He indicated the nature of the apostolic mission.** "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). His program was clearly defined and explicit. The word of their witness was to extend from Jerusalem as the centre in ever-widening circles until it had reached earth's remotest bound. The witness was to be as far as possible synchronous in each of the spheres mentioned. It should be noted that our Lord did not say, "First Jerusalem, then Judea and then Samaria," but "both Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth." They were not selfishly to hug their own spiritual privileges and blessings.

3. **He revealed to them the source of their power for such a stupendous, mind-stretching enterprise.** As He unfolded His plan, they might well have protested, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Corinthians 2:16). He revealed to them the source of their power beforehand: "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). He reminded them again of His provision: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." He was not going to leave them dependent on merely human resources for what was clearly a superhuman task.

### 1.3 An Evangelistic Value

Most of our Lord's post-resurrection appearances had some relation to the extension of His kingdom. He desired to infuse His followers with the missionary passion that blazed at white heat in His own breast.

The enterprise to which He was calling them extended to every nation, every community, every creature in the whole world (Matthew 28:20).

Notice the keynote of His conversations with His disciples in the following occasions:

1. **When He appeared to the ten**, His commission was, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). He invested them with the same authority as He had received from the Father. They were to be missionaries under His orders, even as He had been a missionary under His Father's direction. In the same interview He banished their fears by bestowing His peace, and imparted to them the Holy Spirit.

2. **To the seven on the sea of Tiberias** (John 21:1-2) He issued the symbolic command to those whom He had said were to become fishers of men, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship," Thus teaching them that only as much of their service as was Christ-directed would be successful in taking men alive. At the same time He instructed Peter - and incidentally the others - in the art of feeding both the sheep and the lambs of the flock.

3. **To the disciples on the mountain in Galilee** (Matthew 28:16-20) Jesus outlined His program of world evangelization. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, Io, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Here was a command both universal and individual, binding on all His followers in all ages.

4. **To the eleven at Jerusalem** (Luke 24:44-53) Jesus enjoined that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye shall witnesses of these things." He followed this at once with the command to tarry in Jerusalem until they had received the enduement of power that alone would enable them to encompass the staggering commission He had given them.

So on each occasion when He met His disciples, the great burden of His heart found expression. Only by their loving obedience could they enable Him to "see of the travail of His soul, and ... be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11).

The matters of which Jesus made no mention are equally striking and significant in our materialistic and computerized age. The financial problem which bulks so largely in our calculations was not even mentioned. Methods of organization, structure of the church, type of church buildings were alike ignored. But great emphasis was laid upon utter and absolute abandonment to His leading and devotion to His person as the motive power of evangelistic endeavor.

### 1.4 An Eschatological Value

Throughout all our Lord's conversations there was the underlying assumption that this evangelistic thrust was not to continue forever. It would lead to a glorious consummation. "Till I come" was the time factor

that Jesus used in speaking to Peter (John 22:21). He promised His presence "unto the end [for consummation] of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Those statements limited the scope of evangelistic opportunity to the period between our Lord's ascension and His second advent. Since that is so, we should seize with both hands such opportunities of reaching "every creature" in our generation as still remain.

## 2. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

The ascension of Christ refers to His going back to Heaven in His resurrection body. The ascension was closely linked to, and the logical outcome of, the resurrection. No more fitting climax could have been conceived for such a life as Christ lived. When He ascended, not a claim of God on mankind was left unsettled, and not a promise left in uncertainty. The spectacular method of His departure from earth was entirely consonant with the miraculous achievements of His life and work.

### 2.1 Objections to the Ascension of Christ

Modern criticism objects to the reality of the ascension mainly on the following two grounds:

1. They argue that our knowledge of the universe excludes the belief that Heaven is a definite place above and beyond the stars. But Scripture does not indicate where Heaven is, even though it represents it as a place as well as a state. Heaven is where God dwells, where the angels and the spirits of just men are, and where Christ went in a true body. Such a body must occupy space. The angels, not being infinite, cannot be present everywhere; they must be in some definite place. Likewise Christ said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

2. They argue that a tangible body is not adapted to a superterrestrial abode. But this is ignoring the fact that the stars and the planets are superterrestrial, and yet they are material. Paul says, "There are also Heavenly bodies and earthly bodies" (1 Corinthians 15:40). Admit the bodily resurrection of Christ, and the question of Jesus' bodily departure from this earth is not difficult. In fact, the bodily ascension of Christ is a necessary historical presupposition to belief in His bodily return, since He is to come back to earth as He went away, and to belief in our own bodily resurrection, since we shall be like Him.

### 2.2 The New Testament Teachings

The New Testament abundantly teaches that Christ ascended to Heaven after His resurrection. Matthew and John do not narrate the fact of the ascension. The story of the ascension of Christ is specifically described only three times:

1. With simple brevity Mark wrote, "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

2. "And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them" (Luke 24:50-51).

3. Luke adds a further touch in addition to the words at the head of this chapter, "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

Although these are the only detailed references to the episode, a lot of other New Testament books make reference to it:

1. Though John does not narrate the fact of Christ's bodily return to Heaven, he represents Christ as having clearly predicted it when He said, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" (John 6:62) or again, "I go unto Him that sent me" (John 7:33).
2. See also John 20:17; cf. 13:1; 15:26; 16:10, 16f., 28.
3. The psalmist wrote, "Thou hast ascended on high ... thou hast received gifts for men" (Psalm 68:18), Paul applies it to Christ (Ephesians 4:8).
4. Paul spoke of it (Ephesians 4:8-10; Philippians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16).
5. Peter spoke of it (1 Peter 3:22).
6. The writer to the Hebrews (Hebrews 4:14).

It is evident, therefore, that the early church regarded the ascension as a historical fact. It is a matter of surprise that so small a body of literature centers on this amazing and important event, especially as it has such far-reaching implications for the Christian. *W.H. Griffith Thomas* rightly claims that the ascension is not only a great historical fact of the New Testament, but a great factor in the life of Christ and Christians, since it is the consummation of His redemptive work.

**2.3 The Manner of the Ascension**

It was of tremendous importance that our Lord's final departure from earth should not be a mere vanishing out of their sight, as He did at Emmaus. This would result in uncertainty as to whether or not He might again appear. Accordingly, the ascension took place, not at night, but in broad daylight. "While they beheld" He rose from their midst, not because He must do so to go to His Father, but in order to make the act symbolic and intelligible to them.

Significantly, it was not at Bethelehem, or the Transfiguration mount, or even Calvary that the event took place, but at Bethany, the place of His sweetest earthly fellowship."On the chosen spot, at the chosen moment, the little church being gathered round Him, His extended hands still overshadowing their heads in blessing, and they watching the order of His going - so did He leave them. He went up into Heaven in the entireness of His well-known visible Person, the same aloft as below."

This appearance and disappearance of the risen Christ is represented as an episode as real and objective as His other appearances during the forty days. Those appearances were calculated to assure His disciples that He had conquered death and hell and was recognized as God's Messiah. The ascension was intended to convince them that they need not expect Him to appear again. No other mode of departure would have left the impression this did. The period of transition had ended, and they need no longer remain in suspense. He left His own in the very act of blessing. For this He had come, and blessing He departed, not as condemning judge but as compassionate friend and High Priest, with hands outstretched.

### 2.4 The Necessity for the Ascension

An ascension such as the gospels record was essential for a number of reasons. It is not a marginal doctrine of Scripture. As *J.G. Davies* puts it, "If it is through the ascension that Jesus entered upon the office of Son of Man, became no longer Messiah designations but Messiah indeed, and received the regal dignity and title of 'Lord,' then the ascension belongs not to the periphery, but to the heart and substance of the gospel."

It was essential for these reasons among others:

1. **The nature of our Lord's resurrection body necessitated it.** Such a body would not be permanently at home on earth. He must depart, but by glorification rather than by mortal dissolution.

2. **The unique personality and holy life of our Lord demanded an exit from this world as remarkable and fitting as His entrance into it.** If a miraculous exit was granted to sinful men such as Enoch and Elijah, how much more to the sinless Son of God?

3. **His redemptive work required such a consummation.** Without it, it would have remained incomplete for it rests on four pillars - incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. The ascension was a complete and final demonstration that His atonement had forever solved the problem created by man's sin and rebellion. Only thus could He be constituted Head of the church (Ephesians 1:19-23).

4. **The gift of the Holy Spirit was dependent on His glorification.** "The Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified," was John's comment on the Lord's promise of the Spirit (John 7:39).

5. It enabled the disciples to give to the world **a satisfactory account of the disappearance of Christ's body from the tomb**.

To question the historicity of the ascension would be to thrust the whole drama of redemption into the realm of myth.

### 2.5 The Significance of the Ascension for Christ Himself

The significance of the ascension for Christ Himself were as follows:

1. To Him the ascension came as **the culminating divine assurance** that the work He had come to do had been completed to the entire satisfaction of the Father, to whose right hand He had now been exalted. "The right hand of God" is metaphorical language for divine omnipotence. "Sitting" does not imply that He is resting, but reigning as King and exercising divine omnipotence. The doctrine of the ascension is therefore the divine affirmation of the absolute sovereignty of Christ over the whole universe.

2. It was **a divine vindication of His claims to deity** that had been disallowed by the Jews. He had claimed the right to ascend into Heaven as His own prerogative. "No man hath ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven" (John 3:13). Henceforth He can again exercise those prerogatives and dignities that He laid aside for our Salvation.

3. For the believer, our Lord's ascension **has blessed implications for us.** Though physically remote, He is always spiritually near. Now free from earthly limitations, His life above is both the promise and the guarantee of ours. "Because I live, ye shall live also," He assured His disciples (John 14:19). His ascension anticipates our glorification and leaves us the assurance that He has gone to prepare a place for us (John 14:2).

4. "His resurrection and ascension to Heaven involved nothing less than the making of His humanity eternal in transfigured and glorified form, even if in a manner wholly incomprehensible to us." It **brings Him very near to us** as we remember that He carried His humanity back with Him to Heaven (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16).

5. The ascension helped to **clarify the nature of the Messiahship to the apostles.** They expected a Davidic king, whereas the crucifixion presented them with a suffering Servant. Then the resurrection proclaimed a king after all. The ascension further clarified the nature of His Kingship. The Kingdom of Christ is indeed not of this world. He will reign, but it shall not be simply from an earthly throne. His Kingdom will be glorified but it shall not be achieved through the blood and steel of men. The Cross was the decisive and atoning conflict; the resurrection was the proclamation of triumph; the ascension was the Conqueror's return with the captives of war which issued in the enthronement of the victorious King.

6. "He led captivity captive" (Ephesians 4:8). His ascension was His triumphant return to Heaven and indicated that the **tyrannical reign of sin is ended.**

7. It was **His divine inauguration into His Heavenly priesthood,** a subject treated in Section 4 of this Chapter.

## 3. THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

The exaltation of Christ is the act of the Father by which He gave to the risen and ascended Christ the position of honour and power at His own right hand. The Scriptures likewise speak of Christ's exaltation. Luke mentions it several times (Acts 2:33; 5:31); Paul teaches it (Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Philippians 2:9; Colossians 3:1); the writer to the Hebrews mentions it (10:12); and Jesus Himself intimates it (Matthew 22:41-45; Revelation 3:21; cf. Psalm 110:1).

### 3.1 Things Embraced in the Exaltation of Christ

A number of things are embraced in the exaltation of Christ. Christ was "crowned with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:9). This glory appears in His present "body of His glory" (Philippians 3:21). John saw Him in this body on the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:12-18). Both the glory and the honour are seen in His receiving a name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9). The Lord refers to His new name (Revelation 3:12; 19:12f., 16). With this new name went also His enthronement at the right hand of the Father (Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 10:12). Stephen saw Him standing there (Acts 7:55f.). Some day Christ will sit upon His own throne (Matthew 25:31).

In this act was included also, no doubt, His appointment as head of His body, the church (Ephesians 1:22). Now He directs the affairs of His church. He serves as high priest (Hebrews 4:14; 5:5-10; 6:20; 7:21; 8:1-6; 9:24), offering His own blood (1 John 2:1f.), and praying for the keeping and unifying of His own (Luke 22:32; John 17). Today, angels, authorities, and powers are all subject to Him (1 Peter 3:22). Indeed, all things have been put under His feet (Ephesians 1:22). In this sense, He is today King in a kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).

### 3.2 Results of the Ascension and Exaltation of Christ

The results of His ascension and exaltation may be treated together:

1. He is now not merely in Heaven, but is spiritually present everywhere. **He fills all** (Ephesians 4:10). Thus He is an ideal object of worship for all mankind (1 Corinthians 1:2).

2. He has "led captive a host of captives" (Ephesians 4:8). This may mean that the **Old Testament believers are no longer in Hades,** but have been transferred to Heaven. Clearly, the New Testament believer goes directly into the immediate presence of Christ when He dies (2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:23).

3. He has entered upon His **priestly ministry in Heaven** (Hebrews 4:14; 5:5-10; 6:20; 7:21; 8:1-6; 9:24).

4. He has bestowed **spiritual gifts upon His own** (Ephesians 4:8-11). These are both personal gifts to individuals (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) and gifts to His church (Ephesians 4:8-13).

5. He has **poured out His Spirit upon His people** (John 14:16; 16:7; Acts 2:33), is giving

repentance and faith to men (Acts 5:31; 11:18; Romans 12:3; 2 Timothy 2:25; 2 Peter 1:1), and is baptizing believers into the church (John 1:33; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

These are the results of His ascension and exaltation. It is evident that we cannot stop with the death of Christ, important as that is, if we are to have a complete redemption; the physical resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Christ must also be historical facts.

## 4. CHRIST, OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

From the dawn of human history man has craved a priest or mediator who would represent him to God. Among men there is a universal sense that there is a God who has been offended by man's wrongdoing and who must be appeased. From earliest days an instinctive feeling has been expressed that the one who can do this must be someone capable of compassion for human frailty, and yet who possesses special influence with God. The patriarch Job lamented, "There is no umpire between us, who might lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:33).

This universal desire resulted in the creation of orders of priests who, men ardently hoped, would be able to mediate with God on their behalf. It can confidently be affirmed that human priesthood reached its zenith in Judaism, but the story of the Jewish priesthood only serves to reveal how tragically it failed those who pinned their hopes to it. It is only in Christ, the ideal High Priest, that this deep and hidden yearning of the human heart finds complete fulfillment.

### 4.1 Christ's Qualifications As High Priest

The writer to the Hebrews clearly sets out the necessary qualifications for a Jewish High Priest. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity" (Hebrews 5:1-2).

It will be noted that the two great essentials were:

1. **Fellowship with man.** He must be linked to other men by the ties of a common humanity. He must be "taken from among men." In no other way would he be "able to have compassion" on those whom he was to represent. The idea behind the words "deal gently with" has been expressed as "able to have a moderated feeling toward" the ignorant. That is, he would be neither too lenient nor too severe. Sympathy and compassion are of the essence of the idea of priesthood.

2. There must be **authority from God**. But merely human qualities were not sufficient for an office that demanded so delicate and demanding a relationship. The high priest must be "appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God" (Hebrews 5:1). He cannot be self-appointed. "No man taketh

this honour unto himself" (Hebrews 5:4). His is a divine appointment.

Does Christ satisfy these requirements?

Indeed He does. In order to help the race of which He had become part, He was made "in all things ... like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God" (Hebrews 2:17). And in order that this identification might be complete, **He came not as a king, but as a workingman.** He experienced the "pinch of poverty and the cark of care." He knew the heights of popularity and the depths of rejection. He was indeed "taken from among men."

**He also received His authority from God.** "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest, but He that said unto Him, Thou art my Son" (Hebrews 5:5). He was not self-elected, but God-appointed.

Further, **He was morally and spiritually qualified to exercise this ministry.** The High Priest who "ever liveth to make intercession" for us is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:25-26). He faithfully fulfilled His whole duty to God. He was entirely without guile. He was stainlessly pure. Although experiencing the full blast of human temptation, He was morally separate from human sin. Because He conquered temptation and emerged sinless, He was exalted to the right hand of God.

### 4.2 The Basis for this Priesthood

Hebrews 4:14 states: "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." The writer sees Jesus' ascension as being analogous to the passing of the Jewish high priest into the Holy of Holies where the blood of the sacrifice was offered on the mercy seat in the Old Testament.

Jesus thus functions effectively as our high priest, because propitiation (satisfaction for sin) has been made (Hebrews 2:17), and He has "obtained eternal redemption" for His people (Hebrews 9:12). By the merits of this once-for-all sacrifice He intercedes for us.

### 4.3 His Capabilities As High Priest

Three statements are made in the Hebrews letter in this connection:

1. He is able to succor.
2. He is able to sympathize.
3. He is able to save.

#### *4.3.1 He is able to succor*

"In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). Because He was truly man, our Lord was able to meet man on the plane of His human need. We are willing to aid those requiring help, but too often we have to mourn our inability to do so. Our High Priest knows no such limitations. It should be noted that Christ's ability to succor the tempted is grounded not in mere **pity**, but in costly **propitiation**. "It behoved Him ... to make reconciliation [propitiation] for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). It is because He thus suffered that He is able to succor.

### *4.3.2 He is able to sympathize*

"We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (Hebrews 4:15). He never condones or sympathizes with our sin, only with our weaknesses. He always condemns sin because it incurs judgment and breaks fellowship with God. As our advocate He keeps open the way of restoration of lost fellowship upon repentance and confession. Because He has borne the penalty and exhausted the judgment of our sin, He is able to cleanse us on sincere confession (1 John 1:9).

He does sympathize with our weaknesses. Sympathy is the ability to enter into the experiences of another as if they were one's own, and sympathy is deepest when one has suffered the same experience. Christ was "in every respect tempted as we are." He felt the grueling pressure of sin on every part of His nature, yet He emerged without yielding to its allurement. He can thus enter sympathetically into the suffering of those passing through the fires of testing.

### *4.3.3 He is able to save*

"He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). Since He lives for ever as our mediator and High Priest, He is "able to bring to final completion the Salvation of all who draw near to God." The present tense is used here, signifying "a sustained experience resulting from a continuous practice." The idea is therefore, "He is able to keep on saving those who are continually coming to God by Him."

Our High Priest is able to save us completely. There is no personal problem for which He has no solution, no enemy from whom He cannot rescue, no sin from which He cannot deliver - because He ever lives to make intercession for us.

## 4.4 His Intercession As High Priest

Since the writer to the Hebrews assures us that He is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), we can gain some light on this subject from His intercession when on earth. It will be noted that most of our Lord's recorded prayers were intercessory - offered on behalf of others. On only one occasion did He assert His own will, and then it was that His loved people should share His glory (John 17:24).

Two words are used of our Lord's ministry of intercession. The first refers to rescue by someone who happens upon another in need and helps then unsought. Our Lord's prayer for Peter is an illustration (Luke 22:31-32). Unknown to himself, Peter was about to face a tremendous spiritual crisis. His omniscient Lord knew it, however, and in the presence of His disciples said, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have **you**" - plural, all you disciples - "but I have prayed for **thee**" - singular - "that thy faith fail not." This was unsolicited intercession that anticipated a need of which the subject was unconscious. In the event, Peter failed the test, but his faith did not fail.

The second word, "advocate" (1 John 2:1), signifies one who comes to help in response to a call of need or danger, one who pleads our cause and restores us. So whether our need is conscious or unconscious, we have a great High Priest who "lives to make intercession for us."

### *4.4.1 His intercession is not vocal*

His intercession is not vocal, an audible saying of prayers. When Aaron the first Jewish high priest made his annual appearance in the Holiest of All in the Tabernacle, he uttered never a word. The silence of the sanctuary was broken only by the tinkling of the golden bells on his garment. It was the blood he bore that spoke, not Aaron himself (Leviticus 16:12-16). It is the presence of our intercessor before the throne, bearing in His body the evidence of His suffering and victory that speaks for us.

The story is told of Amintas, a Greek soldier who was to be tried for treason. When his brother Aeschylus who had lost an arm in the service of his country heard this, he hastened to the court. As sentence was about to be passed, he intervened and holding up the stump of his arm cried, "Amintas is guilty, but for Aeschylus sake he shall go free." Even so does our High Priest and intercessor intervene on our behalf.

### *4.4.2 His intercession is personal*

"Seeing if **He** ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). It is His personal responsibility, which He does not delegate to angels or men. He is never so preoccupied as to be unable to care for our concerns. As on earth, so in Heaven He is still One who serves His creatures.

His intercession is in perpetuity - "He **ever** liveth to make intercession for them." He died on the Cross to obtain Salvation for us. On the throne He lives to maintain us in Salvation. It is in this sense that "we shall be saved by His [risen] life" (Romans 5:10). We could not live the Christian life for a day were it not that He lives to intercede for us.

## 4.5 The Implications of His Priesthood

Our idea of intercession is often associated with agonizing entreaty or tearful supplication. It is sometimes erroneously conceived as an endeavor to overcome the reluctance of God. But our High Priest

does not appear as suppliant before a God who has to be coaxed into granting a divine blessing. He appears as our advocate, not to appeal for clemency but to claim justice for us - to claim what we are entitled to in virtue of His sacrifice on Calvary. He obtains this for us from a God who is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9).

### *4.5.1 He receives and presents our prayers*

How can our consciously imperfect prayers be acceptable to our holy God? The answer is in the above lines. Our High Priest receives our prayers and mingles with them the incense of His own merits. "Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne" (Revelation 8:3).

Every prayer of faith presented by the Son who is always in harmony with the will and purposes of His Father becomes His own prayer and meets with the acceptance accorded to Him. Our prayers do not ascend alone, but steeped in His merits, and His intercession is always prevailing.

In view of all that precedes, it is small wonder that the writer of the Hebrews letter sums up his dissertation on the High Priestly ministry of Christ in these words:

> *"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1).*

### *4.5.2 He offers sympathy*

To "sympathize" does not imply leniency, but understanding. Having been tempted as we are, He understands the force of temptation. This encourages us to come to Him for help.

### *4.5.3 He offers mercy*

"Mercy" means pity or forgiveness. Mercy and grace, both mentioned in Hebrews 4:16, are closely related, yet different. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve (wrath), while grace is God giving us what we don't deserve.

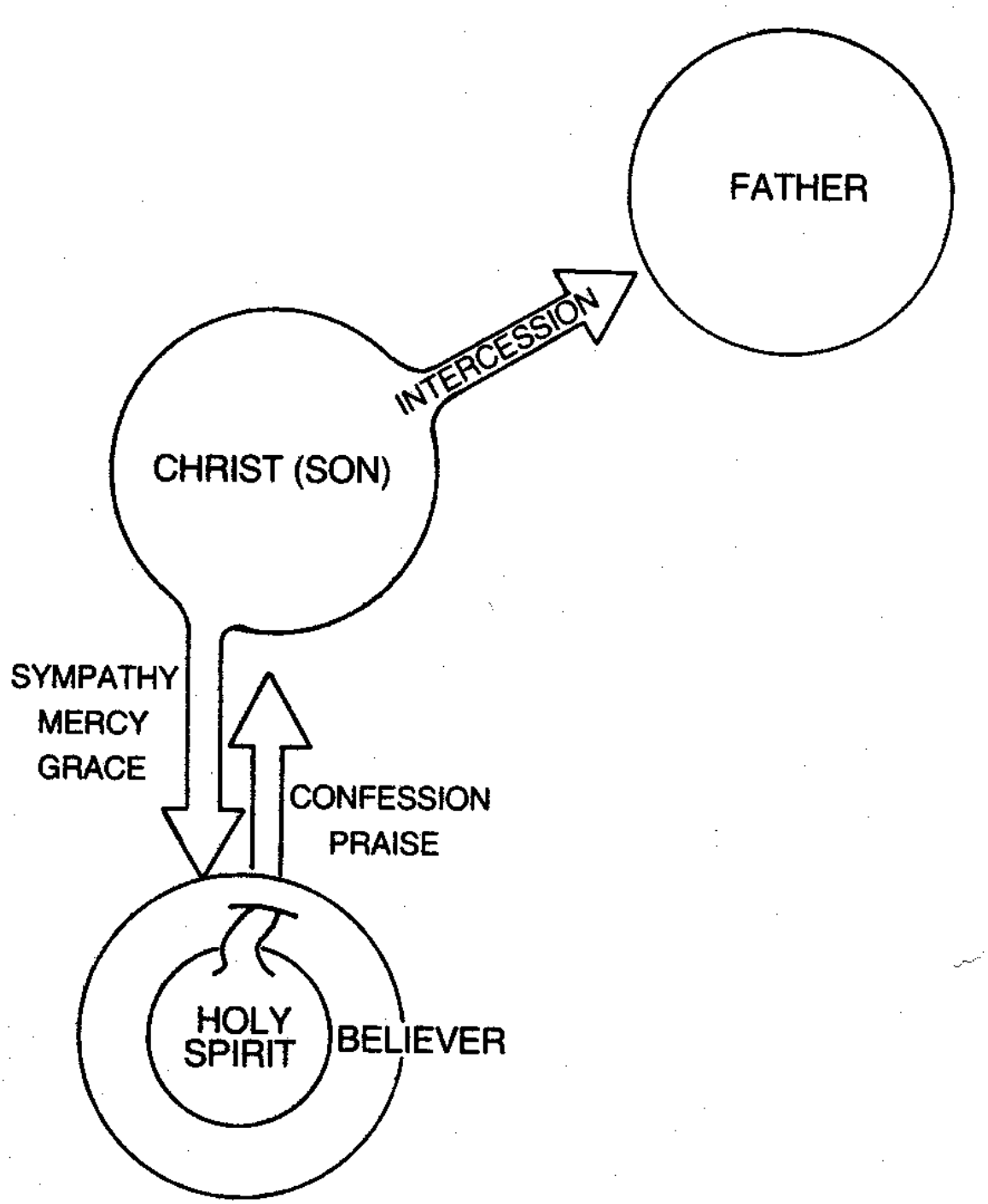
### *4.5.4 He offers grace*

Grace is God giving us what we don't have ourselves - spiritual strength and power - to do what we are not able to do ourselves - overcome sin. Jesus is a superior high priest, especially at this point, for no earthly high priest could offer more than sympathy and mercy through the blood of the sacrifice. This "grace" is the prevention of sin, while mercy is the remedy for sin.

### *4.5.5 He intercedes*

Hebrews 7:25 explains the significance of our High Priest's intercession: "He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." This means that our ultimate Salvation is assured through the constant application to each of us the merits of the High Priest's own blood. When we "confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The priesthood of Christ is illustrated in below diagram:



## 5. CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

How decisions should be made in the functioning of the local church is a crucial matter today. Should decisions involve the whole congregation, the broad of elders, or the pastor alone? How should the members of the body of Christ get their directions from the head, Jesus Christ?

It is beyond the scope of this course to describe in detail how the problem manifests itself. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. Realizing this fact that may help us to take more seriously the questions posed above. There are three aspects to His headship.

### 5.1 Lordship

Lordship, or headship, means authority. Ephesians 1:20-23 tells us that God raised Jesus from the dead "and seated Him at His right hand in the Heavenly places, far above all true and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named ... and He put all things in subjection under His feet ... "

### 5.2 Direction

Headship implies direction. Leaders and laymen alike should saturate themselves in Biblical truths and principles. For example, how does the head of the church make known His will to the body? He does so through the written Word. Whether the decisions in the local church are made by the entire congregation or one member, all should be grounded in the teaching of Scripture, the written expression of the direction of our head, Jesus Christ. Likewise, all impulses or ideas among believers should be checked by Scripture to determine their validity.

### 5.3 Source

Jesus said, "apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). This power is expressed through the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent to dwell within believers. The Holy Spirit energizes the efforts of believers as they serve God in faith.

## 6. CHRIST, PREPARING A PLACE FOR BELIEVERS

### 6.1 Removing the Barrier of Sin

Jesus has entered Heaven "as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:20), and because of this "we have confidence to enter the holy place

by the blood of Jesus ... having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:19-22).

### 6.2 Preparing an Abode

Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us (John 14:1-3). It is likely that this place is part of the New Jerusalem that will come down out of Heaven to the New Earth, and be the future and eternal dwelling place of the saints (Revelation 21:10-27).

## 7. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


1. **Survey of Theology I**, Lesson 11, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
2. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapter XXVI, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.
3. **The Incomparable Christ - The Person and Work of Jesus Christ**, Chapters 33-35, Moody Press, 1971 Edition, by John Oswald Sanders.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# Chapter Twenty Three - Angels: Ministering Spirits

Angels are spiritual beings created by God to serve Him, though created higher than man. Some, the good angels, have remained obedient to Him and carry out His will, while others, fallen angels, disobeyed, fell from their holy position, and now stand in active opposition to the work and plan of God. The holy angels are messengers of God, serving Him and doing His bidding. The fallen angels serve Satan, the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The doctrine of angels follows logically the doctrine of Christ, for the angels are primarily ministers of Christ's providence. When areas of theology are slighted, this will likely be one of them. One has only to peruse the amount of space devoted to angelology in standard theologies to demonstrate this. This disregard for the doctrine may simply be neglect or it may indicate a tacit rejection of this area of Biblical teaching.

This chapter, divided into ten major divisions, is a careful study of Angelology:

1. We will examine the terms used of angels;
2. We will examine the existence of angels;
3. We will examine the creation of angels;
4. We will examine the nature of angels;
5. We will examine the classification of angels;
6. We will examine the ranking of angels;
7. We will examine the ministry of angels;
8. We will examine the identity of the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah];
9. We will examine the identity of the sons of God in Genesis 6:1-8; and
10. We will examine the role of angels in medieval Jewish thought (optional).

## 1. THE TERMS USED OF ANGELS

The terms used of angels are as follows:

1. angels;
2. holy ones;
3. host;
4. chariots;
5. watchers;
6. the Angel of the LORD [Yahweh or Jehovah];
7. elohim;

8. stars; and
9. sons of God.

### 1.1 Angels (Generic Term)

Though other words are used for these spiritual beings, the primary word used in the Bible is *angel*. The Hebrew word for angel is *mal`ach*, and the Greek word is *angelos*. Both words mean "messenger" and describe one who executes the purpose and will of the one whom they serve. The context must determine if a human messenger is in view, or one of the celestial beings called "angels," or if it is being used of the second Person of the Trinity as will be discussed below.

Illustrations of uses that do not refer to celestial beings:

1. For human messengers from one human to another (Luke 7:24; James 2:25).
2. For human messengers bearing a divine message (Haggai 1:13; Galatians 4:14).
3. For an impersonal agent, Paul's thorn in the flesh described as "a messenger of Satan" (2 Corinthians 12:7).
4. For the messengers of the seven churches (Revelation 2-3). It is also used in connection with the seven churches of Asia, "To the angel of the church in ..." Some take this to mean a special messenger or delegation to the church as a teaching elder, others take it to refer to a guardian angel.

Thus, the term *angelos* is not only a generic term, pertaining to a special order of beings (i.e., angels), but it is also descriptive and expressive of their office and service. So when we read the word "angel" we should think of it in this way.

### 1.2 Holy Ones

The unfallen angels are also spoken of as "holy ones" (Psalm 89:5, 7). The reason is twofold. First, being the creation of a holy God, they were created perfect without any flaw or sin. Second, they are called holy because of their purpose. They were "set apart" by God and for God as His servants and as attendants to His holiness (cf. Isaiah 6).

### 1.3 Host

"Host" is the Hebrew *tsaba*, "army, armies, hosts." It is a military term and carries the idea of warfare. Angels are referred to as the "host," which calls our attention to two ideas. First, it is used to describe God's angels as the "armies of heaven" who serve in the army of God engaged in spiritual warfare (Psalm 89:6, 8; 1 Samuel 1:11; 17:45). Second, it calls our attention to angels as a multitude of heavenly beings who surround and serve God as seen in the phrase "Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 31:4). In addition, *tsaba* sometimes includes the host of heavenly bodies, the stars of the universe.

### 1.4 Chariots

Chariots applies to angels in the sense that they are part of God's host or army that accomplish His purpose. Psalm 68:17 refers to angelic intervention that enabled victory over kings and armies that opposed Israel (cf. Psalm 68:12, 14). This term is used also in 2 Kings 6:16-17, where Elisha and his servant were protected by an angelic task force of horses and chariots. Zechariah's visions included four chariots which carried out God's military judgments on the nations surrounding Israel. These are further described as "four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth" (Zechariah 6:5).

### 1.5 Watchers

In Daniel 4:13, 17 a holy watcher is mentioned and that in the singular; Daniel 4:17 uses the plural "watcher." These are probably angels who are sent by God to observe. The name suggests watchfulness. They are also involved in bringing a message from God to man. Whether these are a special class of angels is unknown.

### 1.6 The Angel of the LORD [Yahweh or Jehovah]

A careful study of the many passages using this term suggests that this is no ordinary angel, but a Theophany, or better, a Christophany, a preincarnate appearance of Christ. The angel is identified as God, speaks as God, and claims to exercise the prerogatives of God. Still, in some passages He distinguishes Himself from Yahweh (Genesis 16:7-14; 21:17-18; 22:11-18; 31:11-13, Exodus 3:2; Judges 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-22; 13:3-22; 2 Samuel 24:16; Zechariah 1:12; 3:1; 12:8). That the Angel of the LORD is a Christophany is suggested by the fact a clear reference to "the Angel of the LORD" ceases after the incarnation. References to an angel of the Lord in Luke 1:11; and 2:8 and Acts 5:19 lack the Greek article which would suggest an ordinary angel.

For further information, please read Section 8 of this Chapter and Section 2.4.5 of Chapter 17.

### 1.7 Elohim

*Elohim* by itself is sometimes applied to angels. The name *Elohim* is used both for God and for angels. The angels are *elohim*; and as a family or class they are "sons of *Elohim*." This is the understanding of the writer to the Hebrews (as well as the translators of the Septuagint) when he takes "a little lower than *elohim*" as a little lower than angels (Hebrews 2:7; cf. Psalm 8:5; see also Genesis 35:7). Moses described Jacob's experience at Bethel by saying that *Elohim* were revealed [plural verb] unto him (Genesis 35:7). This term pictures angels along with God as a supernatural class of beings of great strength and higher than weak and mortal man.

### 1.8 Stars

The term "stars" is used symbolically of angels, denotes their heavenly nature and abode. God speaks to Job about the wonders of creation and the time when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God [*bene elohim*] shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). It is rather natural that stars and angels be compared as heavenly creations that reflect the power and wisdom of God. They are often mentioned in the same context (cf. Psalm 148:1-5). Both angels and stars are called "the host of heaven" (Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3; 1 Kings 22:19; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 33:6). In fact, astrology is connected to demon worship through this term (Jeremiah 19:13; Acts 7:42; particularly 2 Kings 23:5, 10, 24). Divination and worship of the stars is condemned by the Scripture (cf. Deuteronomy 18:10-14) as connected with demonological elements. It is not strange, then, to note that Satan is described in his rebellion and warfare against God as a "wonder in heaven ... a great red dragon on ... and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth" (Revelation 12:3-4). This force of spirit beings is later called "Satan ... and his angels" (Revelation 12:9). Stars, then, speak symbolically of heavenly spirits created by God.

### 1.9 Sons of God

In their holy state, unfallen angels are called "sons of God" (Hebrew transliteration, *bene elohim*) in the sense that they were brought into existence by the creation of God (Job 1:6; 38:7). Though they are never spoken of as created in the image of God, they may also be called "sons of God" because they possess personality like God.

For further information, please read Section 9 of this Chapter.

## 2. THE EXISTENCE OF ANGELS

### 2.1 The Denial of the Existence of Angels

In our day neoorthodoxy's denial of the objective existence of angels has been countered by the widespread publicity given to demons and their activity. While people may deny theologically the existence of an order of beings called angels (and demons), practically their reported activity seems to make it impossible to deny their existence. Thus on the one hand man's bias against anything supernatural rules out in his mind the existence of angels; while on the other hand activity which he cannot explain rationally makes their existence seem necessary.

Although the Scriptures have much to say about angels, there is today a very general disregard, often amounting to a rejection of the doctrine. Various things have contributed to this attitude:

1. the Gnostic worship of angels (Colossians 2:18);
2. there are the often foolish speculations of the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages;
3. there is the exaggerated belief in witchcraft in more recent times; and
4. the rise in demon and Satan worship in our own day.

### 2.2 Reasons for Believing in the Existence of Angels

Yet there are many reasons for believing in angels:

1. the existence and ministry of angels are abundantly taught in the Scriptures;
2. Jesus has very much to say about angels, and we cannot dismiss His teaching with a haughty pretense to superior knowledge;
3. the evidence of demon possession and oppression and of demon worship argues for the existence of angels (1 Corinthians 10:20f.); and
4. in the latter days this demon and idol worship is to increase greatly (Revelation 9:20f.).

### 2.3 The Importance of the Study of Angels

The increase in the practice of spiritualism suggests a need to understand this doctrine. Scripture condemns the consulting of familiar spirits (Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Isaiah 8:19f.). This phenomenon is to increase in the latter days (1 Timothy 4:1).

The work of Satan and the evil spirits in hindering the progress of grace in our own hearts and the work of God in the world must be understood so we may know what to expect for the future in this warfare and be assured that Satan will soon be defeated (Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20; Revelation 12:7-9; 20:1-10).

### 2.4 Human Knowledge

Man does not have the knowledge to judge what the makeup of the universe is. He has no *a priori* way to know if that makeup would or would not include an order of creatures like angels. Further, he has no predisposition to assume that it does include angels, for his natural predisposition is antisupernatural. In addition, his experience would not incline him to consider the possibility of angels, and his faith in his own intellect would compel him to seek other explanations for phenomena he cannot readily understand.

### 2.5 Biblical Revelation

If one accepts the Biblical revelation then there can be no question about the existence of angels. There are three significant characteristics about that revelation:

1. **It is extensive.** The Old Testament speaks about angels just over 100 times, while the New Testament mentions them about 165 times.

2. **Angels are mentioned throughout the Bible.** The truth about them is not confined to one period of history or one part of the Scriptures or a few writers. Their existence is mentioned in thirty-four books of the Bible from the earliest (whether Genesis or Job) to the last.

3. **The teaching of our Lord includes a number of references to angels as real beings.** So to deny

their existence is to cast doubt on His veracity.

We shall examine first the amount and spread of the Biblical facts, then the teachings of Christ.

### *2.5.1 In the Old Testament*

The Old Testament always presents angels as real, objective, existing creatures. In no way are they considered illusions or figments of the imagination. In the thirty-four occurrences of the word in the Mosaic writings, angels always appear as real creatures who do specific things in character with their service as messengers (which is, of course, the meaning of both the Hebrew and Greek words for angels). Examples of the existence of angels in the Old Testament are as follows:

1. Abraham ate and conversed with angels (Genesis 18).
2. Many of the references in the Pentateuch and in Judges are to the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah or Yahweh] who seems to Deity.
3. An angel executed the judgment on Israel after David wrongly took a census of the people (2 Samuel 24:16).
4. Isaiah refers to seraphim (Isaiah 6:2), and Ezekiel to cherubim (Ezekiel 10:1-3).
5. Daniel mentions Gabriel (Daniel 9:20-27) and Michael (Daniel 10:13; 12:1).
6. Zechariah mentions angels frequently as agents of God (Zechariah 1:1-21) and interpreters of visions (Zechariah 1:1-6:15).
7. In the psalms angels are depicted as God's servants who worship Him and who deliver God's people from harm (34:7; 91:11; 103:20).

### *2.5.2 In the New Testament*

In addition to what our Lord taught about angels, the writers of the New Testament also affirmed their real existence:

1. The Gospel writers relate their ministry to Christ's birth, life, resurrection, and ascension (Matthew 2:19; Mark 1:13; Luke 2:13; John 20:12; Acts 1:10-11).

2. In the record of the Book of Acts angels were involved in helping God's servants, opening prison doors for the apostles (Acts 5:19; 12:5-11), directing Philip and Cornelius in ministry (Acts 8:26; 10:1-7), and encouraging Paul during the storm on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:23-25).

3. Paul (Galatians 3:19; 1 Timothy 5:21), the writer of Hebrews (Hebrews 1:4), Peter (1 Peter 1:12), and Jude (Jude 6) all assume the existence of angels in their writings.

4. About sixty-five clear references to angels occur in the Revelation, more than in any other single book of the Bible.

Clearly the New Testament furnishes clear, undebatable, and abundant evidence of the existence of

angels.

### *2.5.3 In the teachings of Christ*

Angels ministered to Christ in the wilderness after His temptation by Satan. He taught that the human state in the resurrection would be like the angels; i.e., non-procreative (Matthew 22:30). Angels will separate the righteous from the wicked at the end of the age (Matthew 13:39) and will accompany the Lord at His second coming (Matthew 25:31). There is sufficient evidence that He believed in the reality of angels. Christ knew that angels exist and reflected that knowledge in His teaching.

## 3. THE CREATION OF ANGELS

### 3.1 The Fact of their Creation

Angels are created beings (Psalm 148:5). This means that they did not evolve from some lower or less complex form of life. This is reinforced by the fact that angels do not procreate (Matthew 22:30). When they were created, they were created as angels.

### 3.2 The Agent of their Creation

All things were created by Christ (John 1:1-3). Specifically, angels were created by Him (Colossians 1:16).

### 3.3 The Time of their Creation

The Bible does not undebatably state the time of their creation. They were present when the earth was created, "the sons of God shouted for joy" when God laid the foundations of the earth (Job 38:4-7), so their creation had to be prior to the Creation of the earth. Clearly, they were in existence by Genesis 3:1 when Satan, an angelic being, made his appearance.

### 3.4 The State of their Creation

#### *3.4.1 Holy*

Originally all angelic creatures were created holy. God pronounced His Creation good (Genesis 1:31), and, of course, He could not create sin. Even after sin entered the world, God's good angels, who did not rebel against Him, are called holy (Mark 8:38). These are the elect angels (1 Timothy 5:21) in contrast to the evil angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God (Matthew 25:41).

In addition to being created holy, all the angels were surrounded by holiness. Their Creator was absolute

holiness. The atmosphere in which they lived and served was, until the sin the Satan, without the imperfections and taint of sin.

### *3.4.2 Creaturely*

Angels are creatures, not the Creator. Yet they are a separate order of creatures, distinct, for example, from human beings (1 Corinthians 6:3; Hebrews 1:14). As creatures they are limited in power, knowledge, and activity (1 Peter 1:11-12; Revelation 7:1). Like all responsible creatures, angels will be subject to judgment (1 Corinthians 6:3; Matthew 25:41).

## 3.5 The Number of Angels

### *3.5.1 Numbered in multitudes and legions*

At the birth of Christ, there appeared a "multitude" of angels praising God. This great grouping was only part of the heavenly host (Luke 2:13-15). The title "Lord [Jehovah] of hosts" (Psalm 46:7, 11) indicates that God is the head of armies (hosts of angels).

At His betrayal, Christ could have called upon God for twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53). In the time of Augustus Caesar, a legion numbered about 6,000 men, usually backed by an equal number of auxiliary troops. If there is a parallel in the number of troops and of angels, Christ may have called for 72,000 angels**,** or as many as 144,000 angels. Actually, He could have called the whole heavenly army if needed.

### *3.5.2 Numbered by men and stars*

Perhaps we could compare total number of angels with the total number of humans in all history (as might be indicated in Matthew 18:10). The number of angels might be compared with the number of stars in the heaven, for angels are associated with the stars (Job 38:7; Psalm 148:1-3; Revelation 9:1-2; 12:3-4, 7-9). If so, their number would exceed that of stars visible to the human eye - about six thousand during a year. Some scientists estimate that the total number of stars in the galaxies may run into the billions.

### *3.5.3 Beyond numbering*

The apostle John saw in a vision an exceedingly great number of angels: "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11). Taken literally, this equals 100 trillion. These may be only a part of the heavenly host. This expression, however, may not be an exact number but an indication of a multitude beyond comprehension. So we read in Hebrews 12:22 of "an innumerable company of angels."

This immense number reflects the vastness of God's power and wisdom. The heavens and their hosts declare the glory of God. They are all His handiwork. They are His individual creations whose number is

fixed, since they do not procreate or die (Matthew 22:28-30).

### 3.6 The Abode of Angels

Since angels were all created in the state of holiness before the material creation (Job 38:4-7), it follows logically that their original dwelling place was with God in heaven. However, since the fall of some angels, the question of abode is a bit more complicated.

#### *3.6.1 Holy angels*

Opinions vary as to where the holy angels actually abide. Some say heaven, the dwelling place of God, while others prefer to say the second heaven. Perhaps there are some in each.

##### *3.6.1.1 In heaven, the abode of God*

Some angels are definitely pictured in the presence of God in a rather permanent sense. This seems to be the case of the seraphim (Isaiah 6:1-6), of the living beings (Revelation 4:6-11), and of the angel Gabriel, "who stands in the presence of God" (Luke 1:19). To this agrees, it seems, the references to angels in heaven (Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25) and to "an angel from heaven" (Galatians 1:8). Perhaps angels rejoice in the presence of God over sinners who repent (Luke 15:10). Both Old and New Testaments speak of heaven as the abode of angels (Genesis 21:17; 22:11; Matthew 18:10; 22:30; 24:36; 28:2; Mark 12:25; 13:32; Luke 2:15; 22:43; John 1:51).

##### *3.6.1.2 In second heaven*

The reasoning for this choice as the abode of at least some angels is:

1. there is more than one heaven, and at least three (2 Corinthians 12:2) - supposedly the atmosphere, the stellar heaven, and the presence of God;
2. Jesus passed through the heavens (plural) into God's presence (Hebrews 4:14);
3. Jesus is seated above all angelic principalities and powers (Ephesians 3:10; cf. 1 Peter 3:22);
4. therefore, angels do not abide in the third heaven. They abide, according to this view, in the second heaven and possibly have access to the third. This view also appeals to Satan's desire to ascend into heaven, that is, to the place of God (Isaiah 14:13).

Some angels may permanently abide in the presence of God while others abide in the second heaven with possible access to the third, God's presence. We might question the significance of "above" in referring to Christ's position with reference to angels. The force of the passages seems to indicate position of authority rather than of locality. However, locality cannot be totally ruled out in the total consideration. The connection of angels with stars (Job 38:6-7; Revelation 9:1) and the term "host of heaven" (Psalm 148:1-5) may indicate angels as abiding in the second or stellar heaven.

### *3.6.1.3 In the heavenlies*

The heavenlies ("heavenly places") apparently refer to a spiritual sphere of position and activity that involves Christ and the believers (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6), holy angels (Ephesians 3:10), and evil angels and Satan (Ephesians 6:12). Whether this is a place of abode for angels or merely a place of activity for and against God and His own, is not quite certain. If it is a spatial location, then since it involves believers on earth, it must refer to an area that includes the first or atmospheric heavens. It seems, however, that the primary reference is to a spiritual sphere that must also include the earth's atmosphere. Certainly elect and evil angels both are declared to have invaded our realm of space and sense, where they are affected by and also affect men.

### *3.6.2 Evil angels*

Since the fall, evil angels have been cast out of heaven and are now found in various places.

### *3.6.2.1 In the heavenlies*

As noted above, Christians struggle against wicked spirit beings in the heavenlies (Ephesians 6:12). These are most likely the demons, Satan's henchmen, who seek to hinder God's purpose and people on earth. They may also live and move in the stellar heavens.

### *3.6.2.2 In the abyss*

Revelation 9:1-11 pictures a star from heaven which had fallen to earth. He had a key to the bottomless pit ("shaft of the abyss, " v.1 margin). When he opened the abyss or pit, out came monstrous creatures who had an angel king over them (v.11). These creatures appear to be demons or wicked angelic spirits who had been imprisoned for some time. This abyss may be the same place to which certain demons asked not to be sent by Christ during His ministry on earth (Luke 8:31). It is a place of temporary confinement for certain wicked angels now and for Satan during the future kingdom for one thousand years (Revelation 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3).

### *3.6.2.3 In the earth, bound*

At least four great angels are bound or will be bound at the river Euphrates (Revelation 9:14). They may be leaders of great angelic armies involved in the destruction of one-third of mankind (Revelation 9:15-18). These angelic armies may also be bound with the four great angels. This place of retention seems to be a different location from the abyss.

### *3.6.2.4 In eternal bonds under darkness*

Some angels are described by Jude 6 as those who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode. These God "has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day."

Their release from these bonds is only for entrance into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41). These words parallel what 2 Peter 2:4 says about angels that sinned peculiarly and are cast into *tartarus* ("hell"), peculiar place of retention. The larger contexts of Jude and 2 Peter 2 indicate that these are the same angels and the same place.

### *3.6.3 Summary*

Some angels abide in God's presence, but most seem to have the stellar heavens as their abode. Evil angels cannot live in God's presence. Free evil angels may be in the stellar heavens or the heavenlies, attacking men and opposing God. Some fallen angels are bound, either in the abyss, in *Tartarus* (hell), or in the earth.

## 3.7 Angels Need God's Continual Support

God alone has immortality (1 Timothy 6:16) implies that angels were created by God and owe their continued existence to God's continual support.

# 4. THE NATURE OF ANGELS

The nature of angels are as follows:

1. They are not glorified human beings.
2. They are personalities.
3. They are spirit beings.
4. They are apparently incorporeal.
5. They can appear in different forms.
6. Most of them are invisible.
7. Most of them do not have wings.
8. They are a company, not a race.
9. They are immortal.
10. They are apparently sexless.
11. They do not propagate.
12. They are higher creatures than men.
13. They are greater than man in knowledge, though not omniscient.
14. They are stronger than man, though not omnipotent.
15. They are more noble than man, though not omnipresent.
16. They are subject to the will of God.
17. They were originally holy beings.

## 4.1 They Are Not Glorified Human Beings

Man and angels are distinguished. Matthew 22:30 says that believers shall be like the angels, but it does not say that they shall be angels. The "myriads of angels" are distinguished from the "spirits of righteous men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:22f.). Man was made lower than the angels, and shall be made higher (Psalm 8:5; Hebrews 2:7). Believers will in the future actually judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3).

### 4.2 They Are Personalities

Personality means to have personal existence; thus we mean that angels have personal existence, and possess the quality or state of being persons. Commonly, the essential facets of personality involve intelligence, emotions, and will.

Angels then qualify as personalities because they have these aspects of intelligence, emotions, and will. This is true of both the good and evil angels. Good angels, Satan, and demons possess intelligence (Matthew 8:29; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Peter 1:12). Good angels, Satan, and demons demonstrate that they have wills (Luke 8:28-31; 2 Timothy 2:26; Jude 6). Therefore, they can be said to be persons. The fact that they do not have human bodies does not affect their being personalities (any more than it does with God).

The personality of angels means that they are not merely personifications of abstract good or evil, as some have considered them to be. This includes Satan who also is a personality, not a personification of man's collective idea about evil.

### 4.3 They Are Spirit Beings

They are called "winds" or "spirits" (Hebrews 1:7; cf. Psalm 104:4). Angels, demons (assuming they are fallen angels), and Satan belong to a class of beings which may be labeled spirit beings:

1. Angels are said to be ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:14);
2. Demons are called evil and unclean spirits (Luke 8:2; 11:24, 26); and
3. Satan is the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2).

### 4.4 They Are Apparently Incorporeal

The Scriptures do not attribute directly to angels any kind of bodies. Some Jews and early church fathers understood angels as having some kind of airy or fiery bodies. Some have supposed that they have bodies of refined matter or material different from humans. Though in the Middle Ages it was concluded they were pure spirit beings. This issue has always been disputed.

#### *4.4.1 Angels do not have bodies*

Those who reject the idea that they have bodies appeal to the following grounds:

1. as spirit beings they are immaterial and incorporeal (Hebrews 1:14; Ephesians 6:12);
2. the Scriptures explicitly call angels and demons spirits (Matthew 8:16; Luke 7:21; 8:2; 11:26; Acts 19:12; Ephesians 6:12; Hebrews 1:14); and
3. though God is a spirit being, sometimes He can appear to human beings; therefore angels in their spirit nature can also appear to human beings.

### *4.4.2 Angels have spiritual bodies*

Those who support the idea that they have bodies appeal to four grounds:

1. the idea of a purely spiritual and incorporeal nature as metaphysically inconceivable and incompatible with the concept of a creature;
2. it seems clear that angels are not omnipresent but have spatial limitations, move from place to place (Daniel 9:21-23; 10:10-14);
3. sometimes they were even seen by human beings (Genesis 18:1-19:28; Luke 1:26; John 20:12; Hebrews 13:2); and
4. they can wash (Genesis 19:2), eat (Genesis 19:3) and sleep (Genesis 19:4).

### *4.4.3 Comments*

It may be that angels have some sort of body structure not known to man as of now. A body that operates by principle other than ours is not inconceivable. There are various kinds of bodies, and our resurrection body is called a "spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). However, our human resurrected bodies will be material but run by spiritual power, as was Christ's. Any such body as angels may have is not usually or necessarily visible. They can be present in great numbers in a very limited space, just as many demons had entered into one man's body (Luke 8:30).

## 4.5 They Can Appear in Different Forms

The word "angel" in Scripture occurs in the masculine gender. Though gender does not necessarily signify a given sex, the angels at the tomb of the Lord were identified as men (Luke 24:4). A young man was sitting in the tomb (Mark 16:5). Angels can appear in different forms, for examples:

1. They usually appear as males (Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4) but some appear as females (possibly the women of Zechariah 5:9 are angels).
2. They usually appear in human form, but some appear as bright and shining beings (Ezekiel 1:7; Daniel 10:6; Luke 24:4; Revelation 10:1-3; 15:6; 18:1).
3. They have often revealed themselves in bodily form (Genesis 18:1-19:28; Luke 1:26; John 20:12; Hebrews 13:2).
4. They can wash (Genesis 19:2), eat (Genesis 19:3) and sleep (Genesis 19:4).
5. Some of them have wings (Isaiah 6:2, 6; Ezekiel 1:5-8).
6. They have appeared in dreams and visions (Matthew 1:20; Isaiah 6:1-8).

7. They can appear to people in special unveiling of their presence (2 Kings 6:17).
8. They can appear to people in a normal, conscious and waking state (Genesis 19:1-8; Mark 16:5; Luke 2:13).

### 4.6 Most of Them Are Invisible

Can we see angels? Not normally. Colossians 1:16 speaks of Christ as the Creator of all things in heaven and on earth, **visible** or **invisible**. We cannot see the spiritual realm with our eyes. Neither Moses nor the Israelites saw the Law and Order Angels who brought destruction to Egypt. No one saw the angel who struck Herod. When Elisha was protected by an army of angels, he had to pray that his servant's eyes would be opened before the servant was able to see the mountainside filled by a fiery angelic army, which stood between the prophet and the enemy (2 Kings 6:17). Even though angels are normally invisible to us, they are present.

### 4.7 Most of Them Do Not Have Wings

Artists portray angels, both good and evil, as beings with two feathered wings. But do angels really have wings? Three special classes of angels are described as winged:

1. the four living beings (Revelation 4:6-8);
2. the cherubim (Ezekiel 1:5-8; 10:15-20); and
3. the seraphim (Isaiah 6:2, 6).

Although other angels are said to "fly" (Daniel 9:21; Revelation 14:6-7), *C. Fred Dickason* notes that "they do not have material wings, for wings are for planing or flapping in flight for bodies with weight. Since angels are spirits, they have no weight. They certainly could move without physical wings" (*C. Fred Dickason*, **Angels: Elect & Evil**, Moody Press, 1995 Edition, p. 42). As we know that physical wings are useless for travelling in the outer space (i.e. the stellar heaven) because there is no air, therefore angels certainly could move without physical wings.

Their wings, when pictured, may symbolize the reality of their swiftness to execute God's wishes, just as wind and fire symbolize their fast and fervent service (Hebrews 1:7). It may be that the wings of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:2, which cover their feet and faces, symbolize their reverence of God's presence. Surely this is not the commonly conceived use of wings. Wings, then, may be pictures of angels' genuine complete swift obedience and service.

### 4.8 They Are A Company, Not A Race

Angels are spoken of as hosts, but not as a race (Psalm 148:2). Because the angels are a company and not a race, they sinned individually, and not in some federal head of the race. Unlike Eve who was deceived by Satan, they sinned consciously and voluntarily. It may be that because of this, God made no provision of Salvation for the fallen angels. Scripture does say, "For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but

He gives help to the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16).

### 4.9 They Are Immortal

Angels are immortal. Once created, they never cease to exist. They are not subject to death (Luke 20:36), so that any body they may possess is immortal and incorruptible.

### 4.10 They Are Apparently Sexless

Angels are apparently without sex. We may say "apparently" because we are limited to human concepts of sex and its powers. It is obvious from Matthew 22:28-30 that angels do not procreate and are not a race. So they are without sex in the normal sense of the word. Genetic procreation belongs to the material realm. Perhaps due to the limitations of human language (though neuter expressions were available), angels are generally referred to as masculine.

They are sometimes described as men, and the masculine pronoun is used of them (cf. Mark 16:5-6; Luke 24:4). When they appear, they generally take on the form of a man (cf. Genesis 18:2, 22; 19:1, 5; Daniel 10:18). The only exception may be in Zechariah 5:9, where angels may be represented as women.

As I have mentioned in the above Section 4.5, angels can appear in different forms, they may appear as a man or a woman, or sexless or bi-sexual. Therefore, it is not correct to say that all angels are absolutely males or females or sexless.

### 4.11 They Do Not Propagate

The number of angels is and always will be the same. They are called "sons of God" in the Old Testament (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; cf. Genesis 6:2, 4), but never do we read of the sons of angels. They neither marry nor are they given in marriage (Luke 20:34-36). The Lord Jesus Christ taught that holy angels do not propagate baby angels (Matthew 22:30). Please note that the Lord Jesus did not taught that wicked angels do not participate in sinful sexual activities with human beings. However, the wicked angels will be punished in a place of separation from God (Matthew 25:41; Luke 8:31).

### 4.12 They Are Higher Creatures Than Men

The writer to the Hebrews says that when our Lord became incarnate He became for a little while lower than the angels (Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:7-9). It is clear that "incarnation" placed Christ in a position lower than the angels (though, of course, this was only temporarily true during the time of Christ's humiliation on earth). This is because man who was created in the image of God is lesser than God by nature. He is also lower than angels since they belong to a class of superhuman beings (*elohim*) who are stronger than man by nature and, unlike man, not subject to death.

### 4.13 They Are Greater Than Man in Knowledge, Though Not Omniscient

The wisdom of an angel is considered great wisdom (2 Samuel 14:20). The knowledge that angels possess is limited by their being creatures. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven" (Matthew 24:36). This means they do not know all things as God does. They seem to have greater knowledge than humans. Even the fallen angels have wisdom beyond the natural. One said to Christ, "I know who You are - the Holy One of God!" (Luke 4:34).

Angels possess greater knowledge than human beings may be due to the following three causes:

1. Angels were created as a higher order of creatures in the universe than humans are (Hebrews 2:7). Therefore, innately they possess greater knowledge.
2. Angels study the Bible more thoroughly than some humans do and gain knowledge from it (cf. James 2:19; Revelation 12:12).
3. Angels gain knowledge through long observation of human activities and the marvels of Salvation (1 Corinthians 11:10; 1 Peter 1:12). Unlike human, angels do not have to study the past; they have experienced it. Therefore, they know how others have acted and reacted in situations and can predict with a greater degree of accuracy how we may act in similar circumstances. The experiences of longevity give them greater knowledge.

### 4.14 They Are Stronger Than Man, Though Not Omnipotent

They are said to be greater in might and power than man (2 Peter 2:11; cf. "mighty in strength," Psalm 103:20). Paul calls them "mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7). Illustrations of the power of angels are found in the freeing of the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19; 12:7) and the rolling away of the stone from the tomb (Matthew 28:2). They are limited in strength as seen in the warfare between the good and the evil angels (Revelation 12:7). The angel who came to Daniel needed assistance from Michael in his struggle with the prince of Persia (Daniel 10:13). Neither Michael the archangel (Jude 9) nor Satan (Job 1:12; 2:6) has unlimited power.

### 4.15 They Are More Noble Than Man, Though Not Omnipresent

They cannot be in more than one place at once. They roam and walk about on the earth (Job 1:7; Zechariah 1:11; 1 Peter 5:8), moving from one place to another (Daniel 9:21-23). This involves time and sometimes delays (Daniel 10:10-14). Even the concept of flying suggests that angels are "ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit Salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). Fallen angels are Satan's servants (2 Corinthians 11:15).

### 4.16 They Are Subject to the Will of God

Though they have wills, the angels are, like all creatures, subject to the will of God. Good angels are sent by God to help believers (Hebrews 1:14). Satan, though most powerful and cunning in carrying out his purposes in this world, is limited by the will of God (Job 2:6). Demons too have to be subject to the will of Christ (Luke 8:28-31).

### 4.17 They Were Originally Holy Beings

The Bible gives little specific evidence about the original state of the angels, though we know that when God finished His work of Creation He pronounced everything to be good (Genesis 1:31). Jude 6 also indicates that originally all the angels were holy creatures. Some were elect (1 Timothy 5:21) and others sinned (2 Peter 2:4). Presumably all might have remained in that original state of holiness, and those who did not rebel were confirmed forever in their holy state. In other words, those who successfully passed the probationary test will always stay in that original holy state. Those who failed are now confirmed in their evil, rebellious state.

## 5. THE CLASSIFICATION OF ANGELS

The Scriptures reveal that there are several special classes of angels. Each class has its special distinguishing characteristics which seem to be part of a created constitution. Some question whether the Seraphim and Cherubim are actually angels since they are never clearly identified as angels, but due to the nature of angels and their service as superhuman servants of God, this is the most logical place to classify them.

The special classes of angels are as follows:

1. cherubim;
2. seraphim;
3. living beings;
4. archangels;
5. Michael;
6. Gabriel; and
7. other special groups of angels.

### 5.1 Cherubim

#### *5.1.1 Meaning of the word "cherubim"*

The cherubim (Hebrew plural of *cherub*) are extensively mentioned in Genesis 3:24; 1 Kings 6:23-28; 2 Kings 19:15; Ezekiel 10:1-22; 28:14-16. The etymology of the word is not known for certain, though it has been suggested that it means "to cover" or "to guard."

#### *5.1.2 Appearance*

God made the visible appearances of the cherubim to differ, as each occasion might best be served

(compare Exodus 25:17-22; 1 Kings 6:23-28 with Ezekiel 1:5-6; 10:4-22). However, certain basic descriptions may be traced through the Bible.

## Different Appearances of Cherubim in Various Biblical Passages

| Description of Cherubim | Number of Faces | Number of Wings |
|---|---|---|
| Exodus 25:20; 1 Kings 6:24 | one (probably man) | two wings |
| Ezekiel 1:5-10 | four faces each (man, lion, calf, eagle) | four wings |
| Ezekiel 10:4-22 | four faces each (man, lion, cherub, eagle) | four wings |

### *5.1.2.1 Garden of Eden*

The first Biblical reference to angels is to the cherubim of Genesis 3:24 who were placed at the gate of the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve were expelled. They were stationed with flaming swords to protect the way to the tree of life, lest sinful man should intrude into God's presence or presume to take of the tree of life. They teach us that sin and paradise are incompatible. Sinful man cannot approach God without the righteousness granted to those who trust Christ.

Many Jewish and Christian commentators alike assume that the angelic guard was set so that Adam could not eat of the Tree of Life on the way out of the garden, or return to Eden later. A better interpretation, however, is to view the cherubim as guarding the way back to the Tree of Life. This interpretation finds support in the fact that God commanded Moses to shape two golden figures of cherubim to lean over the cover of the ark of covenant. This cover was Israel's "mercy seat" (Exodus 25:17-18), the place where God met with Israel and where sacrificial blood was sprinkled once a year on the Day of Atonement, symbolizing the reconciliation of Israel with God. The cherubim stationed at Eden symbolize God's commitment to keeping the way to eternal life open for human beings through faith in history's ultimate sacrificial Lamb, Jesus Christ.

It is easy to misunderstand this verse. God didn't send Adam from the garden to punish him, but to protect and love him. God had to drive out Adam and Eve from the garden due to the following reasons:

1. How horrible an endless life would have been for the first pair! As millennium after millennium rolled on, Adam and Eve would be forced to witness the awful results of their choice in the cruelty and the suffering, the wars and the miseries, that life was destined to bring to creatures unwilling to live in submission to God.

2. To prevent man from living eternally in his sinfulness. It would have been calamitous had they continued in a perfect environment as sinful people, especially eating of the life-tree fruit and living on indefinitely in such a condition.

3. They and their descendants to many generations must be taught the true nature and effects of sin, and of living out of fellowship with God, so that they could eventually come to know and understand and love Him fully, as Saviour, as well as Maker and Provider.

The cherubim, of the same order of powerful angels as Satan, were placed to the east of Eden in order to keep the way open for us. Satan corrupted the human race, but neither he nor any dark angel we meet will ever be able to isolate us from God's redeeming love. God's holy angels guard the way home, and God's own Son acted in history to open completely, for you and me, the way to eternal life.

### *5.1.2.2 Tabernacle*

Cherubim appear next in connection with the designated dwelling place of God in the tabernacle. They appear in the form of golden images upon the mercy seat, the lid on the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament worship tent (Exodus 25:17-22) and in Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 3:10-13). The ark and mercy seat with its symbolic cherubim were kept in the innermost sanctuary of the tabernacle where God's Shekinah glory was manifest. In this connection they are designated "the cherubim of glory" (Hebrews 9:5), probably as associated with the glory of God. The cherubim are one of the most important symbols of the Mosaic worship. Figures of them appear also on the tapestry of the tabernacle, and, at a later time, on the walls of Solomon's temple, and in the vision of the new temple (Ezekiel 41:18-20).

### *5.1.2.3 Mercy Seat*

The cherubim on the mercy seat seem to be represented as having one face and two wings each (Exodus 25:17-22; 1 Kings 6:24). They sat on opposite ends of the mercy seat facing each other and stretching out their wings so as to cover the mercy seat. They seem to be looking down at the lid of the ark rather than at one another.

During Ezekiel's captivity in Babylon, he received a vision of the glory of God which involved the presence of "four living beings" (Ezekiel 1:1-28). Later references to this vision identify these creatures as cherubim (Ezekiel 10:4-22). They were, along with the glory of God, associated with the golden images in the mercy seat, the seat of the idol of jealousy (Ezekiel 8:3).

The cherubim of Ezekiel's vision were complex creatures. Each one has four faces and four wings, and the overall appearance could be likened to a man (Ezekiel 1:5-6). They were positioned under the four corners of a platform on which was seated the glory of God in the appearance of a man upon His throne (Ezekiel 1:22-23, 26). Under each of the cherubim were four peculiar wheels composed of two wheels each, probably at right angles to each other and of the same size and centered upon the same vertical diameter. The impression is that these wheels could run in any direction immediately, without taking any space or time to turn around as single wheels would. The platform with its throne was propelled by the powerful wings of the cherubim with a great rushing noise, perhaps as jet engines? (Ezekiel 1:9, 24).

### *5.1.3 Description*

Cherubim seem to be angelic beings of high order or class, created with indescribable powers and beauty. Satan may have been one of the cherubim before he fell (Ezekiel 28:14-16). They are chiefly the guardians of the throne of God. They seem to function as guardians of the holiness of God, having guarded the way to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24). The use of cherubim in the decoration of the tabernacle and temple may also indicate their guarding function (Exodus 26:1ff.; 36:8ff.; 1 Kings 6:23-29). They also bore the throne-chariot which Ezekiel saw (Ezekiel 1:4-5; 10:15-20). Representations of the cherubim will also be a part of the millennial temple (Ezekiel 41:18-20).

### *5.1.4 Duties*

What purpose do cherubim serve and in what activities are they engaged? Though it seems obvious that they are an angelic class, they are never termed "angels." Perhaps this is because they are not messengers (*malakim*) in their duties. They seem never to carry revelation or instruction from God to men.

Their main purpose and activity might be summarized in this way:

1. They are proclaimers and protectors of God's glorious presence, His sovereignty, and His holiness.
2. They proclaim to men the transcendent and unapproachable God.
3. They speak of the revelation of God's glory to man.
4. They indicate the intervention of a sovereign God in the affairs of men.
5. They are proclaimers of the grace of God that provides Salvation and access for man.

#### *5.1.4.1 They are proclaimers and protectors of God's glorious presence, His sovereignty, and His holiness*

They are proclaimers and protectors of God's glorious presence, His sovereignty, and His holiness. This characterization may be substantiated by reference to their various appearances and connections in Scripture. Since they are nowhere sent from God's presence but are confined to the seat of the divine habitation and the manifestation of the Divine Being, they designate the place of abode of the presence of God as in the Garden of Eden, the inner room of the tabernacle, and later of the temple. Psalm 80:1 and Psalm 99:1 refer to the Shekinah glory as representing God who is enthroned *above* the cherubim.

#### *5.1.4.2 They proclaim to men the transcendent and unapproachable God*

In one sense they proclaim to men the transcendent and unapproachable God, since they forbid entrance to Paradise and protect and shade the ark.

#### *5.1.4.3 They speak of the revelation of God's glory to man*

But in another sense, they speak of the revelation of God's glory to man, since they are associated with the visible form of the glory of God and present themselves in the form of earthly living creatures and men.

### *5.1.4.4 They indicate the intervention of a sovereign God in the affairs of men*

From the vision in Ezekiel 1, the cherubim indicate the intervention of a sovereign God in the affairs of men. The whole vision speaks of the glory of God moving swiftly and sovereignly upon the earth and in heaven to accomplish His holy purposes and judgments. We may see the glory of God, associated with the cherubim, judging the sin of Israel and the sin of the nations, and intervening on behalf of Israel to bring about the accomplishments of God's promised ultimate blessing upon His chosen nation in the millennial kingdom.

### *5.1.4.5 They are proclaimers of the grace of God that provides Salvation and access for man*

It seems clear that they emphasize God's presence and holiness in their symbolic form upon the mercy seat, the lid of the ark of the covenant. These things were kept in the innermost sanctuary of the tabernacle where God's Shekinah glory was pleased to dwell with His people. There God met sinful man on the basis of blood sacrifice and through a God-given priesthood. In the ark were kept a golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the law (Hebrews 9:4). These contents were reminders of God's gracious provisions scorned and rejected by man.

When the high priest entered once a year to sprinkle the blood of the atonement for sin on the mercy seat, the blood granted entrance to God and atoned for sins (Leviticus 17:11). Thus, the cherubim, proclaimers of God's holiness, would symbolically look down and see the sprinkled blood on the mercy seat covering the sins of the people as symbolized by the three items under the lid of the ark. All this God-designed imagery pointed forward to Christ, who would shed His blood not just to cover sins but to put them away by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:6-14, 25-26). In witnessing the sprinkling of the divinely provided blood, "the cherubim of glory" (Hebrews 9:5) were not only partakers of God's glory but proclaimers of the grace of God that provides Salvation and access for man, both in the Old Testament symbolism and in the New Testament reality in Christ.

## 5.2 Seraphim

### *5.2.1 Meaning of the word "serapbim"*

Another special class of angels are the seraphim. All we know about this rank of angelic beings is found in Isaiah 6:2-7. The Hebrew word (seraphim) means "burning ones" may be derived from a root meaning "to burn" or possibly from a root which means "to be noble."

### *5.2.2 Appearance*

Their description suggests a six-winged humanlike creature. They are evidently represented in human form; for faces, hands, and feet are spoken of  (Isaiah 6:2). They each have six wings. The symbolism of their appearance is as follows:

1. with two wings they cover their faces - to indicate that even the most exalted spirits cannot bear the full vision of the Divine glory;
2. with two they cover their feet - to symbolize their reverence [speaking of hesitancy to tread uninvited upon holy ground]; and
3. with two they fly - to express the swiftness with which they execute the Divine commands.

### *5.2.3 Description*

The seraphim also, as the cherubim, are closely associated with the glory of God and are probably related closely in class to them. Apparently the seraphim were an order similar to the cherubim.

It seems that the seraphim were hovering above on both sides of Jehovah on His throne. Whether there were only two seraphim or two rows of several seraphim, it is difficult to determine. They were crying to each other, as antiphonal choirs, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). The force of their voices was such that the supports of the throne room shook (Isaiah 6:4). The altar mentioned probably corresponds to the golden altar of incense in the tabernacle. It stood before the veil closing off the holiest place and was used when the high priest would enter into the symbolic presence of God. Incense placed upon coals taken from the altar would fill the holiest place with smoke, signifying that sinful man could not look directly upon the holiness of God. Note that in Isaiah's vision "the temple was filling with smoke" (Isaiah 6:4).

They seem to be distinct from the cherubim, for God is said to be seated above the cherubim (1 Samuel 4:4; Psalm 80:1; 99:1), but the seraphim stand above him (Isaiah 6:2). Their duties are also different from those of the cherubim. They acted as attendants at the throne of God and agents of cleansing (Isaiah 6:6-7). Their duty was to praise God (Isaiah 6:3). They lead heaven in the worship of God Almighty and purify God's servants for acceptable worship and service. That is, they appear to be conerned with worship and holiness, rather than justice and might. In deep humility and profound reverence, they carry on their ministry. The cherubim, on the contrary, are the guardians of the throne of God and God's ambassadors extraordinary. Thus each has its distinct position and ministry.

### *5.2.4 Duties*

Their duties might be summarized in this way:

1. Seraphim are angelic-type beings who perform a priestly-type service for God. The very name seraphim (means "burning ones") speaks of their consuming devotion to God rather than of their outward ministry. Their great cry is in praise of the perfect holiness of God. To ascribe the term "holy" to God three times means, according to Hebrew idiom, to recognize God as extremely, perfectly holy. Therefore, they praise and proclaim the perfect holiness of God.

2. The seraphim also express the holiness of God in that they proclaim that man must be cleansed of sin's moral defilement before he can stand before God and serve Him. One of them, upon Isaiah's confession of sinfulness and uncleanness (reminiscent of the leper's cry, Leviticus 13:45), flew

with a live coal from the altar near Jehovah and touched Isaiah's lips to purge his sin (Isaiah 6:6-7). The action was symbolic of cleansing. This speaks of God's holy standard and the demand that the believer be cleansed before service. Isaiah's lips, once unclean, are now cleansed and ready to speak God's message to men (Isaiah 6:8-9).

## 5.3 Living Beings

### *5.3.1 Meaning of the word "living beings"*

Another special class of angels are the "four living beings" in the book of Revelation 4:6-8. "Living beings" (Greek, *Zoa*) is a noun related to the Greek verb *zao*, which means "to live." It is not derived from the verb meaning "create" (Greek, *ktizo*), so it should not be translated as "living creatures." Nor are they "beasts" (Greek, *therion*, Revelation 13:1; 17:3).

### *5.3.2 Appearance*

They each have six wings. Each has only one face. The first creature is like a lion, the second creature is like a calf, the third creature has a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature is like a flying eagle (Revelation 4:6-9).

The location of the four living beings is fixed by the words "middle" (Greek, *meso*) and "around" (Greek, *kyklo*). "Middle" means that the four were in the immediate vicinity of the throne and encircling it, one can either side, one behind and one in front. "Around" furnishes the picture of a circle, with one always seen before the throne and the others on either side and behind. They form an inner circle closest to the throne as they offer worship to the one sitting on the throne (Revelation :8; 19:4).

### *5.3.3 Description*

They are not ordinary angelic beings, for they are distinguished from the angels, who are mentioned as a class by themselves in Revelation 5:11:

> *"And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living beings and the elders ... " (Revelation 5:11)*

They seem to be angelic beings of the highest order or class as they perform the duties of both cherubim and seraphim:

1. like cherubim, they are the guardians of the throne of God (Revelation 4);
2. like seraphim, they worship God (Revelation 4, 5, 7, 19); and
3. they have special proximity and immediate access to the throne of God.

They are four in number, which is the "earth number," and therefore have something to do with the earth.

That is, they are interested in the "re-genesis" of the earth to its former glory before the Fall. They have eyes before and behind and within, which reveals their intelligence and spiritual insight of things past, present, and to come, and they are tireless in their service, for they rest not day nor night, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." They worship God, direct the judgments of God (Revelation 6:1ff.; 15:7), and witness the worship of the redeemed men (Revelation 14:3). They are active about the throne of God as are the cherubim and seraphim.

It seems that the four living beings of Revelation have a special relationship to animate creation. Each of the four looked like a different creature:

1. A lion, a wild animal.
2. A calf, a tame animal.
3. A man, the most intelligent animal.
4. An eagle, a great bird.

So the four living beings represent all living creatures in the world. They are also considered different aspects of divine majesty. All of these are supreme in their respective categories:

1. The first one is similar to a lion. Among the wild animals, the lion is viewed as "king of the jungle" and it is the king of all animals (Proverbs 30:30). It represents what is the most noble and majesty.

2. The second one is similar to a calf. The calf which is the most important domestic animals, is used to serve man or as a sacrifice (Genesis 12:16; Exodus 21:36; 24:5; 29:10; Leviticus 22:23; 1 Kings 19:19). It signifies patience and continuous labor.

3. The third one has the face as that of a man. Man is the greatest of all God's creatures, especially in intelligence (i.e. wisest) and rational power.

4. The fourth one is similar to an eagle flying. The eagle which is the greatest among birds, is the swiftest in animate creation. It can fly high in the sky and can see better than most birds or animals. It is symbolic of supremacy and omniscient.

### *5.3.4 Identity of the "living beings"*

If the four "living beings" (*hayoth*) of Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10 are cherubim, what are the four living beings (*zoa*) of Revelation 4:6-9? Their description shows them to resemble the "seraphim" of Isaiah 6:2 and the "cherubim" of Ezekiel 1:4-14; 9:3; 10:1-2, 20. Some identify the four "living beings" of Revelation 4:6-9 with the cherubim and others with the seraphim.

#### *5.3.4.1 Similarities and differences between the living beings and cherubim*

Are they also cherubim? There are likenesses in the two appearances:

1. They are four in number as in Ezekiel 1:5.
2. They are full of eyes as are the cherubim in Ezekiel 10:12.
3. There is reference to faces like a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle as in Ezekiel 10:14.
4. They have multiple wings and many eyes as in Ezekiel 10:12, 21.
5. Their name *zoa* (living beings) is derived directly from Ezekiel 1:5, the name being used interchangeably with "cherubim" in Ezekiel 9:3; 10:2, 20.

Though closely akin to the cherubim of Ezekiel, these four living beings are not the same because of the following essential differences:

1. In Ezekiel 1:6, 10, each has four faces, whereas in Revelation, the four faces are distributed among the four, one face apiece.
2. In Ezekiel, the cherubim have only four wings instead of the six found in Revelation.
3. In Ezekiel 1:18 and 10:12, it is the wheels that are full of eyes, but in Revelation, the beings themselves are full of eyes.
4. The Ezekiel beings have wheels (Ezekiel 1, 10), but those of the Revelation have none.
5. In Ezekiel, the throne was above the beings, but here they surround it.
6. In Ezekiel, the cherubim are winged supporters of God's throne, carrying Him as He moves throughout the world, but in Revelaton, the beings attend the throne room of God's glory, leading in adoration directed toward Him and the Lamb.

Some Bible scholars think that the four living beings in the book of Revelation are also cherubim due to the following reasons:

1. The dissimilarity between Ezekiel's "Living Beings," and John's "Living Beings" can be explained on the supposition that there are different orders of "Living Beings" or "cherubim," each adapted to the service he is created to perform.

2. As mentioned in the above Section 5.1.2, God made the visible appearances of the cherubim to differ (compare Exodus 25:17-22; 1 Kings 6:23-28 with Ezekiel 1:5-6; 10:4-22).

#### *5.3.4.2 Similarities and differences between the four living beings and seraphim*

Are they also seraphim? There are likenesses in the two appearances:

1. Each has six wings as do the seraphim of Isaiah 6:2.
2. Their ascription of praise to God, "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Revelation 5:8) is the same as that of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3.

The major difference between the seraphim of Isaiah 6:2-7 and the four living beings in Revelation is that the throne was under the beings in Isaiah, but here they surround it.

If we allow that the purging of Isaiah by fire and the punishment of the earth by judgments both are expressions of a ministry of purgation by a holy God, then we may have additional grounds for identifying the living beings as seraphim.

Their similarities and differences are summarized in the following table:

## Similarities And Differences Among the Living Beings, Cherubim And Seraphim

| **Living Beings** *(Revelation 4)* | **Living Beings** *(Ezekiel 1)* | **Cherubim** *(Ezekiel 10)* | **Seraphim** *(Isaiah 6)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| v. 6 midst of and around throne | v.26 under throne | v. 1 under throne | v. 2 above throne |
| v. 6 full of eyes before and behind | v.18 rings full of eyes | v.12 full of eyes | |
| v. 7 one face each: | v. 6 four faces each: | v.14 four faces each: | |
| 1. like a lion<br>2. like a calf<br>3. like a man<br>4. like an eagle | 1. like a lion<br>2. like a calf<br>3. like a man<br>4. like an eagle | 1. like a lion<br>2. like a cherub<br>3. like a man<br>4. like an eagle | |
| v. 8 six wings full of eyes within | v. 6 four wings | v.21 four wings | v. 2 six wings |
| v. 8 "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" | | | v. 3 "Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts" |
| v. 8 "which was and is and is to come" | | | v. 3 "The whole earth is full of His glory" |
| | v. 7 feet straight | | |
| | v. 8 hands under wings | | |
| | v.13 likeness of fire | | |
| | v.16 wheels | | |

For further discussion of the identity of the four living beings of the book of Revelation 4:6-9, please read Section 7 of Chapter 5 of the course, the book of Revelation.

#### *5.3.4.3 Comments*

We are not certain of their identity. It is probably best to identify them as a different type of angel than either the cherubim or seraphim due to the following reasons:

1. Although there are similarities among the living beings, cherubim and seraphim, there are striking differences among them.
2. If the living beings were actually cherubim or seraphim, then the apostle John would probably name them as cherubim or seraphim.
3. They seem to be angelic beings of the highest class as they not only perform the duties of both cherubim and seraphim but also other special duties.

### *5.3.5 Duties*

The ministry of the four living beings in the book of Revelation are summarized as follows:

1. like cherubim, they are the guardians of the throne of God (Revelation 4);
2. like seraphim, they offer continuous (or never ending) praise before the throne of God (Revelation 4, 5, 7, 19);
3. they are designed to emphasize the majesty, holiness, sovereignty, and eternity of God (Revelation 4, 5, 7, 19);
4. they represent all the animate creation in the world (Revelation 4:7, 11);
5. they are responsible for summoning the riders to advance in portrayal of future wrath against rebellious mankind (Revelation 6:1, 3, 5, 7);
6. they each in turn called for the execution of the judgments associated with the first four seals of the scroll (Revelation 6); and
7. one of them gave to seven other angels the seven bowls of the wrath of God to be poured out upon the earth (Revelation 15).

## 5.4 Archangels

The term "archangel" occurs but twice in Scripture (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 9), but there are other references to at least one archangel, Michael. He is the only angel called an archangel. It would seem that Gabriel might qualify as a second archangel (Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26). The archangels appear to have the specific responsibility of:

1. protecting and prospering Israel (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1);
2. announcing the birth of the Savior (Luke 1:26-38);
3. defeating Satan and his angels in their attempt to kill the man-child and the woman (Revelation 12:7-12); and
4. heralding the return of Christ for His own (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

The apocryphal book of Enoch (20:1-7) enumerates six angels of power:

1. Michael;
2. Gabriel;
3. Raphael;
4. Uriel;
5. Raguel; and
6. Zariel.

The variant reading in the margin adds Remiel as the seventh. Tobit 12:15 reads, "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who offer up the prayers of the saints and enter in before the glory of the Holy One." Though these books are apocryphal, they nevertheless show what the ancients believed in this respect.

### 5.5 Michael

It is noteworthy that of all the angels, only two are designated by name in our canonical books, and these are not mentioned until after the Babylonian captivity of Israel. Michael and Gabriel are given places of great importance among angels in the ministries of God, and both are mentioned in the Old and New Testaments. In emphasis, Michael seems to be the greater. He might be characterized as the military leader, while Gabriel is the leading messenger.

#### *5.5.1 Meaning of the name "Michael"*

The name "Michael" is significant. Its meaning is to be taken as a question, "Who is like God?" This name would call attention humbly to the incomparableness of God. It would speak of his devotedness to God and His will, and would be in stark contrast with Satan who in his pride declared, "I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14).

#### *5.5.2 Michael is a created angel not God Himself*

However, others take the name to be a statement and declaration that its bearer is God Himself and should be understood as, "Who is like me, who am God." *Oehler* writes, "It is certainly true that the later Jewish theology identified Michael with the shekinah ... while among moderns *Hengstenberg* identifies him with the *Logos* (pre-incarnate designation for Christ)."

Michael also disputed with Satan about the body of Moses, but Michael refrained from judgment, leaving that to God (Jude 9). The false cult, Jehovah's Witnesses identify Michael as Christ; this view, however, would suggest Christ has less authority than Satan, which is untenable.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that Michael is a created angel and not God Himself due to the following reasons:

1. The name appears fairly frequently from Numbers 13:13 to Ezra 8:8 as the name of a man.
2. He is designated an archangel and is classified as "one of the chief princes" (Daniel 10:13), as if belonging to a group of comparable ones among angels.
3. He is assigned to the welfare of the nation of Israel as others are assigned to other nations by God or by Satan (cf. Daniel 10:13, 20).
4. In contrast, the *Logos* (pre-incarnate designation for Christ) is termed *monogenes* (only begotten, unique), is the creator of all angels (Colossians 1:16), and is the Lord of all nations (Revelation 19:13-16).

### *5.5.3 Michael is an archangel*

Michael is further designated as "the archangel" (Jude 9). He is represented as having his own angels (Revelation 12:7). This title immediately sets him above some others of the angels, and indeed we see him as the military leader of an army of angels in battle with Satan (Revelation 12:7). The definite article with archangel does not necessarily limit the class of archangel to Michael due to the following reasons:

1. The article may be one of identification as the well-known archangel instead of limitation as the only archangel.
2. There may be others of the same class or rank, since he is described as "one of the chief princes" (Daniel 10:13).

### *5.5.4 The rank and class of Michael*

Perhaps he is the archangel among the chief angelic rulers of God. He may possibly be of the cherub class, as is Satan with whom he is seen contending and battling (Ezekiel 28:14-16; Revelation 12:7). In this case, he might be the only cherub who leaves the presence of God on a mission.

### *5.5.5 Deferment*

Despite his greatness and power, Michael, when disputing with Satan about the body of Moses, dared not blasphemously accuse Satan. But deferring to God he said, "The Lord rebuke you" (Jude 9). If one so great as Michael, the head of all the angelic armies of God, does not rely on his own strength in opposing Satan but respects his evil power, how much more must we rely upon God (cf. Ephesians 6:10-12; 2 Peter 2:11).

### *5.5.6 Duties*

The duties of Michael may include:

1. As an archangel, he is the head and military leader of all the angelic armies of God.

2. In the Old Tesatment period, he helped the other holy angels to fight with Satan's evil angels. It

was in Daniel's day. An angel, seemingly lesser in rank and power than Michael, speaks of "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" withstanding him (Daniel 10:13, cf. vv. 10-14). In that case, he came to help the angel.

3. He is now protecting Christians. In the mysterious angelic sphere, he is now participating in spiritual warfare between God's angels and Satan's (cf. Colossians 1:13-15; Ephesians 6:10-12).

4. He protects the nation of Israel. Thus he is also called "Michael your prince" (Daniel 10:21). Other nations may have their angelic princes, good or evil, but Michael is the defender of Israel.

5. He will defend Israel in the coming Great Tribulation period. We read of him as "the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people" in the time of the coming Great Tribulation (Daniel 12:1; cf. also Matthew 24:15, 21-22). He will defend Israel in "the time of Jacob's distress" (Jeremiah 30:7), when Jewish people will be persecuted by the kingdoms of the world and the satanic host in the unprecedented time of trial and wrath that comes upon the whole world immediately before Christ's second coming (Revelation 12:3-17).

6. He will be the military leader of an army of angels in battle with Satan in the time of the coming Great Tribulation (Revelation 12:7). Under God, Michael and his army will be victorious over Satan (Revelation 12:8-9).

## 5.6 Gabriel

### *5.6.1 Meaning of the name "Gabriel"*

The name Gabriel means "mighty one of God" or "hero of God" or "man of God" or "God is strong" and speaks of his great strength endowed by God.

### *5.6.2 Description*

Gabriel also appears to be a high-ranking angel though he is not designated as an archangel as Michael is. Wherever Gabriel appears in Scripture, he is the special messenger of God to communicate revelation and interpretation concerning God's theocratic kingdom program, particularly concerning Israel and Messiah.

He is self-described as, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God" (Luke 1:19). A special and important messenger of God, he has permanent access to God's presence.

The fact that he was "caused to fly swiftly" to Daniel reveals his great strength demonstrated in unusual speed (cf. Daniel 9:21). He sets an example before us, who is swift to carry God's message to His people.

He is further designated "the man Gabriel" (Daniel 9:21), reflecting his form; and "the angel Gabriel" (Luke 1:26), revealing his nature as angelic.

He is obviously an angelic being presented in human form on occasions. Daniel says, "There came again ... one like the appearance of a man" (Daniel 10:18). This one spoke with a man's voice (Daniel 10:17-20) and had the power of touch, much as a man's (Daniel 8:18; 10:18). This angel could stand in one particular spot as he appeared to Zacharias, and his appearance caused Zacharias to be troubled with great fear (Luke 1:11-12). When Mary saw him, she seemed not so much troubled with his appearance as with what he had to say about her supernatural offspring, Jesus (Luke 1:26-29).

### *5.6.3 Duties*

The duties of Gabriel may include:

1. reveals and interprets God's purpose and program concerning Messiah and His kingdom to the prophets and people of Israel; and
2. bring important messages from God to several individuals (Daniel 8:16; 9:21, to Daniel; Luke 1:19, to Zacharias; Luke 1:26; to Mary).

Whereas Michael is God's special champion for Israel in her warfare, Gabriel seems to be God's special messenger of His kingdom program in each of the four times he appears in the Bible record:

1. Gabriel brought to Daniel an interpretation of the vision of the ram and the rough goat. He revealed that the two-horned ram represented the Medo-Persian Empire, and that the great horned goat represented the Grecian Empire under Alexander, whose kingdom was later split into four parts (Daniel 8:15-22).

2. Gabriel is also the interpretive messenger of the "seventy sevens" of years that God has planned for Israel under the domination of Gentile world powers (Daniel 9:21-27). This remarkable prediction pinpointed the date of Messiah's first coming to 483 years (69 sevens of years) after the decree to rebuild the wall and city of Jerusalem (probably that of Artaxerxes, cf. Ezra 7:7). The separately treated seventieth "week" of years (Daniel 9:27) refers to another literal seven-year period yet to come after God's parenthetical program of the church. This will involve the time of tribulation planned for Israel (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1-2; Matthew 24:15-21) that immediately precedes Christ's second coming (Matthew 24:29-31).

3. Gabriel is also the messenger that appeared to Zacharias announcing the birth of John the Baptist, the official forerunner of the King, Jesus Christ (Luke 1:13-17, 19).

4. He appears once more to Mary, the virgin mother of the human nature of Christ. He announces the virgin birth to her as the means of bringing the eternal Son of God into the human race to become the promised God-man, the seed of David, who should reign on David's throne over the nations of the world (Luke 1:26; 31-35). His kingdom will be established at His second coming (Matthew 25:31-34).

## 5.7 Other Special Groups of Angels

### *5.7.1 Angels with special responsibilities*

Certain angels are designated in connection with a particular function they perform (Revelation 14:18; an angel who has power over fire; 16:5, the angel of the waters; 9:11, the angel of the abyss; 20:1-2, the angel who binds Satan).

### *5.7.2 Angels associated with future judgments*

Two of the three series of judgments of the Revelation involve angels in announcing them. When angels sound the trumpets the judgments of Revelation 8:1-9:21 beings, and the seven last plagues are poured out on the earth by angels (Revelation 16:1-21).

### *5.7.3 Angels of the seven churches of Revelation 2-3*

Each letter is addressed to the "angel" of each of the seven churches, and those angels were seen in the right hand of the risen Christ in the vision of Revelation 1:16, 20. It is uncertain whether these are angelic beings or the human leaders of those churches.

Though the word "angel" clearly means messenger, it can refer to a superhuman being, that is, to the guardian angel for each church. Or it may refer to a human messenger, that is, to the human leader (pastor) of each church (see Mark 1:2; Luke 9:52; and James 2:25 for the use of "angel" as designating human beings).

## 6. THE RANKING OF ANGELS

The Scriptures speak of the "assembly" and "council" of the angels (Psalm 89:5, 7), of their organization for battle (Revelation 12:7), and of a king over the demon-locusts (Revelation 9:11). They are also given governmental classifications which indicate organization and ranking (Ephesians 3:10; good angels; and 6:12, evil angels). Unquestionably God has organized the elect angels and Satan has organized the evil angels.

A very important practical point emerges from this. Angels are organized; demons are organized; yet Christians, individually and in groups, often feel that it is unnecessary that they be organized. This is especially true when it comes to fighting evil. Believers sometimes feel that they can "go it alone" or expect victory without any prior, organized preparation and discipline. It is also true when it comes to promoting good. Believers sometimes miss the best because they do not plan and organize their good works.

Rank among angels is a fascinating subject. There is enough evidence to say that there are distinct and

graded ranks, but not enough evidence to make a complete comparison or organizational chart. Remember that these facts reflect God's orderly and creative ingenuity and skill.

### 6.1 Ranking by Classes

There seem to be larger categories of angels that we may term "classes." Their basic or essential nature, or at least its details, differs from class to class. Here we might consider ordinary angels, cherubim, seraphim, and living beings. The living beings seem to be angelic beings of the highest class as they not only perform the duties of both cherubim and seraphim but also other special duties.

The ranking of angels by classes in descending order is as follows:

1. living beings (Revelation 4:6-8)
2. seraphim or cherubim (I am not sure whether or not the rank of seraphim is higher than cherubim.)
3. ordinary angels

Within classes there seems to be various ranks obtained by appointment from God. Among the cherubim, Satan held the highest rank due to the following reasons:

1. he was described as "the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty";
2. he was appointed as "the anointed cherub that covereth," and again as "covering or guardian cherub" (Ezekiel 28:12, 14, 16); and
3. Michael the archangel would not dispute with him (Jude 9).

It seems that Satan and his angels still retain some of their dignity and rank even after their fall into sin.

### 6.2 Ranking by Titles

Certain titles imply rank by their very meaning. The ranking of angels by titles in descending order is as follows:

1. archangels
2. chief princes
3. governmental rulers

#### *6.2.1 Archangel*

Consider the title "archangel." The etymology of it implies a rank first among angels, since *arche* (Greek) means "first." This title is applied directly only to Michael (Jude 9). Of the group of chief princes, Michael apparently is the foremost one because he is the archangel.

#### *6.2.2 Chief princes*

The title, "chief princes" (Daniel 10:13), referring to a group of superior angels, underscores the fact of ranking among the angels. Of this group of chief princes, Michael is called "one of the chief princes" (Daniel 10:13). This implies that there are others of chief princes (i.e. high rank angels).

### *6.2.3 Governmental rulers*

If the order of listing implies rank (for which there is good evidence), then a comparison of the various listings seems to indicate that among what we might call governmental rulers (compare Romans 8:38; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:10, 15). Various levels in the organization of governmental rulers are seen in the several titles ascribed to them by eight Greek terms in descending order:

1. *thronai* (Greek) - thrones (KJV, NAS, NIV)
2. *kuriotetes* (Greek) - dominions (KJV, NAS, NIV)
3. *archas* (Greek) - principalities (KJV) or world rulers (NAS, NIV)
4. *exousias* (Greek) - powers (KJV) or authorities (NAS, NIV)
5. *dunameos* (Greek) - might (KJV, NAS, NIV)
6. *kosmokratoras* (Greek) - rulers of the darkness of this world (KJV) or world forces of the darkness (NAS) or powers of this dark world (NIV)
7. *pneumaika tes ponerias* (Greek) - spiritual wickedness (KJV) or spiritual forces of wickedness (NAS) or forces of evil (NIV)
8. *angelos* (Greek) - ordinary angels

Some of the titles apply to both good and evil angels, and only the Biblical context can determine which kind they are. The last two listed are equal, spiritual wickedness describing evil angels while ordinary angels describing holy angels.

## Ranks of Governmental Rulers

| Colossians 1:16 | Colossians 2:15 | Ephesians 1:21 | Ephesians 3:10 | Ephesians 6:12 | Romans 8:38 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thrones | - | - | - | - | - |
| Dominions | - | - | - | - | - |
| Principalities | Principalities | Principalities | Principalities | Principalities | Principalities |
| Powers | Powers | Powers | Powers | Powers | - |
| - | - | Might | - | - | Might |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| - | - | - | - | Rulers of the Darkness of this World | - |
| - | - | - | - | Spiritual Wickedness | - |

### *6.2.3.1 Thrones*

This designation emphasizes the dignity and authority of angelic rulers in God's use of them in His government (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; 2 Peter 2:10; Jude 8).

### *6.2.3.2 Dominions*

Dominions regulate angelic duties. Through them the majesty of God is manifested. The rank of dominions is listed last in Ephesians 1:21 and second, after thrones, in Colossians 1:16, so its place is more uncertain than the others.

### *6.2.3.3 Principalities or World rulers*

This title, principalities or world rulers, used seven times by Paul, indicate an order of angels both good and evil involved in governing the universe (Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:10, 15). The rule of angels is often manifest through earthly rulers. It may be that those called world rulers are particularly responsible in this activity (see Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Ephesians 6:12).

### *6.2.3.4 Powers or Authorities*

Powers stop the efforts of demons to overthrow the world - or they preside over demons, or perhaps (according to the apostle Paul) they are themselves evil. This likely emphasizes the superhuman authority of angels and demons exercised in relation to the affairs of the world (Ephesians 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:10, 15; 1 Peter 3:22). The word, powers, underscores the fact that angels and demons have greater power than humans (2 Peter 2:11). See Ephesians 1:21 and 1 Peter 3:22.

### *6.2.3.5 Rulers of the darkness of this world*

In one place demons are designated as world rulers of this darkness (Ephesians 6:12).

### *6.2.3.6 Spiritual wickedness / Ordinary Angels*

Spiritual wickedness is the lowest order of wicked angels. On the contrary, holy ordinary angels are guardians of people and all physical things.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The unimaginably vast number of angels are highly organized and ranked according to their class and position.

## 7. THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS

Basically and essentially good angels are servants (Hebrews 1:14). God sends them for service or help of believers, and in so serving the angels function as priestly messengers in the temple-universe of God.

### 7.1 In Relation to God

In relation to God, angels' primary ministry is to worship and praise Him:

1. they praise God (Psalm 148:1-2; Isaiah 6:3);
2. they worship God (Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:8-13);
3. they rejoice in what He does (Job 38:6-7);
4. they serve God (Psalm 103:20; Revelation 22:9);
5. they appear before God (Job 1:6; 2:1); and
6. they are instruments of God's judgments (Revelation 7:1; 8:2).

### 7.2 In Relation to New Epochs

Angels appear to be unusually active when God institutes a new epoch in the sweep of history:

1. they joined in praise when the earth was created (Job 38:6-7);
2. they were involved in the giving of the Mosaic Law (Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2);
3. they were active at the first advent of Christ (Matthew 1:20; 4:11);
4. they were active during the early years of the church (Acts 8:26; 10:3, 7; 12:11); and
5. they will be involved in events surrounding the Second Advent of Christ (Matthew 25:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1).

### 7.3 In Relation to the Ministry of Christ

#### *7.3.1 At His birth*

The ministry of angels in relation to the ministry of Christ at His birth were as follows:

1. **Prediction.** Gabriel predicted His birth (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:26-28).
2. **Announcement.** An angel announced His birth to the shepherds and was then accompanied in

praise by a multitude of angels (Luke 2:8-15).

### *7.3.2 During His life*

The ministry of angels in relation to the ministry of Christ during His life were as follows:

1. **Warning.** An angel warned Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath (Matthew 2:13-15).
2. **Direction.** An angel directed the family to return to Israel after Herod died (Matthew 2:19-21).
3. **Ministration.** Angels ministered to Him after His temptation (Matthew 4:11) and in His stress in Gethsemane (Luke 22:43).
4. **Defense.** He said that a legion of angels stood ready to come to His defense if called on (Matthew 26:53).

### *7.3.3 After His resurrection*

The ministry of angels in relation to the ministry of Christ after His resurrection were as follows:

1. **Stone.** An angel rolled away the stone from the tomb (Matthew 28:1-2).
2. **Announcement.** Angels announced His resurrection to the women on Easter morning (Matthew 28:5-6; Luke 24:5-7).
3. **Ascension.** Angels were present at His ascension (Acts 1:10-11).

### *7.3.4 At His second coming*

The ministry of angels in relation to the ministry of Christ at His Second Coming are as follows:

1. **Rapture.** The voice of the archangel will be heard at the translation of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
2. **Second Coming.** Angels will accompany Him at the Second Coming (Matthew 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7).
3. **Judgment.** Angels will separate the wheat from the tares at His Second Coming (Matthew 13:39-40).

## 7.4 In Relation to Nations of the World

The ministry of angels in relation to the nations of the world is divided into two categories:

1. Israel; and
2. other nations.

### *7.4.1 In relation to the nation Israel*

Michael, the archangel, especially guards Israel (Daniel 12:1).

### *7.4.2 In relation to other nations*

The ministry of angels in relation to other nations are as follows:

1. Angels watch over rulers and nations (Daniel 4:17) and seek to influence their human leaders (Daniel 10:21; 11:1).
2. During the coming Tribulation years, angels will be involved in the administration of God's judgments (Revelation 8:1-9:21; 16:1-21).

## 7.5 In Relation to the Unrighteous

The ministry of angels in relation to the unrighteous are as follows:

1. Angels announce impending judgments (Genesis 19:13; Revelation 14:6-7; 19:17-18).
2. Angels inflict judgments on them (Acts 12:23; Revelation 16:1).
3. Angels will separate the righteous from the unrighteous (Matthew 13:39-40).

## 7.6 In Relation to the Church

The ministry of angels in relation to the church includes:

1. basic ministry;
2. background ministry; and
3. specific ministry.

### *7.6.1 Basic ministry*

Basically angels help believers (Hebrews 1:14).

### *7.6.2 Background ministry*

Angels have been involved in communicating and revealing the meaning of truth which the church benefits from today (Daniel 7:15-27; 8:13-26; 9:20-27; Revelation 1:1; 22:6, 8).

### *7.6.3 Specific ministries*

The specific ministries of angels are as follows:

1. **Prayer requests.** They bring answers to prayer (Acts 12:5-10).
2. **Salvation.** They aid in winning people to Christ (Acts 8:26; 10:3).
3. **Observing.** They observe Christian order, work, and suffering (1 Corinthians 4:9; 11:10; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:12).
4. **Encouragement.** They encourage in times of danger (Acts 27:23-24).
5. **Present at death.** They care for the righteous at the time of death (Luke 16:22).

Whether angels continue to function in all these ways throughout the present age is uncertain. But they did perform these ministries and may well continue to do so even though we are not aware of them. Of course, God is not obliged to use angels; He can do all these things directly. But seemingly He chooses to employ the intermediate ministry of angels on many occasions. Nevertheless, the believer recognizes that it is the Lord who does these things whether directly through using angels (notice Peter's testimony that the Lord delivered him from the prison though God actually used an angel to accomplish it, Acts 12:7-10 compared with Acts 12:11, 17).

Angels observing the conduct of redeemed people startle our thinking as much as any of these truths. The reason for their interest in us may stem from the fact that since angels do not personally experience Salvation (2 Peter 2:4; Hebrews 2:16), the only way they can see the effects of Salvation is to observe how it is manifest in saved human beings. We are indeed a theater in which the world, men, and angels make up the audience (1 Corinthians 4:9). Let us pur on a good performance for them as well as for the Lord before whom all things are naked and open.

## 8. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD [JEHOVAH OR YAHWEH]

The Angel of the LORD [Jehovah or Yahweh] carries with Him an air of mystery. Who is He? He seems far more than an ordinary angel. Some identify Him with Jehovah and even with Christ. If this is so, then the angel is a theophany, a manifestation of God in visible and bodily form before the incarnation of Christ.

### 8.1 His Identity

What evidence is there that this angel might be Jehovah or even the eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ?

#### *8.1.1 His identity with Jehovah*

The Angel of the LORD [Jehovah or Yahweh] acts as a unique messenger of God in Old Testament times. His appearances extend from the time of Abraham to the time of Zechariah.

##### *8.1.1.1 <u>His peculiar title</u>*

The title *Elohim* (the mighty one) was used of both the true God and the gods of the heathen. But the title Jehovah (Hebrew, *Yahweh*) was reserved for the God of Israel, the eternally self-existent One who made heavens and earth and who entered into covenant relationship with His people. The angels in general are called "the sons of God" (*bene elohim*), but never "the sons of Jehovah." Therefore, since this one has a singular and peculiar title, "the Angel of Jehovah" (*malak Yahweh*), we may suspect that He was more than an angel, perhaps Jehovah Himself.

### *8.1.1.2 **His personal identification***

From a number of appearances throughout Biblical history, we notice this angel consistently presented as Jehovah:

1. This angel found Hagar (Genesis 16:7) and promised to do Himself what God alone can (Genesis 16:10). Moses, the writer, identifies the angel as "Jehovah that spake unto her" (Genesis 16:13).

2. When this angel appeared to Moses "in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Exodus 3:2), verse 4 says "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush". The one who spoke with Moses is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and with this announcement, Moses hid his face for fear of looking upon God (Exodus 3:6). Upon this historic occasion, God revealed His name as I AM THAT I AM (Exodus 3:14), the eternal, unchanging One. Would God entrust this unique personal revelation to a mere angelic creature? Acts 7:30-34 seems to identify the angel as the Lord (*Yahweh*, Exodus 3:2-7), "the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob."

3. The record of Gideon's commission identifies the one who spoke to him as "the angel of Jehovah" (Judges 6:12) and as "Jehovah" (Judges 6:14) without any notice of change of speaker. Manoah and his wife saw the Angel of Jehovah; and upon recognizing Him, Manoah feared they would die because they had seen God (Judges 13:21-22). That this angel was Jehovah is also implied in the vision of Zechariah when the angel in Zechariah 3:1 seems clearly called Jehovah in the next verse (Zechariah 3:2).

### *8.1.1.3 **Comments***

Most likely, the Angel of Jehovah was a theophany, a manifestation of God in visible and bodily form before the Incarnation. His appearances were evidences of God's grace in revealing His person and purpose to His people.

### *8.1.2 His distinction from Jehovah*

The same person is most likely in view in every mention of the singular and peculiar title, the Angel of Jehovah. Yet this angel, while identified as Jehovah, is presented as distinct from Jehovah in the following verses:

1. He intercedes to Jehovah. In Zechariah 1:9-11 we see that the man among the myrtle trees was the Angel of Jehovah, and that Jehovah had sent the horsemen who were to report to this angel. Their separate identity also appears in Zechariah 1:12-13 where the Angel of Jehovah intercedes for Jerusalem as he speaks to Jehovah.

2. He calls upon Jehovah. In the visions of the cleansing of Joshua, Zechariah saw the Angel of Jehovah defending this priestly leader of Israel against the accusations of Satan in the presence of Jehovah (Zechariah 3:1-2). The angel (Zechariah 3:1) is called Jehovah: "And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee" (Zechariah 3:2). The angel called Jehovah was speaking to a separate person called Jehovah. How can there be more than one person called Jehovah?

### *8.1.3 His identity with Christ*

#### *8.1.3.1 Christ's essential nature*

To those not recognizing the deity of Christ and not able to welcome the truth of the Scriptures, the problem is irreconcilable. But to those who recognize Christ as God's eternal Son and truly God, the problem is easily resolved. Christ, the eternal Son, is Jehovah in essence, yet a distinct person within the Trinity (note Isaiah 6:3; 40:3; Matthew 3:3; John 1:1-2; 12:36-41; Hebrews 1:8-9).

#### *8.1.3.2 Christ's economic function*

In the outworking of the purpose of the great triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; see Matthew 28:19-20), the Son of God voluntarily took upon Himself the assignment of certain responsibilities. Thinking along this line, there are four considerations that help to identify the Angel of Jehovah as Christ in preincarnate appearances:

1. The second person of the Trinity, the Son, is the visible God of the New Testament (John 1:14, 18; Colossians 2:8-9). Accordingly, the Son was the visible manifestation of God in the Old Testament also.

2. The Angel of Jehovah no longer appeared after Christ's incarnation. A reference such as Matthew 1:20 does not identify the angel and should be understood as an angel of the Lord.

3. They both were sent by God and had similar ministries such as revealing, guiding, and judging. The Father was never sent.

4. This angel could not be the Father or the Spirit. They never take bodily form (John 1:18; 3:8).

#### *8.1.3.3 Comments*

The Angel of Jehovah, then, according to all the evidence, seems to be the preincarnate Son. His

appearances evidence His eternal existence.

### 8.2 His Ministries

The ministries of the Angel of Jehovah were many and varied. He was obviously God's special representative to His people in the Old Testament, just as Christ was in the New Testament. Their ministries were surprisingly parallel and argue further for the identification of the angel with Christ.

#### *8.2.1 Parallels with Christ's ministries*

The parallels with Christ's ministries are listed below:

1. revelation;
2. commission;
3. deliverance;
4. protection;
5. intercession;
6. advocacy;
7. confirmation of the covenant;
8. comfort; and
9. judgment.

##### *8.2.1.1 Revelation*

Outstanding in this angel's ministries of revelation was that of disclosing God's name, Jehovah (Exodus 3:2, 4, 6, 14). To Him was given this unique privilege above all angels. Jesus Christ is the permanent revelation of God in bodily form (John 1:14, 18; Colossians 2:9), and He also revealed God's name (John 17:6) by word and in person.

##### *8.2.1.2 Commission*

On the same occasion, the angel commissioned Moses to deliver God's people from Egyptian bondage and lead them to the Promised Land (Exodus 3:7-8). He called and commissioned Gideon to go in God's might against the Midianites (Judges 6:11-23). He called and commissioned Samson through his parents (Judges 13:1-21). Jesus Christ called and commissioned His disciples and us to deliver men from sin with the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20; John 20:21).

##### *8.2.1.3 Deliverance*

He was the angel of deliverance as well, for in each of the above cases, He acted to deliver God's people from servitude to their enemies. Jesus Christ delivers from fear and death and sin's guilt for those who trust Him now (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 2:14-15) and for Israel (Romans 11:25-26).

### *8.2.1.4 Protection*

His protecting ministry was renowned in David's days. Psalm 34:7 declares, "The Angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Hezekiah knew spectacular deliverance from the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19:35). Jesus Christ is our Protector today. We need not fear man because "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

### *8.2.1.5 Intercession*

The Angel of Jehovah interceded for Israel when they were oppressed by their enemies. He asked God to act to deliver them (Zechariah 1:12-13). Our High Priest ever lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25).

### *8.2.1.6 Advocacy*

Zechariah pictures the angel as the advocate of God's imperfect believers, defending them against the accusations of Satan (Zechariah 3:1-7). Jesus Christ the Righteous is our Advocate defending our position gained by His work on Calvary that satisfied God for our sins (1 John 2:1-2).

### *8.2.1.7 Confirmation of the covenant*

The angel confirmed the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 22:11-18). God had previously promised Abraham great personal, national, and universal blessings (Genesis 12:1-3). Abraham had believed God (Genesis 15:5-6), and God "cut a covenant" unconditionally with Abraham (Genesis 15:8-21). So great was his faith that he would have sacrificed Isaac, his only son; but the Angel of Jehovah stopped him and confirmed God's promises (Genesis 22:15-18). It is in this connection that the angel is identified with Jehovah as He who made an unbreakable covenant with Israel (Judges 2:1). Christ was sent to confirm the promises to Israel for their deliverance, and the forgiveness of sins for all (Matthew 26:28; Romans 15:8-9; Hebrews 9:15).

### *8.2.1.8 Comfort*

The Angel of Jehovah found and comforted the outcast slavewoman Hagar, promising her safety and a great progeny (Genesis 16:7-13). Christ came with comfort and blessing (Luke 4:16-19) and ministered to the outcast (John 9:35-38; 16:1-4).

### *8.2.1.9 Judgment*

At times the angel brought judgment. When Satan had provoked David to number Israel to revel in his military might, God was displeased and sent the Angel of Jehovah to partially destroy Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 21:1; 14-15). David saw Him with a drawn sword in His hand stretched out over Jerusalem, and fell on His face in repentance and intercession (1 Chronicles 21:16-17). Then the angel commanded

him to build an altar, which later became the site of the Solomonic Temple (1 Chronicles 21:18, 24-29; 22:1, 6). During the Great Tribulation, the Lord Jesus shall judge His people Israel along with unbelieving earth-dwellers (Matthew 24:44-51; 25:32-42; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 5:5; 6:1-17). The purging done, the temple will be rebuilt for worship (Ezekiel 20:37-42; 43:2-5, 12).

### *8.2.2 Possible other ministries*

Other passages seem to refer to the Angel of Jehovah, even though His name is not specifically mentioned. If this is the case, He has other possible ministries. Some of the following overlap, but we are seeking the emphasis in each reference:

1. calling to faith and commitment;
2. provision and safekeeping;
3. forgiveness and direction;
4. representative of God's presence;
5. associated with the glory cloud; and
6. heavenly leader of God's armies.

#### *8.2.2.1 Calling to faith and commitment*

The angel received intercession from Abraham (Genesis 18:22-33). He called Jacob to faith in Jehovah (Genesis 31:11-13). Later He brought Jacob to submission, granted him a new name, and left him with a new walk (Genesis 32:24-32). These actions picture the Lord Jesus.

#### *8.2.2.2 Provision and safekeeping*

In blessing Joseph's sons, Jacob spoke of "the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil" (Genesis 48:15-16). His Hebraistic parallel statements may equate the angel with God, and He is credited with provision and protection.

#### *8.2.2.3 Forgiveness and direction*

In Exodus 3:20-21 God promised to send an angel before Moses and Israel to keep them on their journey and to bring them to the Promised Land. They were to obey Him and not provoke Him. This angel could forgive sin, which only God can do, because God's name (signifying His character and authority) was in Him. Here is another preview of our Lord Jesus, who will keep us along life's way and deliver us to our destination, forgiving us our daily sins by God's authority.

#### *8.2.2.4 Representative of God's presence*

In the wilderness journey, Moses interceded for Israel after their first breach of the law. God responded by promising, "Behold, mine angel shall go before thee." Immediately afterward, God said, "I will not go up

in the midst of thee." Moses pleaded further, and God responded, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 32:34-33:3, 14, 15). This presents a distinction between an ordinary angel and the angel who was said to carry with Him God's presence (Exodus 23:20-21). The Angel of Jehovah seems to be "the angel of His presence" (Isaiah 63:9).

#### *8.2.2.5 Associated with the glory cloud*

The fiery, cloudy pillar that led Israel in the wilderness is associated with the angel of God (Exodus 13:21-22; 14-19). If this is the Angel of Jehovah, then this unique angel guided and protected God's people along their pilgrim pathway (note Numbers 9:15-23).

#### *8.2.2.6 Heavenly leader of God's armies*

If the one who appeared to Joshua just before Israel's initial move to conquer Palestine was the Angel of Jehovah, then He was styled "captain of the host of the Lord" (Joshua 5:13-15). He leads God's people to victory over their enemies (see Ephesians 6:10-18).

### 8.3 Conclusion

The Angel of Jehovah has been shown to be equal in essence with Jehovah and yet distinct from Jehovah. The only answer to this seeming contradiction is that He is a preincarnate appearance of our Lord Jesus, the eternal Son. Indeed, He is the most frequent Christophany in the Old Testament. His ministries are varied and extensive and well known in Old Testament times from the days of Abraham to Zechariah. Some of His ministries are those that only God Himself can do and are so extensively parallel with Christ's ministries that they argue further for His identity as the preincarnate Christ.

Please read Section 2.4.5 of Chapter 17 of this course for further information of the identity of the Angel of the LORD [Jehovah or Yahweh].

## 9. WHO ARE THE "SONS OF GOD" IN GENESIS 6:1-8?

Moral and spiritual conditions in the antediluvian world had deteriorated with the passing years, not only among the Cainites but eventually among the Sethites as well. Materialism and ungodliness abounded, except for the small remnant connected with the line of the promised Seed, along with those few who may have been influenced by the witness of such men as Enoch.

Then, in the days of Noah, a strange and terrible event took place, leading rapidly to such a tidal wave of violence and wickedness over the earth that there was no longer any remedy but utter destruction. The "sons of God" saw the "daughters of men" and took them as their wives, the children of such unions being "giants in the earth," mighty men of renown, monsters not only in size but also in wickedness (Genesis

6:1, 2, 4).

In Genesis 6:2 which tells us the "sons of God" took wives from among the "daughters of men." We have the following three different interpretations of the term "sons of God":

1. It refers to the sons of the godly line of Seth and the "daughters of men" to refer to the ungodly line of the Cainites.
2. It refers to despots, powerful dynastic rulers.
3. In keeping with the use of "sons of God" in Job, the term refers to fallen angels who mated with the daughters of men to produce an extremely wicked and powerful progeny that led to the extreme wickedness of Noah's day. Most who hold to this latter view find further support in 2 Peter 2:4-6 and Jude 6-7.

The interpretation of Genesis 6:1-8 hinges upon the definition of three key terms:

1. the sons of God (verses 2,4);
2. the daughters of men (verses 2,4); and
3. the Nephilim (verse 4).

**9.1 Human Beings**

The "sons of God" are generally said by those who hold this view to be the godly men of the Sethite line. The "daughters of men" are thought to be the daughters of the ungodly Cainite. The first Christian writers to suggest this interpretation were Chrysostom and Augustine.

In Israel, separation was a vital part of the religious responsibility of those who truly worshipped God. What took place in chapter six was the breakdown in the separation which threatened the godly seed through whom Messiah was to be born. This breakdown was the cause of the flood which would follow. It destroyed the ungodly world and preserved righteous Noah and his family, through whom the promise of Genesis 3:15 would be fulfilled. The Nephilim are the ungodly and violent men who are the product of this unholy union.

***9.1.1 Evidences for this interpretation***

In support of their identification as men, there are several reasons:

1. The major support for this interpretation is the context of chapters 4:16-17 and 5:32. Chapter four describes the ungodly generation of Cain, while in chapter five we see the godly Sethite line.
2. The term "sons of God" could easily refer to men, since it is used elsewhere of godly men (Deuteronomy 14:1; Isaiah 43:6; Hosea 1:10; 11:1).
3. The concept of sonship, based on God's election, is common in the Old Testament (Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 14:1; Psalm 73:15; Jeremiah 31:20).

4. The concept of a holy line is seemingly established (Genesis 4:26).
5. Hebrew indicates continuity from the previous chapter.
6. Warning against marriage between believers and unbelievers are a common theme throughout the Pentateuch.

### *9.1.2 Problems of this interpretation*

The problems of this interpretation are as follows:

1. Nowhere are the Sethites called "the sons of God."
2. No evidence that the lines are kept totally separate. The theory does not account for Adam and Eve's other children.
3. In Noah's time he alone was holy.
4. The term for men is general. It would need further classification to be understood otherwise.
5. Why stress only the union of godly men with ungodly women? What about the "daughters of God"? Were they being married to "sons of men"?
6. It could not provide a satisfactory answer to the occurrence of the giants and universal violence.

#### *9.1.2.1 Nowhere are the Sethites called "the sons of God"*

First and foremost this interpretation does not provide definitions that arise from within the passage or which even adapt well to the text. Nowhere are the Sethites called "the sons of God."

The interpretation of the passage obviously turns on the meaning of the phrase "sons of God" (Hebrew transliteration, *bene elohim*). In the New Testament, this term is used with reference to all who have been born again through personal faith in Christ (John 1:12; Romans 8:14), and the concept of spiritual relationship of believers to God as analogous to that of children to a father is also found in the Old Testament (Psalm 73:15; Hosea 1:10; Deuteronomy 32:5; Exodus 4:22; Isaiah 43:6). The concept of sonship based on God's election is indeed common in the Old Testament, but none of these examples cited above does the phrase "sons of God" appear; furthermore, in each case the meaning is not really parallel to the meaning here in Genesis.

Neither the descendants of Seth nor true believers of any sort have been previously referred to in Genesis as sons of God in any kind of spiritual sense and, except for Adam himself, they could not have been sons of God in a physical sense. Such a description would apply only to Adam (Luke 3:38) and to the angels, whom God had directly created (Psalm 148:2, 5; 104:4; Colossians 1:16).

#### *9.1.2.2 No evidence that the lines are kept totally separate*

The contrast between the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain may be overemphasized. It is not certain that the line of Seth, as a whole, was godly. While all of the Cainite line appears to be godless, only a handful of the Sethites are said to be godly. The theory does not account for Adam and Eve's other

children. The point which Moses makes in chapter 5 is that God has preserved a righteous remnant through whom His promises to Adam and Eve will be accomplished.

#### *9.1.2.3 In Noah's time he alone was holy*

One has the distinct impression that few were godly in these days (cf. Genesis 6:5-7, 12). The sons of Seth were surely not all godly men; so why should they be called sons of God? It seems that only Noah and his family could be called righteous at the time of the flood (Genesis 6:8-9). Would God have failed to deliver any who were righteous?

#### *9.1.2.4 The term for men is general*

Also, the "daughters of men" can hardly be restricted to only the daughters of the Cainites. In verse 1 Moses wrote, "Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them" (Genesis 6:1). It is difficult to conclude that the "men" here are not men in general or mankind. It would follow that the reference to their "daughters" would be equally general.

#### *9.1.2.5 Why stress only the union of godly men with ungodly women?*

The term could be a class designation for "womankind," in contradistinction to the class of sons of God or angelic beings. Further, it would seem strange to confine the supposed human marriages to those of godly men with ungodly women. Intermarriage between two strains of humanity would most likely include godly women with ungodly men (sons of men with daughters of God). Why stress only the union of godly men with ungodly women? What about the "daughters of God"? Were they being married to "sons of men"? What justification would we have for confining "daughters of men" to godly women? To conclude that the "daughters of men" in verse two is some different, more restrictive group is to ignore the context of the passage.

#### *9.1.2.6 It could not provide a satisfactory answer to the occurrence of the giants and universal violence*

If it merely means that the sons of Seth began to marry the daughters of Cain, then why did not the writer simply say so, and thus avoid all this confusion? Such interpretation could not provide a satisfactory answer to the occurrence of the giants and universal violence. Such an awful irruption of abnormality and wickedness burst forth on the earth could only be explained by a demoniacally supernatural cause.

### *9.1.3 Conclusion*

For these reasons and others, I must conclude that this view is exegetically unacceptable. While it meets the test of orthodoxy it fails to submit to the laws of interpretation.

## 9.2 Despots

This interpretation has its roots in antiquity. It was suggested by both the Aramaic Targums and the Greek Translation of Symmachus. According to this approach the "sons of God" are despots, nobles, dynastic rulers, and kings. These ambitious despots lusted after power and wealth and desired to become "men of a name" that is, somebodies (cf. Genesis 11:4)! Their sin was not intermarriage between two groups - whether two worlds, (angels and man), two religious communities (Sethite and Cainite), or two social classes (royal and common) - but that the sin was polygamy. In this transgression the "sons of God" frequently violated the sacred trust of their office as guardians of the general ordinances of God for human conduct.

### *9.2.1 Evidences for this interpretation*

In support of their identification as despots, there are several reasons:

1. Magistrates or administrators of justice are often referred to as gods (Exodus 21:6; 22:8, 9, 28; Psalm 82:1, 6). Some Bible scholars believe they refer to despots, powerful rulers.n the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, is used for men in positions of authority. "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges who acted in God's name" (Exodus 21:6, following the marginal reading of the NASV). "God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers" (literally, the gods, Psalm 82:1, cf. also 82:6).

2. A thematic parallelism exists between Biblical motifs and the Sumero-Babylonians antediluvian traditions.

3. Kings are often referred to in ancient Near Eastern literature as sons of deities (2 Samuel 7:14). Some scholars have sought to define the expression "the sons of God" by comparing it with the languages of the Ancient Near East. It is interesting to learn that some rulers were identified as the son of a particular god. In Egypt, for example, the king was called "the son of Re" (the sun god).

### *9.2.2 Problems of this interpretation*

The problems of this interpretation are as follows:

1. Scripture never speaks of kings in a group as sons of deity. While pagan kings were referred to as sons of a foreign deity, no Israelite king was so designated. True, nobles and those in authority were occasionally called "gods," but not the "sons of God." This definition chooses to ignore the precise definition given by the Scriptures themselves.

2. There is no evidence that a monarchical system of rulers had been established in the line of Cain.

3. It is difficult to understand why something as familiar as kingship should be expressed so indirectly. The whole idea of power hungry men, seeking to establish a dynasty by the acquisition of a harem seems forced on the passage. Who would ever have found this idea in the text itself?

4. There is no evidence that the expression "sons of God" was borrowed from contemporary literature.

5. The definition of the Nephilim as being merely violent and tyrannical men seems inadequate. Why should these men be sorted out for special consideration if they were merely like all the other men of that day (cf. Genesis 6:11,12)? Needs the connection of v.4, but the "mighty men" are the Nephilim, not the children of the union.

### *9.2.3 Conclusion*

While the despot view does less violence to the text than does the Cainite/Sethite view, it seems to me to be inadequate.

## 9.3 Fallen Angels

According to this view, the "sons of God" of verses 2 and 4 are fallen angels, which have taken the form of masculine human-like creatures. These angels married women of the human race (either Cainites or Sethites) and the resulting offspring were the *Nephilim*. The *Nephilim* were giants with physical superiority and therefore established themselves as men of renown for their physical skill and military might. This race of half human creatures was wiped out by the flood, along with mankind in general, who were sinners in their own right (Genesis 6:11-12).

A wide variety of commentators regard the sons of God as fallen, wicked, angelic beings who cohabited with the fair "daughters of men" in a most unnatural way. This interpretation is an ancient one. It is found in the Book of Enoch, a pseudepigraph dating from the last two centuries B.C.:

> *"And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children'" (Enoch 6:1, 2).*

This was also the view of Philo, Josephus, most of the rabbinical writers, and the oldest church fathers - Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose and Lactantius.

### *9.3.1 Evidences for this interpretation*

Supporting the view that they are angelic beings, we suggest these considerations:

1. The term "sons of God" refers only to angels (Job 1; 38:7; Psalm 29:1; 89:7).
2. The Septuagint renders the phrase "sons of God" as "angels of God" (Job 1).
3. 2 Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7 describe the unnatural angelic sexual sin.
4. It provides a valid reason for the judgment of God upon angels who sinned peculiarly and are

especially bound (2 Peter 2:4-5; Jude 6-7).
5. The context emphasizes the unusual nature of the relationship which produced "giants" (Genesis 6:1-4).
6. Pagan literature often refers to Titans and other offspring of deities and humans. Genesis 6 indicates the roots of this tradition.
7. Christ says holy angels do not marry; He does not rule out gender when wicked angels take human form (Matthew 22:29-30).

#### *9.3.1.1 The term "sons of God" refers only to angels*

My basic presupposition in approaching our text is that we should let the Bible define its own terms. If biblical definitions are not to be found then we must look at the language and culture of contemporary peoples. But the Bible does define the term "the sons of God" for us.

> *"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan also came among them" (Job 1:6).*
>
> *"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came among them to present himself before the Lord" (Job 2:1).*
>
> *"When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:7, cf. Psalm 89:6; Daniel 3:25).*

Outside of Genesis 6 the exact term "the sons of God" (Hebrew transliteration, *bene elohim*) is used exclusively to the angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). A very similar form (*bar elohim*) is used in Daniel 3:25, and also refers either to an angel or to a theophany. The term "sons of the mighty" (*bene elohim*) is used in Psalm 29:1 and also Psalm 89:6, and again refers to angels. Angels are termed *elohim*, *bene elohim*, or *bene elim* because they belong to a class of mighty beings. The references cited to support the other view do not use *bene elohim*. Then, the term should be understood as in other Biblical usage as of angels.

#### *9.3.1.2 The Septuagint renders the phrase "sons of God" as "angels of God"*

It is significant that the Septuagint renders the phrase "sons of God" as "angels of God" (Job 1). This was the Old Testament version in dominant used in the Apostolic period, and thus this would be the way the phrase would have been read by Christ and His apostles. The apocryphal book of Enoch was extant then, as well, and was apparently known to the New Testament writers (Jude 14); and it intensely elaborated this angelic interpretation. This was also the meaning placed on the passage by the Greek translators of the Septuagint, by Josephus, and by all the other ancient Jewish interpreters and the earliest Christian writers.

#### *9.3.1.3 2 Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7 describe the unnatural angelic sexual sin*

The language of both 2 Peter and Jude seems to describe the very type of unusual sexual sin that would have been involved. In 2 Peter the author sets forth the sure destruction of false teachers whose chief characteristics involve a denial of Christ's redemption and right to rule and a devotedness to sensual satisfaction (2 Peter 2:1-3, 12-15, 18). As mentioned, it is significant that here as well as in Jude the angelic sin is compared with sex perversion, as in Sodom and Gomorrah.

The language in Jude is pointed. The phrase "since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh" (Jude 7) should most likely be understood as a description of the angels' activity which is compared with Sodom and Gomorrah. The angelic sin would be "gross immorality" further defined as going after "strange flesh," understood as a flesh they did not have. These same angels are described in Jude 6; they "did not keep their own domain [*archen*, place of assigned authority and activity], but abandoned their proper abode [*idion oiketerion*, "peculiar place of residence"]." Instead of remaining in their usual state and residence, they invaded a new state and residence to commit gross immorality with alien flesh. No other angelic sin or human sin can begin to be described in this amazing and unparalleled fashion.

### *9.3.1.4 It provides a valid reason for the judgment of God upon angels who sinned peculiarly and are especially bound*

Without Genesis 6 referring to angelic beings, it is impossible to find the valid reason for the supposed well-known judgment of God upon angels who sinned peculiarly and are especially bound (2 Peter 2:4-5; Jude 6-7):

> *"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment" (2 Peter 2:4).*
>
> *"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).*

These particular Satanic angels compounded their original sin in following Satan in his rebellion against God by now leaving "their proper abode (i.e. habitation)" and keeping not their "own domain", "going after strange flesh" as later did the Sodomites "in like manner" (Jude 6, 7). Therefore, God no longer allows them to roam about the earth like other demons, but has confined them "in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day," casting them down to a special "hell" (literally, "tartarus," not the ordinary place of departed spirits) where they are "to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Peter 2:4).

While Cain and his descendants were "in Satan's pocket," Satan knew from God's words in Genesis 3:15 that through the seed of the woman God was going to bring forth a Messiah who would destroy him. Genesis 6 describes a desperate attempt on the part of Satan to attack the godly remnant that is named in chapter 5. So long as a righteous seed is preserved, God's promise of Salvation hangs over the head of Satan, threatening of his impending doom. If we would postulate on the satanic purpose in such a crime, we might say that he designed to corrupt the line of the Redeemer (Genesis 3:15) to keep Him from becoming truly human to represent us on the Cross. If the whole race were to eventually become hybrid

angelic-human, then Christ could not have become a genuine and complete representative. God's judgment in the flood punished human folly and destroyed the monstrous offspring of the ungodly union.

Several factors must be noted here:

1. Their peculiar sin is compared in Peter and in Jude with sexual perversions as in Sodom and Gomorrah.
2. The time and sequence of mention connects this angelic sin closely with the flood.
3. If the sin were the original fall of angels with Satan, all evil angels, not just some, would be bound. Further, there would be no Biblical explanation for Satan's angels now being loose (as demons), and Satan himself would be expected to be bound since the Fall.

### *9.3.1.5 The context emphasizes the unusual nature of the relationship which produced "giants"*

One of the most amazing facts revealed by paleontology (the study of fossilized remains of creatures which inhabited the earth in a former age) is that nearly all modern animals were once represented by larger ancestors. One thinks of the mammoths and cave bears, giant cockroaches and dragonflies, and huge reptiles like the dinosaurs. Along with them are occasionally found giant human footprints, suggesting indeed that "there were giants in the earth in those days." Not only in the Bible, but in numerous other ancient books, are preserved traditions of giants.

Why children born of demon-controlled parents should grow into giants? It is believed that mutations can produce "giantism." The strange process of cloning, by which geneticists think they will one day be able to produce a race of carbon copies of Einstein by implantation of body cells in human fertilized eggs might be still another means of doing this. The point is that, if modern geneticists can discuss with all seriousness the imminent possibility of accomplishing such things, then it is likely that knowledge of these secrets could have been available to the angelic and demonic hosts. Having gained essentially complete control over both minds and bodies of these antediluvian parents, these fallen "sons of God" could then, by some such genetic manipulation, cause their offspring to become a race of monsters. The latter also then would be under their control and possession as well.

The daughters of men were not raped or seduced as such. They simply chose their husbands on the same basis that the angels selected them - physical appeal. Now if you were an eligible woman in those days, who would you choose? Would you select a handsome, muscle-bulging specimen of a man, who had a reputation for his strength and accomplishments, or what seemed to be in comparison a ninety-pound weakling? Women looked for the hope of being the mother of the Savior. Who would be the most likely father of such a child? Would it not be a "mighty man of renown," who would also be able to boast of immortality? Some of the godly Sethites did live to be nearly 1000 years old, but the *nephilim* did not die, if they were angels. And so the new race began.

Therefore, it is possible that the *nephilim* may be interpreted as a race of super-humans who are the product of this angelic invasion of the earth.

### *9.3.1.6 Pagan literature often refers to Titans and other offspring of deities and humans*

The Hebrew term for the resulting offspring is *nephilim* and comes from the verb *naphal* ("fall") means "fallen ones" and designates the unusual offspring of the unholy union. The name came also to mean "giants" and was applied later to the giants (i.e. the sons of Anak in Canaan) seen in Canaan by the Israelite spies (Numbers 13:33):

> *"There also we saw the nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight" (Numbers 13:33).*

The word was so understood by the translators of Genesis into Greek, rendering the word in the Septuagint by *gigantes*. Why are the unusual and famous offspring of this union designated *nephilim*, translated by the Greek Septuagint as *gigantes*, rendered "giants" in the King James Version? The basic idea of the Greek term, however, is not monstrous size, but "earth-born" (*gegenes*) and was used of Titans, who were partly of celestial and partly of terrestrial origin. Genesis 6 indicates the roots of this tradition.

### *9.3.1.7 Christ says holy angels do not marry; He does not rule out gender when wicked angels take human form*

Christ says holy angels do not marry; He does not rule out gender when wicked angels take human form (Matthew 22:29-30). The context presents the cohabitation as unusual, probably one of the causes for the flood. (Probably Genesis 6:1-4 presents the angelic cause and 6:5-6 the human cause). So, then unusual relationships might be involved. We do not know the total powers of fallen angels. Matthew 22:30 does not exclude such cohabitation, but its point is that angels do not procreate among themselves. Furthermore, angels have taken human form and performed other human functions, such as eating, walking, talking, and sitting. Some angels were mistaken for men and were sought for homosexual use by men of Sodom (Genesis 18:1-19:5).

### *9.3.2 Problems of this interpretation*

Scholars who reject this view readily acknowledge the fact that the precise term is clearly defined in Scripture. The reason for rejecting the fallen angel interpretation is that such a view is said to be in violation of both reason and Scripture in the following ways:

1. Angels are sexless and they cannot procreate (Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; cf. Luke 20:34-36).
2. Angels are spiritual beings therefore they do not have physical bodies (i.e. human sexual organs) to perform sexual intercourse with women.
3. Angels were not previously mentioned in the first five chapters of Genesis.
4. Why is man punished by the Flood for the wickedness of angels?
5. The idea of a union between angels and humans is unreasonable, abnormal, and grotesque,

partaking of the mythological and magical.

### *9.3.2.1 Angels are sexless and they cannot procreate*

The primary passage which is said to be problematical is that found in Matthew's gospel, where our Lord said,

> *"You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in **marriage**, but are like angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:29-30).*

Is it true that angels are sexless and they cannot procreate? We are told that here our Lord Jesus Christ said that angels are sexless, but is this really true? Jesus compared men in heaven to angels in heaven. Jesus taught that angels do not propagate baby angels (Matthew 22:30). Neither men nor angels are said to be sexless in heaven but we are told that in heaven there will be no **marriage**. This is not equivalent to saying that angels are "sexless," since people who share in the resurrection will surely retain their own personal identity, whether male or female. It is the **will of God** that there will be no sexual activity between male angels and female angels in the heaven to generate their offsprings (i.e. baby angels). Angels were never told to "be fruitful and multiply" as was man. Hence, it is correct to say that angels **do not** procreate in heaven but it is wrong to say that angels **cannot** procreate on earth. Fallen angels were not concerned with obedience to God's will.

As I have mentioned in the above Sections 4.5 and 4.10, angels can appear in different forms, they may appear as a man (cf. Genesis 18:2, 22; 19:1, 5; Daniel 10:18) or a woman (Zechariah 5:9), or sexless or bi-sexual. Therefore, it is not correct to say that all angels are absolutely males or females or sexless.

### *9.3.2.2 Angels are spiritual beings therefore they do not have physical bodies to perform sex*

Is it true that angels cannot participate in sexual activities? Some Bible scholars think that it is difficult to believe that after angels rebelled against God and were cast from heaven, they acquired the capacity for human reproduction. After man fell, he experienced no essential biological transformation; the only change was represented by the introduction of pain and difficulty. However, this objection presupposes more about angelic abilities than we know.

Although some angels do not have physical bodies, the fallen angels (i.e. demons) may possess a human body (i.e. demon-possession) in order to carry out sexual activities. In addition, some angels have often revealed themselves in bodily form (Genesis 18:1-19:28; Luke 1:26; John 20:12; Hebrews 13:2). They can wash (Genesis 19:2), eat (Genesis 19:3) and sleep (Genesis 19:4). In addition, if the Holy Spirit (i.e. without physical body) can cause the virgin Mary to born a baby (i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ), then it is possible that evil spirits may also cause women to conceive babies.

When we find angels described in the book of Genesis, it is clear that they can assume a human-like form,

and that their sex is masculine. The writer to the Hebrews mentions that angels can be entertained without man's knowing it (Hebrews 13:2). Surely angels must be convincingly like men. The homosexual men of Sodom were very capable of judging sexuality. They were attracted by the "male" angels who came to destroy the city (cf. Genesis 19:1ff, especially verse 5).

A solution seems to consist in recognizing that the children were true human children of truly human fathers and mothers, but that all were possessed and controlled by evil spirits. That is, these fallen angelic "sons of God" accomplished their purposes by something equivalent to demon possession, indwelling the bodies of human men, and then also taking (or "possessing") the bodies of the women as well. The men whose bodies they possessed were evidently thereby made so attractive to the careless and rebellious women of the age that they could take over and use any of the women they chose. The seductive beauty of the women, probably enhanced by various artificial cosmetics and allurements developed by that time, was itself sufficient to induce men to constant obsession with sex, assuring a maximum rapidity of multiplication of the population. Thus, the "sons of God" controlled not only the men whose bodies they had acquired for their own exploitation, but also the women they took to themselves in this way, and then all the children they bore.

#### *9.3.2.3 Angels were not previously mentioned in the first five chapters of Genesis*

Angels were not mentioned in the first five chapters in Genesis; to introduce them in such a narrative and in connection with such a strange, unprecedented union is unnatural and foreign to the text. I would like to reply that although angels were not previously mentioned in Genesis, it should not be viewed as a decisive evidence to reject this interpretation.

#### *9.3.2.4 Why is man punished by the Flood for the wickedness of angels?*

A formidable problem is that judgment in Genesis 6:6ff. fell upon men alone. Why is man punished by the Flood for the wickedness of angels? Since the sons of God were the real initiators of the evil that was judged, surely they were human rather than angelic. I would like to reply that both wicked angels and sinful men were justly punished by God.

Only Noah and his family could be called righteous at the time of the flood (Genesis 6:8-9), therefore it is right to punish the sinful men by Flood (Genesis 6:12-13). In addition, those fallen angels involved in the extraordinary unnatural sexual sin were confined permanently in *tartarus* awaiting the great judgment of the lake of fire with Satan their leader (Matthew 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 20:10). Those fallen angels are probably "the spirit in prison which once were disobedient when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah" (1 Peter 3:19-20), to whom Christ went in the Spirit after His death to proclaim His ultimate victory over their evil purposes.

#### *9.3.2.5 The idea of a union between angels and humans is grotesque, partaking of the mythological and magical*

One's first reaction to this passage (and the standard interpretation of the liberals) is to think of the fairy tales of antiquity, the legends of ogres and dragons, and the myths of the gods consorting with men - and then to dismiss the entire story as legend and superstition. I would like to reply that the whole Bible recorded a lot of miracles and supernatural events, therefore we should not solely base on this objection to dismiss this interpretation.

### *9.3.3 Conclusion*

After examining all the evidences and problems of this interpretation, I conclude that the identity of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-4 should mean "fallen angels." I believe that it is the best interpretation.

## Different Interpretations of the Identity of the "Sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-4

| | Human Beings | Despots | Fallen Angels |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sons of God** | Godly line of Seth | Dynastic rulers | Fallen angels |
| **Daughters of Men** | Line of Cain | Commoners | Any woman (mortals) |
| **Offense** | Marriage of holy to unholy | Polygamy | Marriage between supernatural and mortal |
| **Evidences** | 1. The context (Genesis 4) refers to the lines of Seth (Genesis 4:16-24) and of Cain (Genesis 4:25-5:32).<br>2. The term "sons of God" could easily refer to men, since it is used elsewhere of godly men (Deuteronomy 14:1; Isaiah 43:6; Hosea 1:10; 11:1).<br>3. The concept of sonship, based on God's election, is common in the Old Testament (Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy | 1. Magistrates or administrators of justice are often referred to as gods (Exodus 21:6; 22:8, 9, 28; Psalm 82:1, 6).<br>2. A thematic parallelism exists between Biblical motifs and the Sumero-Babylonians | 1. The term "sons of God" refers only to angels (Job 1; 38:7; Psalm 29:1; 89:7).<br>2. The Septuagint renders the phrase "sons of God" as "angels of God" (Job 1).<br>3. 2 Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7 describe the unnatural angelic sexual sin.<br>4. It provides a valid reason for the judgment of God upon angels who sinned peculiarly and are especially bound (2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 14:1; Psalm 73:15; Jeremiah 31:20).<br>4. The concept of a holy line is seemingly established (Genesis 4:26).<br>5. Hebrew indicates continuity from the previous chapter.<br>6. Warning against marriage between believers and unbelievers are a common theme throughout the Pentateuch. | antediluvian traditions.<br>3. Kings are often referred to in ancient Near Eastern literature as sons of deities (2 Samuel 7:14). In Egypt, for example, the king was called "the son of Re" (the sun god). | Peter 2:4-5; Jude 6-7).<br>5. The context emphasizes the unusual nature of the relationship which produced "giants" (Genesis 6:1-4).<br>6. Pagan literature often refers to Titans and other offspring of deities and humans.<br>7. Christ says holy angels do not marry; He does not rule out gender when wicked angels take human form (Matthew 22:29-30). |
| **Problems** | 1. Nowhere are the Sethites called "the sons of God."<br>2. No evidence that the lines are kept totally separate. The theory does not account for Adam and Eve's other children.<br>3. In Noah's time he alone was holy.<br>4. The term for men is general. It would need further classification to be understood otherwise.<br>5. Why stress only the union of godly men with ungodly women? What about the "daughters of God"? Were they being married to "sons of men"?<br>6. It could not provide a | 1. Scripture never speaks of kings in a group as sons of deity.<br>2. There is no evidence that a monarchical system of rulers had been established in the line of Cain.<br>3. It is difficult to understand why something as familiar as kingship should be expressed so indirectly.<br>4. There is no evidence that the expression "sons of God" was borrowed from contemporary literature.<br>5. The definition of the Nephilim as being | 1. Angels are sexless and they cannot procreate (Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; cf. Luke 20:34-36).<br>2. Angels are spiritual beings therefore they do not have physical bodies to perform sexual intercourse with women.<br>3. Angels were not previously mentioned in the first five chapters of Genesis.<br>4. Why is man punished by the Flood for the wickedness of angels?<br>5. The idea of a union between angels and humans is unreasonable, abnormal, and |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | satisfactory answer to the occurrence of the giants and universal violence. | merely violent and tyrannical men seems inadequate. | grotesque, partaking of the mythological and magical. |

## 10. THE ROLE OF ANGELS IN MEDIEVAL JEWISH THOUGHT (OPTIONAL SECTION)

*(Note: I would like to draw the attention of my readers that all materials given in this section is purely for your information, as it is not originated from the Holy Bible, therefore it should not be dogmatically held.)*

### 10.1 Fallen Angels Who Had Sex with Human Women in Genesis 6

The pseudepigraphical **book of Jubilees** gives these names for eleven fallen angels who were supposed to have had sex with human women in Genesis 6. Each was supposed to have taught human beings some art or skill that corrupted our race.

## Eleven Fallen Angels Who had Sex with Human Women in Genesis 6

| Fallen Angels | Have Taught Human Beings Some Skill that Corrupted Our Race |
|---|---|
| Armaros | taught resolving enchantments |
| Araqiel | taught the signs of the earth |
| Azazel | taught how to make swords and create cosmetics for beautifying women |
| Baraqijal | taught astrology |
| Ezequeel | taught the knowledge of clouds |
| Gadreel | taught men to make war |
| Kokabel | taught the science of the constellations |
| Penemune | taught writing |
| Sariel | taught the course of the moon |
| Semjaza | taught enchantments |
| Shamshiel | taught the signs of the sun |

The game of naming angels is an ancient one. Many names for angels are found in Jewish religious

writings of the first two centuries before Christ, including the Apocrypha. In fact, **A Dictionary of Angels (1994)** contains 331 pages of angels identified and named in sources from Christian, Jewish and other traditions - names arranged in order from A to Z. Obviously, all of that goes far beyond Scripture's revelation of the unseen realm.

### 10.2 Orders of Angels in the Heavenly Hierarchy

Here are three of the many rankings of angels found in Christian writings, Jewish and Islamic writings provide other rankings.

## Orders of Angels in the Heavenly Hierarchy

| Ambrose | Gregory the Great | John of Damascus |
|---|---|---|
| Seraphim | Seraphim | Seraphim |
| Cherubim | Cherubim | Cherubim |
| Powers | Thrones | Thrones |
| Dominions | Dominions | Dominions |
| Thrones | Principalities | Powers |
| Archangels | Powers | Authorities |
| Angels | Virtues | Rulers |
| - | Archangels | Archangels |
| - | Angels | Angels |

#### *10.2.1 Seraphim*

Seraphim, the highest order, the six-winged ones, surround the throne of God, singing ceaselessly, "Holy, Holy, Holy." They are angels of love, light and fire.

#### *10.2.2 Cherubim*

Cherubim are the guardians of the fixed stars, keepers of the celestial records, bestowers of knowledge. In the Talmud cherubim are equated with the order of wheels, also called ophanim. Chief rulers are Ophaniel, Rikbiel, Zophiel, and, before his fall, Satan.

#### *10.2.3 Thrones*

Thrones bring God's justice to us. They are sometimes called "wheels" and in the **Jewish Kabbalah**,

"chariots" or the "merkaba." The occult book, **the Zohar**, ranks wheels above seraphim, but other sources place them on the same level as cherubim, the whole thing being confused. The ruling prince is Oriphiel or Zabkiel or Zaphiel.

### *10.2.4 Dominions*

Dominions regulate angelic duties. Through them the majesty of God is manifested. They hold an orb or scepter as an emblem of authority, and, in **Hebraic lore**, the chief of this order is named Hashael or Zadkiel.

### *10.2.5 Virtues*

Virtues work miracles on earth. They bestow grace and valor.

### *10.2.6 Powers*

Powers stop the efforts of demons to overthrow the world - or they preside over demons, or perhaps (according to the apostle Paul) they are themselves evil. Ertosi, Sammael, or Camael (depending on the source) is the chief of the Powers.

### *10.2.7 Principalities*

Principalities are protectors of religion. Nisroc, in **Milton**, is "of principalities the prime," and others, according to various sources, are named Requel, Anael, and Cerviel.

### *10.2.8 Archangels and Angels*

Archangels and angels are guardians of people and all physical things. The apocryphal Book of Enoch names Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel as the four principal angels who were privileged to stand around the throne of God (Enoch 9:1; 40:9). It also numbers the following seven angels as archangels (Enoch 20:1-7; cf. Tobit 12:15):

1. Michael;
2. Gabriel;
3. Raphael;
4. Uriel;
5. Raguel;
6. Zariel; and
7. Remiel.

The above information (Sections 10.2.1 to 10.2.8) is originated from *Sophy Burnham*, **A Book of Angels**, 1990.

## 11. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


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# Chapter Twenty Four - Satan: Our Adversary

There is a vast amount of Scriptural evidence that Satan actually exists and that he is a person, not just a symbol of evil or a figure of speech. He is an angelic being of wide and powerful influence, a major character on the moral stage of God's universe. He is an enemy of God and of man and of believers, one whom we should know, respect, and resist in the faith and in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This chapter, divided into eight major divisions, is a careful study of Santanology:

1. We will examine the names of Satan;
2. We will examine the existence of Satan;
3. We will examine the personality of Satan;
4. We will examine the nature of Satan;
5. We will examine the original state of Satan;
6. We will examine the fall of Satan;
7. We will examine the present character and position of Satan; and
8. We will examine the present power and activity of Satan.

**1. THE NAMES OF SATAN**

In the Scriptures Satan is referred to by several different names:

1. Anointed Cherub Who Covers;
2. Satan;
3. Lucifer;
4. Devil;
5. Dragon;
6. Serpent;
7. Beelzebub;
8. Belial;
9. The evil one;
10. The tempter;
11. Liar, Deceiver;
12. Destroyer;
13. The god of this world;
14. The prince of the power of the air; and
15. The ruler of this world.

### 1.1 Anointed Cherub Who Covers

Anointed Cherub Who Covers (Ezekiel 28:14, 16). Satan is called by God, "the anointed cherub" and "O covering cherub." "Cherubim" speaks of God's presence, glory, holiness, and sovereignty. This title describes Satan's original exalted position. He was probably the highest rank of the highest class of angelic beings before his fall. This makes the defection of Satan all the more heinous and reprehensible. After his fall, his leading role is being replaced by the archangel, Michael, (Revelation 12:7-9) and his original duties are being replaced by the four living beings (Revelation 4:6).

### 1.2 Satan

Satan (1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1:6; Zechariah 3:1; Matthew 4:10; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Timothy 1:20). This term was used about 52 times from the Hebrew, *satan*, means "adversary" or "opposer"; he is the adversary of both God and man (1 Peter 5:8). It designates this person as self-proposed rival of God whose purpose is to set up a counterfeit and rival kingdom.

### 1.3 Lucifer

Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12 KJV). This term was used only in Isaiah 14:12 from the Hebrew, *Helel*, the Latin equivalent is Lucifer, means "the morning star", an epithet of the planet Venus. It is literally "light-bearer." This title refers to him in his original state, as a shining one. This title may connect Satan with the other angelic beings, pictures as stars, and may indicate that he is the first among them. It speaks of the light that was his character and his abode before the blackness of sin invaded and surrounded him. The use of morning star with reference to Satan gives us an indication of the basic character of his plot against God. Since the same title is used in Revelation 22:16 of Christ, we are alerted to the fact that Satan's plan was to counterfeit the plan of God, and indeed it was and is. As Lucifer, Satan is seen as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

### 1.4 Devil

Devil (Matthew 13:39; John 13:2; Ephesians 6:11; James 4:7). This term was used about 35 times from the Greek, *diabolos*, means slanderer. As the devil, a term used only in the New Testament, he is the slanderer and the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). He slanders God to man (Genesis 3:1-7), and man to God (Job 1:9; 2:4). It pictures this person as uttering maliciously false reports that tend to injure the reputation of another. The devil seeks to defame God, Christ and Their purpose. He seeks also to defame believers.

### 1.5 Dragon

Dragon (Revelation 12:3, 7, 9; 13:2; 20:2; cf. Isaiah 51:9). The word "dragon" seems to mean literally "serpent" or "sea-monster." The dragon is taken as the personification of Satan, as it is of Pharaoh in Ezekiel 29:3 and 32:2. The dragon as a sea animal may properly represent Satan's activity in the seas of

the world. Note that the dragon has a tail; thus our Halloween caricatures of Satan are not far off! Satan is depicted as a great red dragon (Revelation 12:3). This emphasizes his fierce nature, especially in conflict. He is portrayed as a terrifying, destructive beast whose wrath against God and His people seeks their total devastation. He has an army of angels that join him in his war of destruction against Christ and His people (Revelation 12:4, 9, 17).

**1.6 Serpent**

Serpent of old (Genesis 3:1; Revelation 12:9; 20:2; cf. Isaiah 27:1). This name recalls the first reference to Satan in the Bible as he deceived Eve in Genesis 3 and caused the fall of man. "Old" indicates that he has been around a long time and is well known. By this term, his crookedness and deceitfulness (2 Corinthians 11:3) are pointed out.

**1.7 Beelzebub**

Beelzebub or Beelzebul (Matthew 10:25; 12:24-27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15-19). The title Beelzebul, from the better Greek texts, comes from the Hebrew *Baalzebul*, "lord of the flies," or "lord of the dwelling." In Syriac it means "lord of dung." It was the title given to one of the gods of the Philistines, and had been brought over into Judaism as a title of Satan. 2 Kings 1:3, 6 and 16 mention *Baal-zebub* as the god of Ekron, a northern city of Philistia. Another opinion is that *Baalzebub* ("lord of flies") may be an intentional Hebrew alteration of the Canaanite *Baalzebul* ("lord of the high place," or "exalted Baal"). In this case, it should be a Hebraistic insult to a false god. Using this name as a source of Christ's power, the Jewish leaders were indeed blaspheming God's Son and the Holy Spirit. This title, then, describes Satan's position as the ruler of a demonic host involved in bringing men into spiritual bondage through lust and idolatry.

**1.8 Belial**

Belial or Beliar (2 Corinthians 6:15). This term was used in the Old Testament in the sense of "worthlessness" (2 Samuel 23:6). Thus we read of the "worthless fellows" (lit. "sons of Belial," Judges 20:13; cf. 1 Samuel 10:27; 30:22; 1 Kings 21:13).

**1.9 The Evil One**

The evil one (Matthew 13:19, 38; Ephesians 6:16; 1 John 2:13f.; 5:19). This is a description of his character and work. He is evil, wicked, cruel and tyrannical over all that he can control, and he is out to do evil wherever possible.

**1.10 The Tempter**

The tempter (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5). This name indicates his constant purpose and endeavor to incite man to sin. He tries men in moral combat. He presents the most plausible excuses and suggests

the most striking advantages for sinning. The title is a present participle in the Greek, indicating a continuous and characterizing activity. Satan is devoted to this as his job. First it was Adam and Eve and then the whole race he worked on. He even sought to entice the Last Adam (i.e. Jesus Christ), but was overcome by Him.

### 1.11 Liar, Deceiver

Liar, deceiver (John 8:44; Revelation 12:9; 20:3). Christ called Satan the father, the originator of lies. He murdered the whole race through his deception (John 8:44). Currently Satan is the one "who deceives the whole world," or inhabited earth (Revelation 12:9). Again the present participle in Greek indicates that he is characterized by this continuous action. It continues until he is bound during the millennial reign of Christ and resumes again upon his release for a short time (Revelation 20:3; 7-8). This deception involves a wide range of scheming, from hiding his own existence to actively promoting false philosophies, religions, and outright perversions of behaviour and morals. His schemes or deceits are successful with many. Three factors that make him a master of trickery are his constitutional superiority as a cherub, his extensive experience and knowledge, and his ability to transform himself in a variety of ways.

### 1.12 Destroyer

Destroyer (Revelation 9:11). The text tells of grotesque locust-like demons who "have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is *Abaddon*, and in the Greek he has the name *Apollyon*." Both the Hebrew and Greek names mean "destroyer." In the context, the demons torment and kill great numbers of mankind. Satan is not only a destroyer of physical life, but of spiritual life. The end of rebellion against God is self-destruction and the destruction of others.

### 1.13 The God of this World

The god of this world (literally, "age," 2 Corinthians 4:4). The Greek term is not world (*cosmos*, ordered system), but age or course (*aion*, course or age). The emphasis is on a system of philosophy or a spirit of the age that expresses a creature-centered manner of life and religion that rejects the true God and sets up a counterfeit like and substitute religion. He sponsors the religion of the natural man and is, no doubt, back of the false cults and systems that have cursed the true church through the ages. As such, he has his servants (2 Corinthians 11:15), doctrines (1 Timothy 4:1), sacrifices (1 Corinthians 10:20), and synagogues (Revelation 2:9). Men walk according to the course (*aion*) of this world (*cosmos*); that is, they are governed and dominated by it (Ephesians 2:1-3). It partakes of its leader's characteristics, and so it is termed "this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4).

### 1.14 The Prince of the Power of the Air

The prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). This title might be rendered "the ruler of the empire of this atmosphere." It pictures Satan's position and activity as a dominating leader operating a kingdom that centers in the atmosphere of the earth. It is a limited empire, but it includes all fallen men and angels. As

such, he is the leader of the evil angels (Matthew 12:24; 25:41; Revelation 12:7; 16:13f.). The principalities in Romans 8:38 are princedoms of evil rulers (cf. Daniel 10:13, 20). As I have mentioned in Section 6.2 of Chapter 23, both the good and the bad organizations of angels are included in the "principalities," "powers" and "might" of Ephesians 1:21. In Ephesians 6:12, "rulers of the darkness of this world" and "spiritual wickedness" in heavenly places refer to the organization of the forces of evil, as do the "thrones" and "dominions" in Colossians 1:16.

### 1.15 The Ruler of this World

The ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). This seems to refer to his influence over the governments of this world. Satan rules a world (Greek, *cosmos*, ordered system) that includes by nature (Romans 8:7-8). This *cosmos* is Satan's counterpart to God's rule and kingdom. His desire to be like God (Isaiah 14:14) caused him to sin, and now he rules over all rebels who have, like him, fallen into him. This world engulfs false religionists (John 8:44) and threatens to defeat the true children of God (1 John 2:15-17). Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim to some sort of right here on this planet (Matthew 4:8f.); God, however, has set definite bounds for him, and when the time comes, he will be superseded by the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one whose right it is to rule.

## 2. THE EXISTENCE OF SATAN

The denial of Satan's reality usually takes the form of considering the idea of a Satan as the personification of evil but not actually a being who has his own separate existence. The idea of "Satan" as a person developed more in New Testament times, and this necessitated, we are told, reinterpretations of the "legends" of the Old Testament, since, it is claimed, they do not contain the idea of a distinctive demonic figure. In addition, Iranian dualism, it is said, contributed to the Jewish idea of a personal Satan during the Greco-Roman period.

If one accepts the Scriptures as revelation from God, rather than merely a record of man's thoughts about God, then the reality of Satan cannot be denied. Satan did not evolve as a personal being; he existed and acted from the earliest to the last books of God's revelation.

### 2.1 Evidence in the Old Testament

The Old Testament assumes the existence of Satan, much as it does the existence of God. There is no formal proof presented for either one, but the story unfolds depending for its vitality upon their reality.

The whole plot of the book of Genesis depends upon the reality of Satan working through the serpent to cause the fall of mankind into sin (Genesis 3). The basic facts of the Creation and the Fall lay the foundation for the whole battle between good and evil throughout the Bible and history, and for the whole redemptive plan of God centered in the God-man who overcomes Satan.

The whole story of the tragedy and triumph of Job is based in the first two chapters upon the personal challenges and battle between God and Satan.

A crucial judgment upon Israel in which seventy thousand men fell is linked directly to Satan moving David to number Israel in 1 Chronicles 21. To stay the plague of God, David was ordered to offer sacrifice upon the threshing floor of Ornan, which later became the site of the tabernacle and temple.

The concepts of demons behind idolatry and an adversary like Satan are found in Psalms 106:36-37 and 109:6. It is difficult to explain seemingly superhuman powers behind the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:12-17 and the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:1-9 without the recognition of a personal Satan.

Zechariah 3 could not be understood properly without the reality of Satan opposing and accusing Israel. Here Satan is presented as a definite person who is opposed by the Angel of Jehovah, the preincarnate Son of God.

We conclude that the Old Testament fully support the reality of Satan's existence and influence as a person.

### 2.2 Evidence in the New Testament

Satan's existence is recognized by every writer of the New Testament, though not necessarily by every book. In fact, 19 of the 27 books mention Satan by one of his names. Even of the 8 that do not specifically mention him, 4 imply his existence by the mention of evil angels or demons. The evidence in the New Testament is extensive.

### 2.3 Evidence from Christ Himself

In the gospels there are 27 references to Satan. In 25 of these, it is Christ who speaks of Satan as actually existing as a person. The report of the temptation of the wildereness could have come from none other than the Lord Himself, as He described the person-to-person encounter He had with Satan. The essence of the testings and the details of the conversations seem to have been related directly by the Lord to the disciples for their information and later writings. When Christ speaks on a subject, the reverent receive it as truth.

## 3. THE PERSONALITY OF SATAN

Here we consider the evidence for Satan's personality. What further evidence is there that Satan is a genuine person and not just a figment of imagination or personification of evil? Consider three lines of evidence as follows:

1. traits of personality;
2. personal pronouns; and
3. moral responsibility.

### 3.1 Traits of Personality

An accepted proof of personality consists of demonstrating that one possesses intellect, emotion, and will. Satan has these. His intellect is obvious in his scheming to deceive (2 Corinthians 11:3) and in his communications through speech to other persons (Luke 4:1-12).

His emotions are clearly involved in his rebellious desire to oppose God (Isaiah 14:12-17) and conquer Christ (Luke 4:1-12). He emotes fury and rage in his hatred of God's people, especially the Jewish nation and those who protect them out of faith in the Jewish Saviour (Revelation 12:12, 17).

We see Satan's will in operation appealing to the will of Christ in commands (Luke 4:3, 9) and in his determined and never giving up rebellion against God (Revelation 20:7-9).

### 3.2 Personal Pronouns

The Scripture uses the personal pronouns of him. God says of him, "You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there ... And you sinned" (Ezekiel 28:14, 16). Paul writes, "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). James commands, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). In the last two instances, note the association with other persons.

### 3.3 Moral Responsibility

Neither impersonal animals nor forces are held moral accountable, but only persons who reflect the moral image of their Creator. Judgment has come and will further come upon Satan and his angels (Matthew 25:41; John 16:11).

### 3.4 Conclusion

We conclude that Satan is a person in a genuine sense. This is observable from the evidence and was determined when he was made in God's image, as were all other angels.

## 4. THE NATURE OF SATAN

Certain facts are clear about Satan's basic makeup:

1. creature;
2. spirit being;
3. cherubim class; and
4. first in rank among all creatures.

### 4.1 Creature

Satan was created by God, not in his present corrupt form, but wonderfully constituted and holy. God describes him: "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you" (Ezekiel 28:15). Colossians 1:16 includes Satan as one created by Christ, since he is one of the invisible powers that owe their existence to the Son. As a creature, he is infinitely less than God.

### 4.2 Spirit Being

As other angels, with whom he is constantly associated (Isaiah 14:12-13; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:9), Satan is in essence a spirit, finite and limited. This means he is incorporeal and invisible (Colossians 1:16), though at times he may manifest his presence in temporary, visible form.

### 4.3 Cherubim Class

Satan is called by God, "the anointed cherub" and "O covering cherub" (Ezekiel 28:14, 16). "Cherubim" speaks of God's presence, glory, holiness, and sovereignty. They were created for this specific ministry. This title describes Satan's original exalted position.

### 4.4 First In Rank Among All Creatures

The terms "the anointed cherub" and "covering cherub" indicate that before he fell, Satan was a high-stationed guardian for God. "Anointed" indicates that he had a special position, just as anointed kings had special position. The further description in Ezekiel 28 seems to leave little room for a greater angelic creature: "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty ... Every precious stone was your covering" (Ezekiel 28:12-13). He was probably the highest rank of the highest class of angelic beings before his fall. After his fall, his leading role is being replaced by the archangel, Michael, (Revelation 12:7-9) and his original duties are being replaced by the four living beings (Revelation 4:6).

Satan still retains some of the dignity he had before he fell into sin. He is regarded as the leader of the fallen angels, one without equal in their ranks (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:4, 7). Michael the archangel respected his authority and dignity when disputing with him over the body of Moses (Jude 8-9). It is most likely that Satan is equivalent to an archangel among the evil angels or demons.

### 4.5 Summary

Satan was created a person of the angelic class of cherubim, possibly first in position among all created spirit beings. Great beauty and power were his from God. Today, after his fall, he is still powerful, but his power is limited and resisted by God the infinite Creator and Sovereign. He retains some of his dignity, but he is no longer beautiful, since he lost his holiness in his fall. We need to remember that God is in complete control, and no creature can overthrow God or any of His purposes.

## 5. THE ORIGINAL STATE OF SATAN

All angels were created by God through His Son, the Lord Jesus (Colossians 1:16-17). There is no creature that was not created by Him (John 1:3). God cannot be directly involved in the creation of evil, for He is holy. So it is obvious from reason and from the Bible that all angels were created in a holy state, each a direct creation of God and all at or near the same time.

Satan fell from his originally holy state when he rebelled against God, incurring his own condemnation (1 Timothy 3:6) and enticing perhaps a third of the angels to defect with him (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:4). Now Satan and his angels are permanently wicked and opposed to God and His program and people.

Two major passages are usually connected with Satan's original state and fall which we will consider:

1. Ezekiel 28:12-19; and
2. Isaiah 14:12-17.

### 5.1 Identification of Persons

Ezekiel 28:1-19 speaks of God's judgment on a rebellious ruler or rulers. Many debate whether or not Ezekiel 28:1-19 has Satan in view, but if it does, then it provides us with a number of descriptive details as to the characteristics of Satan's original condition at his creation. All agree that the subject of Ezekiel 28:1-19 is judgment on Tyre and its leader. But the question is, do Ezekiel 28:11-19 go beyond the human leader to reveal things about something or someone else? The candidates for that something or someone else called the king of Tyre are:

1. a symbol drawn from pagan mythology;
2. a primal being who lived in the Garden of Eden and was driven out through pride;
3. a mythological, unreal being presented in Phoenician mythology and incorporated and applied in this story to the king of Tyre;
4. an "ideal," though unreal, person;
5. the ideal man, the same as the historical first man, Adam, whose histories (initial privileges and

subsequent sin) are analogous;
6. the sinister being Satan; and
7. Satan's masterpiece, Antichrist.

### *5.1.1 Views 1 through 5 are inadequate*

Views 1 through 4 are incompatible with the principles of normal interpretation, for there is no justification for introducing such mythology into the text. View 5 though possible, seems to fall short of fulfilling the totality of the sinister nature of the figure behind the king of Tyre.

### *5.1.2 Both the human leader and Satan were in mind*

Views 6 and 7 can be combined; i.e. Satan is the one behind it all including being behind Antichrist who will be the climax of all people whom Satan has indwelt throughout history. The king of Tyre was one whom he indwelt in the past, as Antichrist will be the final one he will indwell in the future. To understand the prophecy as including references to Satan does not mean that Ezekiel did not also have a historical leader of Tyre in mind in his denunciations. The question is, did he only have the historical human leader in view or did he also have a greater being, Satan, in mind?

I would say that two persons are addressed:

1. the human leader (Ezekiel 28:1-10); and
2. behind him the superhuman leader, Satan (Ezekiel 28:11-19).

My reasons are as follows:

1. It would not be unusual for a prophetic passage to refer both to a local personage and also to someone else who fully fulfill it. This is true of many passages that relate both to King David and Jesus Christ. It is also true of the reference to the prince of the kingdom of Persia in Daniel 10:13, a reference that must include a superhuman being related to the kingdom of Persia. So for Ezekiel 28 to refer both to the then-reigning king of Tyre as well as to Satan would not be a unique interpretative conclusion.

2. The whole pronouncement of judgment in Ezekiel 28:1-19 speaks to two different persons with:

   (a) different titles, "prince or leader" of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:2) and "king" of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:12); and

   (b) different natures, "man (Ezekiel 28:2, 9) and "the anointed cherub" (Ezekiel 28:14).

3. The passage includes too many superlatives and figures to be true of only an earthly king no

matter how great he was, for examples:

(a) the superlatives used of the kind, "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" (Ezekiel 28:12);

(b) difficult to apply to any earthly king, "You were the anointed cherub who covers ... walked in the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezekiel 28:14); and

(c) the perfection of the king, "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created" (Ezekiel 28:15).

### *5.1.3 Conclusion*

I conclude that the historic king of Tyre was simply a tool of Satan, possibly indwelt by him, and in describing this king, Ezekiel also gives us glimpses of the superhuman creature, Satan, who was using him. Therefore, I take Ezekiel 28:1-10 to refer to the human leader and Ezekiel 28:11-19 to refer to Satan.

## 5.2 Initial Privileges of Satan

Before his fall Satan seems to have had the greatest privileges ever accorded to a creature, including:

1. nature;
2. position;
3. habitation; and
4. perfection.

### *5.2.1 Nature*

Satan belongs to the cherub class of angelic being. He is probably of the greatest class and highest order. Among them he was the anointed one, a privilege given to a God-appointed leader (Ezekiel 28:14). The expressions, "You had the seal of perfection," and "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" (Ezekiel 28:12), indicate that he was the greatest of all creatures. The figurative language of this verse speaks of his exquisite perfection.

### *5.2.2 Position*

Not only was he an anointed leader, but twice was called a guardian (i.e. covering) cherub (Ezekiel 28:14, 16). This could refer to his role as a guardian - an honor guard - and proclaimer of God's glorious presence and holiness.

### *5.2.3 Habitation*

"You were in Eden, the garden of God" (Ezekiel 28:13) probably refers in earthly terms to God's paradise in heaven. Within the paradise was "the mountain of God," from which abode he was cast (Ezekiel 28:14, 16). So he seems to have been in the very presence of God, for he "walked in the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezekiel 28:14).

### *5.2.4 Perfection*

This term summarizes his personal and moral qualities. He "had the seal of perfection" and was "perfect in beauty" (Ezekiel 28:12). He was perfect or blameless in his ways from the day he was created until his first sin (Ezekiel 28:15).

## 5.3 Beginning of Perversion

Without explaining how it happened, God says, "Iniquity was found in thee" (Ezekiel 28:15). The only clue as to what occurred in Satan's mind is found in Ezekiel 28:17: "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor." His sin is obviously a proud heart and self-occupation. Reflecting upon his God-endowed beauty, he became enthralled with himself and was lifted up with pride (1 Timothy 3:6). Sin uses God's gifts for selfish ends.

He also perverted other angels from God's way. The words *merchandise* (Ezekiel 28:16) and *traffick* (Ezekiel 28:18) may refer to a soliciting to his evil cause a large group of fellow angels (cf. Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:4, 9). His habitation was defiled by his sin also: "By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries" (Ezekiel 28:18).

## 5.4 Indictment and Punishment

Because of Satan's sin of arrogance and violence, God cast him from his privileged position near the throne of God ("out of the mountain of God," Ezekiel 28:16). He may have been cast to the earth after his original sin ("I cast you to the ground," Ezekiel 28:17). So God accused him of flagrant and unwarranted rebellion and banished him from His presence. His ultimate punishment is the lake of fire, Christ said (Matthew 25:41).

# 6. THE FALL OF SATAN

Sin was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15). This is really the only verse in the Bible that states exactly the origin of sin. The details of Satan's sin are specified in Isaiah 14:12-17.

## 6.1 Identifying the Persons

Like the Ezekiel 28:11-19 passage there is a question as to whether or not this refers at all to Satan. There are three different interpretations in Isaiah 14:3-21:

1. it refers to the fall of the king of Babylon mentioned in Isaiah 14:4;
2. it relates only to the fall of Satan; and
3. two persons addressed, the first being the king of Babylon and the second being Satan, called Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12-17).

### *6.1.1 The fall of the king of Babylon mentioned in Isaiah 14:4*

Some Bible scholars think that this passage is not a reference to Satan due to the following reasons:

1. The unusual language in Isaiah 14:12-17 as containing allusions to Canaanite Ugaritic mythology which are applied to the pagan king. Similar language in pagan literature referring to their idolatrous and astrological worship.

2. They also note that Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12) is also called a man (Isaiah 14:16-17) and that he is compared with other kings of the earth (Isaiah 14:18-19).

3. The Babylonian king had desired to be above God, and so fell from heaven. He falls to Sheol, and his power is done away. Not so Satan. His fall was against God, but he continues yet his tyrannical acts against God's people. "His doom is sure," for Christ has died, but not until the final judgement will he be confined to the lake of fire. Inasmuch, then as this passage describes a king's downfall and removal from the scene, it cannot apply to Satan.

The whole passage of Isaiah 14:3-21 announces judgment against the king of Babylon mentioned by name in Isaiah 14:4. Isaiah is prophetically speaking of the fall of Nebuchadnezzar, who was the epitome of a Babylonian king in all of his pride and arrogance. Scripture itself mentions that he was eventually brought low (Daniel 4:1-18). A second view is that Isaiah is speaking of the Assyrian kings who ruled over Babylon at the time of Isaiah. This view stems primarily from verses 24-27 where the Lord vows to break Assyria (v. 25). It has been pointed out that Pul (2 Kings 15:19), also known as Tiglath-pileser, was the king of Babylon and may be the prototype in Isaiah's day of an arrogant, proud king who is set against the Lord of Israel and Judah.

According to this view, to fall from heaven (Isaiah 14:12) is to fall from a great political height as in pagan literature. There also may be a parallel in Daniel 8:10 in reference to Antiochus causing stars to fall from heaven. The name "son of the dawn" (Isaiah 14:12) could be a reference to a pagan deity. "The mount of assembly" (Isaiah 14:13) may refer to a mountain about 25 or 30 miles northeast of Ugarit, a place where the gods were supposed to gather.

The setting for the taunt is Sheol, the place of the dead. The picture is a gathering of the great kings of the earth after the time of the earth receiving rest from the warfare that has been pronounced in Isaiah 13:4b-8. The king of Babylon arrives in Sheol, where he is met by the kings and leaders of the earth, who are

amazed that even the mighty king of Babylon has met the same fate as they (vv. 9-11). They make a point of noting that in contrast to the wonderful conditions that that king had on earth this bed now is made up of maggots and his covering is of worms. That is highly figurative language noting the utter humiliation of the king of Babylon who stands for the anti-God forces that are against the people of God in Israel and Judah.

### *6.1.2 It relates only to the fall of Satan*

There are those who hold that Isaiah 14:12-17 refers to Satan only. They cite the unusual language as far beyond applying to a human king. In favor of this view is the repetition in these verses of what was basically been said in Isaiah 14:4-11. Even some of the specific terms are repeated. Then, too, the assertions of rebellion and pride fit what is known about Satan.

### *6.1.3 Two persons addressed, the first being the king of Babylon and the second being Satan, called Lucifer*

Some of the early church fathers believe that the king of Babylon is viewed as a tool or a front for the real, unseen ruler of the cosmos. We have the following reasons to support this view:

1. Satan is called in the New Testament the "prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and the "god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4). There are a few other instances in Scripture in which Satan is addressed through one of his instruments. The earliest, of course, was in Eden after the Fall, when God addressed Satan through the serpent (Genesis 3:15), and in the New Testament the Lord Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan!" (Matthew 16:23). The pattern here parallels the pattern set in Ezekiel 28 where the king of Tyre is first addressed, and then Satan, the highest cherub, is addressed as the power behind him.

2. We note that the whole passage, as determined by the opening verses (Isaiah 14:1-4), looks forward to that day when God shall have restored the nation Israel to its land and leadership among the nations. The nation shall enjoy rest when all her enemies are defeated by the Lord Jesus, who returns to earth to reign in His kingdom (Isaiah 11:11-12:6). Then Israel will rule over her oppressors. Babylon is singled out as representative of all Israel's enemies and of the future Antichrist who is empowered by Satan (Daniel 7:23-27; 9:26-27; 11:36-45; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10; Revelation 13:4). In these passages there is terminology very similar to that used in Isaiah 14:12-17. It seems, then, that Isaiah would not be referring to the historic king of Babylon as the primary oppressor of Israel, but rather the future one with Satan behind him.

3. The language especially befits Satan, who is pictured here and elsewhere as fallen from his high station in heaven (Luke 10:18) and cast down to earth (Ezekiel 28:13-14, 17; Revelation 12:7-9). In addressing this one God calls him "star of the morning" (NASB, NIV). The KJV uses the equivalent Latin term *Lucifer*, which has become generally known in English as a title for Satan before his fall. He seems to be first among other heavenly beings, for he is the "star of the morning" and would rule over "the stars of God," a term which does describe angels (Job 38:7).

> His character and actions certainly compare to those described here. The Lord Jesus is also called the "bright morning star" (Revelation 22:16). If this address in Isaiah is indeed to Satan, he is the false daystar in contrast to the Lord Jesus, the true One (2 Peter 1:19).

Isaiah 14:4-11 refers to a future "king of Babylon," or the coming Antichrist associated with Babylon, a politico-religious system existing just before the second coming of Christ. This one is pictured in Revelation 13, 17, and 18, and is described in 2 Thessalonians 2. There seems also to be an inclusion of Satan in Isaiah 14:12-17 to retrace Satan's sin as analogous with Antichrist's character and actions in the future. We must remember that the Antichrist is empowered by Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10). According to this view, Isaiah reveals the true nature of the Antichrist and his ultimate defeat, even though he is empowered by the highest of all heavenly creatures. Satan will be defeated and all his heavenly and earthly hosts.

This passage should be compared with Ezekiel 28:12-19, which seems to be a similar hidden message to Satan. Ezekiel views the career of Satan from the beginning forward to its end, whereas Isaiah sees his career from its end backward to its beginning. Many Bible students consider Isaiah 14:12-17 to be the central passage in the Bible on the origin of sin. The fall from heaven mentioned in verse 12 is in reality a prophecy. The sin or moral fall described belongs to the dateless past, but the final expulsion of Satan from heaven evidently will not occur until the end time, at the middle of that period often spoken of as the seventieth week of Daniel (Daniel 9; Revelation 12:9).

The five "I wills" uttered by the "morning star" constitute the very essence of sin, culminating in the boast "I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:4). If the human king of Babylon exalted himself as a god, certainly Satan has to the highest degree. Ezekiel describes the "anointed cherub" as being lifted up because of his beauty (Ezekiel 28:14, 17), having been perfect or blameless in all his ways until iniquity was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15).

#### *6.1.4 Conclusion*

I conclude that the third view is the best interpretation.

### 6.2 Identifying the Sin

The basic sin of Satan seems to be pride, as we previously noted from Ezekiel 28:17. Pride or conceit is specifically labeled by Paul as the reason for "the condemnation incurred by the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). Isaiah pictures his pride expressed in determined rebellion. Note the five occurrences of "I will" in Isaiah 14:13-14. This fits the description of the future Antichrist, pictured by Paul as a proud rebel (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

### 6.3 Expression of Sin

The five statements of "I will" specifically express Satan's self-assertion and rebellion. These statements

are probably flashbacks to his original intentions in his original situation just before he was cast out the presence of God. This seems to fit the indictment (probably by God) in Isaiah 14:13: "But you said in your heart." So at the time of Satan's future defeat in the defeat of the Antichrist, God reminds him of his original scheme and how it has come to complete failure. The five assertions speak of Satan's desire to rise above the sphere in which he was created and placed (Isaiah 14:13-14). He asserted his own will against the beneficent will of the Most High in the following ways:

1. "I will ascend to heaven."
2. "I will raise my throne above the stars of God."
3. "I will sit on the mount of assembly."
4. "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds."
5. "I will make myself like the Most High."

### *6.3.1 "I will ascend to heaven"*

Since Satan had access to the very presence of God as the leading cherub (Ezekiel 28:13-14), this assertion does not mean he would visit, but abide there. It means that he desired to occupy the abode of God, probably desiring equal recognition with God.

### *6.3.2 "I will raise my throne above the stars of God"*

The stars, as we have seen, are references to angels (Job 38:7; Jude 13; Revelation 12:3-4; 22:16). Satan already was the greatest angelic being, and it may be that all angels took orders from him as the chief administrator under God. Angels would recognize that orders through him came directly from God. He may be saying, "I will usurp God's rule over all the angels." If the stars refer to the luminous heavenly bodies, then he wised to rule in the heavens.

### *6.3.3 "I will sit on the mount of assembly"*

According to Isaiah 2:2 and Psalm 48:2, the mount of the assembly is the center of God's kingdom rule. It seems associated with Messiah's earthly rule from Jerusalem. Satan would also, then, seek to rule over all human affairs, usurping the place of Messiah.

### *6.3.4 "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds"*

The atmospheric clouds are hardly in view here. Isaiah's pattern helps us to understand the figurative use of clouds. Stars refer here to angels, mount to a place of rule; now clouds are associated with the glory of God. (Note the connection of clouds with God in Exodus 13:21; 16:10; 40:34; Job 37:15-16; Matthew 26:64; Revelation 14:14-16; 19:1). Lucifer had in him a great glory that reflected his Creator. Now he desired a glory equal to or above God's glory.

### *6.3.5 "I will make myself like the Most High"*

This is the climax of all self-assertion and defiance of God! Why did Lucifer choose this title among all the titles of God? Because it refers to God as the "possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:18-19). Two points are worth noting here. First, Satan did not want to be unlike God. He respected God's power and authority, and he wanted it for himself. He would usurp God's authority rather than be submissive to it, for no one can be like God and still let God be God; for there is none like Him (Isaiah 42:8; 43:10; 44:6; 45:5-6, 21-33). God will not share His glory or position with any other. Second, Satan would be like God primarily in the matter of authority and control. He originally thought to replace God, but he ended up a counterfeiter, not a replacement. With rebellion there came a change in character, all the holiness he had derived from his Creator was lost, and corruption replaced it. He could no longer be like God, even in reflection.

### 6.4 Wretchedness of His Sin

Satan's sin is peculiarly heinous for several reasons:

1. There was no previous example; this was the beginning of rebellion against the most high God.
2. He was created beautiful and perfect; he lacked nothing as the greatest of all creatures.
3. His greatest of all intelligence gave him greater light and understanding of the greatness and goodness of the God against whom he sinned.
4. His highest position gave him the privilege of the greatest service to God.
5. In his perfection and holiness, he had the privilege of intimate fellowship with God.
6. His sin was more damaging because of the widespread effects of it. It affects other angels (Revelation 12:7); it affects all people (Ephesians 2:2); it positioned him as the ruler of this world (John 16:11); it affects all the nations of the world, for he works to deceive them (Revelation 20:3).

### 6.5 Results of His Sin

In Isaiah 14 there are statements and intimations of what issued from Satan's fall:

1. Banishment from heaven.
2. Corruption of character.
3. Perversion of power.
4. Retention of dignity.
5. Destined to the pit.

#### *6.5.1 Banishment from heaven*

"How you have fallen from heaven," says God of the one who would ascend to heaven (Isaiah 14:12). His privileges and position were permanently lost.

#### *6.5.2 Corruption of character*

The one whose name was Lucifer, who shone with the holy light of God, the "star of the morning, son of the dawn," now has become Satan, the opposer of all that God is.

### *6.5.3 Perversion of power*

Satan's power, once used for God's glory and the good of His creatures, is now turned to disruptive and destructive purposes. He weakened the nations (Isaiah 14:12) and caused the earth and governments to tremble (Isaiah 14:16). His prisoners have no relief (Isaiah 14:17).

### *6.5.4 Retention of dignity*

Though cast from his exalted position, Satan yet retains some of his great dignity. The passage indicates that his influence and power was yet felt. Even Michael the archangel "did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment" (Jude 9).

### *6.5.5 Destined to the pit*

God's judgment had to come in His moral rectitude against so great a sin. He will "be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit" (Isaiah 14:15; cf. Revelation 20:3) and so will all who follow him (Isaiah 24:21-22).

## 6.6 The Time of His Fall

There is no clear revelation as to exactly when Satan fell, but there are limits to the possible time which we may deduce from Biblical evidence.

If we assume that angels were part of the creation of Genesis 1:1, then their fall follows that point. However, it may be that angels were created prior to the creation of the heavens and the earth. In either case, angels were present when God "laid the foundation of the earth" and "set its measurements" (Job 38:4-5), for it was then that "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). This involved all the angels rejoicing with God. Satan and his angels fell, then, sometime after the original creation of the heavens and the earth, all of which was "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

It is certain that Satan had fallen before Genesis 3 where the temptation of Adam and Eve is recorded. He fell before man fell; but whether he fell before or after man's creation, we cannot say certainly. It would be an unwarranted assumption to say that man was created to teach previously fallen angels a lesson, and that angelic warfare is God's primary reason for the existence of all the rest of creation.

## 6.7 The Fall of Angels with Satan

It is obvious from the Bible that Satan has his angels. They follow his orders and fight for his causes (Matthew 12:24-26; 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:7). Satan solicited their following in his initial

revolt against God. The expression "the unrighteousness of your trade" (Ezekiel 28:18) may refer to Satan's selling his rebellious cause to other angels. This fits in with his plan to rule over angels (Isaiah 14:13). Once Satan seduced these angels, they were fixed in their moral degeneration. As many a a third of the angelic creation may have followed Satan in his defection (Revelation 12:4).

### 6.8 The Moral Problem in the Fall of Angels

It is inevitable that men would ask why a good and powerful God should allow the fall of Satan and his angels to occur. It introduced sin into the universe, affecting angels, all mankind, and even God to some extent. This is really part of the whole problem of the existence of evil. From the Bible we may deduce some possible reasons. In working toward the solution of the problem, the following factors must be kept in mind:

1. The character of God.
2. The control of God.
3. The choice of God.
4. The choice of angels.
5. The confinement by God.
6. The condemnation by God.

#### *6.8.1 The character of God*

We must remember that the same Bible that records the inception and continued existence of evil also presents God as One who is holy, righteous, and perfect in all His ways, One in whose eyes sin is exceedingly wicked and worthly of judgment (Deuteronomy 32:3-4; Psalm 145:17; Isaiah 45:21; Romans 3:4). He could not and did not promote or perpetuate the sin (Psalm 5:4; James 1:13, 17).

#### *6.8.2 The control of God*

At the same time, the Bible presents God as both omnipotent and sovereign. He is in control of all things, and He has no potential successful rival (Isaiah 41:4; 43:13; 45:5; 46:8-11; Ephesians 1:11; Revelation 4:11). Evil did not rise up apart from His control; otherwise He would no longer be God.

#### *6.8.3 The choice of God*

It seems best to say that God, for good reasons, allowed evil to come into being. Not all these reasons are evident, but a few are genuinely probable. In any case, we must confess that God is the Author of a plan, a perfect plan, that included allowing His creatures to sin (Isaiah 45:7; Acts 15:16). Just as a composer of a musical score may include some discords to create an overall pleasing effect, so God's ultimate purpose is best served by such a plan. Perhaps He allowed angels to sin in order that He might give a concrete example of the wretchedness and degradation of sin. Perhaps He used the test to gain a group of angels to serve Him from choice and love. Perhaps He allowed sin to enter so that He might show in specific form His hatred and judgment of sin (compare Pharaoh's case, Romans 9:17-18). It may have been necessary

to allow the fall of angels to finally show the graceof God in the preserving of some angels and in the redemption of unworthy, sinful man who fell because of Satan. In man, God will magnify His grace forever before angels (Ephesians 1:10-2:7).

### *6.8.4 The choice of angels*

It was obviously Satan and the angels who chose to sin. They felt no pressure from God or His decree. They were conscious only of their own desires and planned their wretched rebellion in light of all they knew of the greatness and goodness of God. Everywhere in the Bible, they are treated as fully responsible.

### *6.8.5 The confinement by God*

When God did allow sin into His universe, He did not allow it to run without control. He confined the expression of sin and so limited its devasting effects. It was allowed only for a finite duration between what might be termed two aspects of eternity. Further, it was controlled even within that time (Psalms 11:4-7; 96:11-13; 140:12; Romans 2:1-16; 2 Thessalonians 2:6-9).

### *6.8.6 The condemnation by God*

God has condemned sin in the fullest sense in accord with His righteousness. He has judged it in man through human history. He judged it in awesome dimensions in the judgment of His Son at Calvary. It cost God more than all creatures could ever suffer through the suffering and sacrifice of His eternal Son. Finally, God will forever punish the evildoers in the lake of fire and will banish forever the presence of sin from the universe when He makes all things new (Revelation 20:10-15; 21:4-5).

## 6.9 Summary

Certainly Ezekiel 28 and probably Isaiah 14 gives us insight as to Satan's original privileged position as the greatest of all angels. His self-occupation and self-promotion were a deliberate attempt to overthrow God. As a result, he was banished from heaven, corrupted in character, and now opposes God and man with his perverted power. Most likely his fall occurred shortly after the creation recorded in Genesis 1, and in his fall he took many angels with him. In all this, the righteousness of God and the sovereignty of God is upheld by Scripture. Satan is fully responsible for his wicked deeds.

# 7. THE PRESENT CHARACTER AND POSITION OF SATAN

Knowledge of the corruption of Satan's person and the position he now occupies should help in our battle against this enemy.

## 7.1 His Present Character

His present character includes:

1. Murderer (John 8:44).
2. Liar (John 8:44).
3. Confirmed and practicing sinner (1 John 3:8).
4. Opposer of the righteous (1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10).

### *7.1.1 Murderer (John 8:44)*

Satan cannot truly give life; he brings only death. He caused the spiritual death of angels and of mankind in Eden. Christ said, "He was a murderer from the beginning," probably referring to all that happened in Genesis 3 and 4, including the murder of Abel.

### *7.1.2 Liar (John 8:44)*

Four statements by Christ describe Satan's relation to truth: (a) he does not stand in the truth; (b) there is no truth in him; (c) he speaks lies from his own nature, for he is a liar; and (d) he is the father of lies, he promotes outright lies and some truth for the sake of his lie (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

### *7.1.3 Confirmed and practicing sinner (1 John 3:8)*

Jesus and John present the devil as continuing in sin. They also present those who continue in sinning as children of the devil. There is a universal fatherhood of Satan among unbelievers (John 8:44).

### *7.1.4 Opposer of the righteous (1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10)*

Satan, as his name indicates, opposes God and truth. He also opposes God's people. He is "the accuser of our brethren." He accused Job before God (Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5), and he charges God's elect before God and probably in their consciences as well (Zechariah 3:1; Romans 8:33). Peter labels him our adversary who stalks about as a ferocious killer lion seeking whom he may next devour (1 Peter 5:8).

## 7.2 His Present Position

Satan has been cast out of God's presence and removed from his former office, yet he retains a great position in the plan of God.

### *7.2.1 His dignity*

Satan retains, under God's permission, such dignity that even Michael the archangel dared not "bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9). He is a majesty in his

perverted and permitted realm.

### *7.2.2 His dominion*

His dominion includes:

1. ruler of fallen angels (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:9); and
2. ruler of the world system (John 12:31; 16:11).

#### *7.2.2.1 Ruler of fallen angels*

Satan rules a vast army of angels, perhaps a third of the originally created number (Revelation 12:9, 40). They battle with God's angels under Michael in the Great Tribulation (Revelation 12:7). Even now they wrestle with believers as the power behind all sorts of opposition, direct and indirect (Ephesians 6:10-13). Satan is recognized by the Jews and by Christ as the prince of demons (Matthew 12:24-28). However, he will not rule when cast by Christ into the Lake of Fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

#### *7.2.2.2 Ruler of the world system*

The world (*cosmos*) includes men and angels in an organized system under Satan as its god. He is "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) in that he dominates, with knowing or unknowing consent, men who know not God. The whole world has been affected by him (1 John 5:19). This world stands in opposition to believers, promoting as life's great values pleasure, possessions, and pride (John 17:14; 1 John 2:15-17).

### *7.2.3 His domain*

His domain includes:

1. Abides in the heavenlies (Ephesians 6:11-12);
2. Access to heaven (Revelation 12:10); and
3. Active on earth (1 Peter 5:8).

#### *7.2.3.1 Abides in the heavenlies*

The heavenlies seem to be a spiritual sphere of operation and combat. The believer sits positionally with Christ in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:6), and it is the sphere of his blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). However, the believer finds authorities and powers of Satan and Satan himself in the heavenlies. Cast from heaven, Satan seems to operate in the realms of both the earth and the heavenlies.

#### *7.2.3.2 Access to heaven*

God evidently allows Satan to appear before Him on limited occasions. Satan cannot, since he sinned, abide there in the holy presence of God, but he appears with other "sons of God" to assemble and answer to God (Job 1:6; 2:1). There he accuses the brethren (Zechariah 3:1; Revelation 12:10).

#### *7.2.3.3 Active on earth*

He roves the earth, he and his cohorts, seeking to oppose and defeat believers and God's purpose in individuals and in the church. He seeks to oppose the spreading of the gospel (Matthew 13:38-39; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:12-19).

### *7.2.4 His detention*

Though Satan is not now bound, as he will be in the future (Revelation 20:1-3), he is limited in his operations by God. God limits who and how much he can touch (Job 1:12; 2:6; John 17:15; 1 John 5:18).

## 7.3 Summary

Satan retains a great position over men and angels. But with his perverted character as a liar and murderer, he continues sinning and opposing God. God limits his place and power in the universe.

# 8. THE PRESENT POWER AND ACTIVITY OF SATAN

Satan's power is great and his activity is extensive, seen in several relationship.

## 8.1 In Relation to God

In relation to God, Satan is:

1. the opposer of God's person; and
2. the opposer of God's program.

### *8.1.1 The opposer of God's person*

As Satan desired to be like the Most High, so his power and activity are directed primarily against God. Other activities are understood as stemming from this rebellious aim. His attack on Adam was really an attack on the character and control of God (Genesis 3:1-5). Satan induced Cain to murder Abel, a man of God (1 John 3:12). The opposition to God in this is mentioned in 1 John 3:10. The opposition obviously comes from a character opposite to that of God's. Once reflecting the light from God as *Lucifer*, the shining one, now he is full of darkness and keeps the light from others (Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 4:4;

Ephesians 6:12). God is love and promotes love, whereas Satan is hateful and promotes hatred (1 John 3:7-15). God is life and creates life, whereas Satan operates in the realm of death (Hebrews 2:14).

### *8.1.2 The opposer of God's program*

Satan desired to oppose God's program in the following ways:

1. counterfeiting God's system of truth; and
2. counteracting God's sovereign rule.

#### *8.1.2.1 Counterfeiting God's system of truth*

In line with his purpose to be like the Most High, Satan promotes a system that we may call "the lie" (see Ephesians 2:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-11).

Satan's counterfeit system may be irreligious. He may deny the existence of God or His control (Psalm 14:1-3). To explain the world, he substitutes evolution for creation, uniformitarianism for providence, human progress for divine Salvation, and man's utopia for God's kingdom on earth. Atheism, agnosticism, pragmatism, existentialism, and relativism are his substitutes for truth.

However, Satan also promotes counterfeit religions. He authors or encourages non-Biblical religions or distortions of the true religion. In this latter category, we find false ministers, Satan's messengers who transform themselves into messengers of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Satan may be found in the chair of theology or the pulpit. He seeks and sometimes gets control of a work of God (2 Corinthians 2:9-11; Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 2:9; 13-15).

Satan also promotes false doctrine. These he propagates through his demons, who teach works-righteousness (1 Timothy 4:1-3) and self-seeking through ministering in religious matters (2 Peter 2:1, 15). Some so-called churches follow his teaching in idolatry and intrusion into the occult (Revelation 2:14, 24).

In his counterfeit religion we also find false christs, or antichrists. In 1 John 2:18, 22, and 4:3 we read of many antichrists presently invading and deceiving the world and even Christian communities. These are forerunners of the Antichrist who, as Satan's man, one day will promote himself as God and through his lying miracles deceive many (2 Thessalonians 2:3-11).

During this age we also find false followers. They profess to believe in Christ, but they are Satan's counterfeits (Matthew 13:38-39).

#### *8.1.2.2 Counteracting God's sovereign rule*

Rebellion against God's personal and constitutional authority is the essence of Satan's every expression.

A rebel at heart, he is a rebel in every deed. He cannot, of course, step outside of God's overall sovereign control; but within the limits of his creaturely freedom, he is totally anti-God.

The great rebel counteracted God's rule in the Garden of Eden. He turned man's submission to God into rebellion toward God and submission to him. He has opposed God's kingdom and church from without and within throughout the centuries. A highlight of his opposition to God came in his attack upon Christ, confronting Him in temptation, counteracting His ministry, and instigating His death (see Matthew 4:1-11; John 13:26-30).

An apex of his rebellious opposition will be found in his empowering of the future Antichrist, who himself is a proud rebel who would pass himself off as God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). This lawless one will deceive and dominate man in an unprecedented sense (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11; Revelation 13:1-18). He will assume a religious pose and use a religious system, called Babylon, to oppose true religion, and then he will destroy even that false religious system (Revelation 17). Even now "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work" under the restraining influence of God (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8). Its full manifestation will come in the Tribulation.

During the Great Tribulation, Satan will be cast down from heaven. Though he knows his time is short and his doom sure, yet he increases his rebellious activities persecuting God's people, Israel (Revelation 12:9; 12-13). Even after he has felt defeat from Christ and has been bound for one thousand years, he will make one last rebellious attempt to overthrow God and Christ after his release, but he will be defeated (Revelation 20:1-10).

### 8.2 In Relation to the Nations

In relation to the nations, Satan is:

1. deceiving the nations;
2. influencing governments of nations; and
3. directing the governments of nations.

#### *8.2.1 Deceiving the nations*

Right now Satan is deceiving the nations, leading them astray from the truth as it is in God and Christ. At the second coming of Christ he will be bound for a thousand years, "that he should deceive the nations no more" (Revelation 20:3). Upon release, he will deceive the nations again, to assemble them against Jerusalem and God (Revelation 20:7-10).

#### *8.2.2 Influencing governments of nations*

Satan is "the god of this world," which includes men and angels outside the family of believers (2 Corinthians 4:4). He offered the nations to Christ in the temptation. Christ did not dispute the legitimacy

of the offer, but refused to rebel against God in submitting to Satan's method of obtaining the rule (Matthew 4:8-10).

Satan uses his angels to influence the affairs of nations, particularly in their opposition to God's program with Israel or with the church (Daniel 10:13, 20; Ephesians 6:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:18).

Hitler's occult involvement and Stalin's staunch atheism gave Satan great opportunity through their great hatred and murderous actions to destroy many Jews and Christians.

Today he would use governmental authorities to hinder the spread of the gospel at home and abroad. Recently, certain African nations in their nationalistic programming have been insisting on a return to animistic and idolatrous religions and are persecuting and murdering national Christians and deporting missionaries.

### *8.2.3 Directing the governments of nations*

During the tribulation period, Satan will actually direct the affairs of a ten-nation coalition through his man, the Antichrist. Ten rulers will give to the Antichrist their power (Revelation 17:12). This may constitute a revived Roman Empire, since it is related in Daniel's vision to the fourth world empire of the Gentiles (Daniel 2:31-45; 7:1-12). This Antichrist will even control the nations at that time for at least three-and-one-half years (Revelation 13:4, 7). Behind this world ruler is none other than Satan, called "the dragon" (Revelation 13:2, 4). These conditions will exist just before the second coming of Christ, who will destroy these world powers and the Antichrist (Daniel 2:35; 44-45; 7:8-14; Revelation 19:11-21). Even now it appears that Satan is assembling the national alliance predicted for those days.

## 8.3 In Relation to the Unsaved

In relation to the unsaved, Satan is:

1. preventing acceptance of truth; and
2. promoting attraction to falsehood.

### *8.3.1 Preventing acceptance of truth*

Satan is preventing acceptance of truth by:

1. snatching away the gospel (Luke 8:12); and
2. blinding minds to the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

#### *8.3.1.1 Snatching away the gospel*

Some who hear the gospel are prevented from understanding it, lest they believe and be saved.

#### *8.3.1.2 Blinding minds to the gospel*

He causes a barrier to the gospel's penetrating the mind with enlightenment concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. This is one of the reasons for the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11). As a result of Satan's work in this line, the gospel sounds foolish and irrelevant to the perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18).

### *8.3.2 Promoting attraction to falsehood*

Satan is promoting attraction to falsehood by:

1. indoctrinating in false religion (1 Timothy 4:1-3); and
2. ingraining a false lifestyle (Ephesians 2:1-3).

#### *8.3.2.1 Indoctrinating in false religion*

Satan and his demons use men who knowingly or unknowingly preach his lies. Either he promotes a Salvation by human works, attractive to sinners who would bypass the Saviour's work of Salvation; or he persuades men that there is no need for Salvation, only progress. This progress may be purely human, as in systems of ethical idealism that deny sin and evil; or it may include recourse to the spirit world, as in spiritism or oriental mysticism. So today we see a great increasing interest in the occult practices, including witchraft and satanism. John warns us to test the spirits (1 John 4:1-4).

#### *8.3.2.2 Ingraining a false lifestyle*

We formerly walked in this philosophy of the age ("course of this world"). It may change expression from generation to generation, but it is still creature-centered and creature-promoting. This philosophy is based on pleasure, possessions, and position (1 John 2:15-17). It is opposed to our Father God. Satan is now constantly energizing "the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2) to follow this spirit. It is basically the egocentric ambition of Satan that characterizes the world. Satisfied with these things of man and materialism, unbelievers are kept from desiring a relationship with the living God. Satan has captured attention and influenced moral behaviour through the mass media's promotion of illicit sex, pornography, homosexuality, and violence. Films, TV, videos, magazines, and heavy metal and satanic rock music are his effective tools for promoting his destructive propaganda.

## 8.4 In Relation to Christians

In general, Satan seeks to defeat believers in their individual and corporate life and service. The wise Christian does not dismiss this part of spiritual warfare as superstition. He will be aware of Satan's tactics and guard against them (2 Corinthians 2:11). Some of his tactics are obvious from Scripture:

1. waging warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18);
2. accusing and slandering (Revelation 12:10);
3. planting doubt (Genesis 3:1-5);
4. tempting to sin;
5. inciting persecution (Revelation 2:10);
6. preventing service (1 Thessalonians 2:18);
7. infiltrating the church; and
8. promoting division (2 Corinthians 2:10-11).

### *8.4.1 Waging warfare*

What we might relegate to human opposition may indeed be Satan's interference. Our ultimate wrestling is not with "flesh and blood" but with spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies. We might get an idea of what sort of attacks Satan makes by noting the type of armor provided in the wisdom of God. He seeks to influence and control our minds.

### *8.4.2 Accusing and slandering*

As devil means slanderer, so Satan lives up to his name. He accuses us before God for our sins and imperfections. He may also work on sensitive consciences not standing firm in God's grace. To answer these accusations, we have a defense lawyer, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who satisfied God for all our sins and who stands as witness to our right standing before God, thus defeating Satan (1 John 2:1-2).

### *8.4.3 Planting doubt*

Satan would make us doubt God's goodness, His Word, His concern for us. He emphasizes God's restrictions as unjust (Genesis 3:1), His warning and Word as untrue (Genesis 3:4), His interests as selfish and limiting man's development (Genesis 3:5). So he maligns God's character and challenges God's authority.

### *8.4.4 Tempting to sin*

Satan is tempting Christians to sin through the following ways:

1. to lie (Acts 5:3);
2. to sex sins (1 Corinthians 7:5);
3. to occupation with this world (1 John 2:15-17; 5:19);
4. to relying upon human wisdom and strength (1 Chronicles 21:1-8; Matthew 16:21-23);
5. to pride in spiritual matters (1 Timothy 3:6); and
6. to discouragement (1 Peter 5:6-10).

#### *8.4.4.1 To lie*

Satan is the author of lies, and he tempts others to acts against the truth. To lie is to tell a falsehood in whole or in part for personal gain and to the loss or hurt of another. It is part of the self-seeking philosophy of Satan.

#### *8.4.4.2 To sex sins*

Satan promotes the philosophy of the priority of bodily satisfaction. Perversion of sex in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, or masturbation comes from pre-occupation with bodily needs. The first three are specifically forbidden in God's Word, and the last is distracting and debilitating in a perverted self-gratification. God has provided marriage for the normal expression of sex, and partners must recognize their mutual responsibilities. They provide Satan with an opportunity to tempt to sexual sins when there is not satisfaction in marriage. However, there is never justification to yielding to Satan and these sins.

#### *8.4.4.3 To occupation with this world*

The world is Satan's system, built up on the principle of self-promotion. Its philosophy and practice are anti-God. Satan would influence and defeat us through "the lust of the flesh" (pleasures), "the lust of the eyes" (possessions), and "the boastful pride of life" (self-promotion). This attitude affects all of us somewhat, knowingly or unknowingly. Satan is actively promoting it (Ephesians 2:1-3). Some have succumbed to his temptations through it (2 Timothy 4:10; James 4:1-7).

#### *8.4.4.4 To relying upon human wisdom and strength*

Satan knows that he can defeat what is purely human, since it does not conform to God's standard or rely on God's power. So he tempted David to have confidence in numbers of soldiers, and he tempted Peter to resist the Lord in human wisdom. He moved the Corinthians to judge the gospel message and ministry according to human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 3:18-4:5; 2 Corinthians 4:1-7).

#### *8.4.4.5 To pride in spiritual matters*

The privilege of leadership in the church has its perils. Satan attacks the leaders to affect the congregations. So Paul urged that novices not be ordained to leadership, lest, being proud, they fall into the condemnation also incurred by the devil. Any spiritual ability carries with it the danger of self-satisfaction and self-confidence that precludes God's best blessings and affords Satan an opportunity.

#### *8.4.4.6 To discouragement*

Satan would have us occupied with our difficulties and overcome with cares. Perhaps this is why Peter first tells us to cast all our cares upon God, assuring us of God's care, and then tells us to beware of our adversary the devil, who prowls about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:7-8). He may be involved

in the case of the man who, hearing the Word, is then overcome by the worry of the world (Matthew 13:22). Persecution, rejection, lack of appreciation, physical and spiritual difficulties may lead us from discouragement to despair, to disheartenment, to defeat (see Revelation 2:9-10; 3:9-10).

### *8.4.5 Inciting persecution*

Persecution, privation, and imprisonment may be motivated by Satan. The church and Israel are his primary objects of attack by this method (Revelation 12:13; 13:7).

### *8.4.6 Preventing service*

On one occasion, Satan thwarted Paul from coming to help the Thessalonians. How this was done we are not told. Perhaps it was through a physical illness (2 Corinthians 12:7) or through some human agency (2 Corinthians 11:22-27).

### *8.4.7 Infiltrating the church*

Satan is infiltrating the church through:

1. false teachers (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 2 Peter 2:1-19); and
2. false disciples (Matthew 13:38-39).

#### *8.4.7.1 Through false teachers*

Satan sends his messengers disguised as messengers of light. As deceitful workers, they oppose true ministers and promote as legalistic or humanistic form of religion. Satan may use demons in this (1 Timothy 4:1-5). They can attract even sincere persons into false forms of Christianity and into the occult. John warns against "the completely open mind" policy (1 John 4:1-4). We must test all things by God's Word, particularly its teaching on the person and work of Christ.

#### *8.4.7.2 Through false disciples*

While God sows good seed through His messengers, the enemy, Satan, also sows evil seed. "The tares are the sons of the evil one," and they at first look like wheat, but soon they are evident as impostors. The presence and activity of the false disciples hinder the work of the church and confuse the true nature of the church and the gospel for those on the outside.

### *8.4.8 Promoting division*

A member of the Corinthians church had been disciplined to promote holiness (compare 1 Corinthians 5:1-11). Paul instructed the church to receive him back to fellowship. But where there is not agreement

on full forgiveness, there is occasion for Satan to cause strife and division. This seems the case here. Certainly the Corinthians were influenced by Satan's promotion of worldly wisdom that had already caused other divisions among them (1 Corinthians 1:10-11; 3:1-9; 5:2; 6:1; 8:1-13). Harboring anger gives the devil an opportunity to promote division (Ephesians 4:26-27).

### 8.5 Summary

Satan's present power and activity are wide and varied, but always directed against God and His program and people primarily. He is anti-God in character, and he opposes God's program by counterfeiting His program and by counteracting God's authority. He is now deceiving the nations and influencing their governments, and he will one day direct world government through the coming Antichrist. Regarding the unsaved, he prevents acceptance of the truth and attracts to falsehood in doctrine and life. Against the genuine believer he wages constant warfare, accuses, plants doubts, tempts to sin, incites persecution, prevents service, infiltrates the church, and promotes division. As born again Christians, we must be aware of Satan's schemes and tactics.

We must also be aware that we cannot divorce the activity of demons from the activity of Satan. They serve to extend his power and influence. Satan, though a powerful creature, is but one person and so is limited. He sought the demons' support in his rebellion against God (Ezekiel 28; Isaiah 14). We now move on to see how demons' nature and activities are similar to Satan's and how they serve his purpose and program.

## 9. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


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# Chapter Twenty Five - Demons: Unclean Spirits

The twentieth century has witnessed an almost complete turnaround in attitudes toward the reality of demons. In the first part of the century their reality was commonly denied; in the latter part, it is much more readily and universally affirmed. Undoubtedly the increase in the number of witches and astrologers as well as booming sales of accompanying paraphernalia (including trade journals) has contributed to this change. Movies and books on the extraterrestrial have created a more favorable climate for the acceptance of demons.

There is no doubt that the Bible, interpreted in normal fashion, testifies very clearly to the reality and activity of demons. This chapter, divided into eleven major divisions, is a careful study of Demonology:

1. We will examine the names for demons;
2. We will prove the existence of demons;
3. We will examine the origin of demons;
4. We will examine the nature of demons;
5. We will examine the duties of demons;
6. We will examine the domination by demons;
7. We will discuss whether or not a genuine Christian can be possessed by demons;
8. We will examine the conquest of demon possession;
9. We will examine the distractions by demons - the occult;
10. We will examine the defeat and destiny of Satan and demons; and
11. We will teach the defense of believers against Satan and demons.

## 1. NAMES FOR DEMONS

### 1.1 Names for Demons in the Old Testament

The Hebrew possesses no precise equivalent for the Greek terms *daimon* or *daimonion*, but no fewer than five different Hebrew words are translated by *daimonion* (demons):

1. *Shedhim* (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37);
2. *Seirim* (Leviticus 17:7);
3. *'Elilim* (Psalm 96:5, LXX 95:5)'
4. *Gad* (Isaiah 65:11); and
5. *Qeter* (Psalm 91:6; LXX 90:6).

#### *1.1.1 Shedhim*

Always in the plural, this word has the idea of rulers or lords. It speaks of idols as lords, since the Hebrews

regarded images as visible symbols of invisible demons. So the Israelites committing idolatry were said to have "sacrificed to demons" (*shedhim*, Deuteronomy 32:17).

### *1.1.2 Seirim*

The Hebrews were to sacrifice at the altar of the tabernacle and not to sacrifice in the desert to "hegoats" (LXX, *daimonia*). Jeroboam I appointed worship for the *seirim* (2 Chronicles 11:15), and Josiah "brake down the high places of the gates [shearim]," which is to be read *seirim* (2 Kings 23:8). These goatlike conceptions represented demon-satyrs. Isaiah's reference to them dancing in the desolated Babylon is translated in the Septuagint by *daimonia* (Isaiah 13:21; 34:14).

### *1.1.3 'Elilim*

This passage identifies demons with idols and suggests demonism as the dynamic of idolatry. This plural word conveys emptiness, the nothingness of idols. The demons behind them are the real existence.

### *1.1.4 Gad*

Those that forsake Jehovah "set a table for Fortune" (NASB, LXX, *daimonion*). The demon god Fortune was worshiped by the Babylonians. This idolatry was elsewhere called the worship of Baal, or Bel.

### *1.1.5 Qeter*

The "destruction [*qeter*] that wasteth at noonday" (KJV) was regarded as an evil spirit.

## 1.2 Names for Demons in the New Testament

Names for demons in the New Testament are as follows:

1. *Daimon*;
2. *Daimonion*;
3. *Pneumata*; and
4. *Angels*.

### *1.2.1 Daimon*

This is the word from which the English word *demon* is derived. It occurs once in the critical editions of the Greek New Testament in Matthew 8:31. The Textus Receptus has it on four other occasions (Mark 5:12; Luke 8:29; Revelation 16:14; 18:2). Its derivation is unsure. The early Greeks (Homeric period) equated it with God (*theos*). The emphasis was upon evil power or bad influence. In post-Homeric usage, it was used of an intermediary between gods and men, in some cases human spirits. A third stage of Greek development began to view demons as morally imperfect beings, some good, some evil. Plato thought *daimon* came from *dao*, meaning "knowing" or "intelligent." Some modern scholars derive it from *dai*, meaning "divide," "disrupt," "distributor of destiny." The final stage of its usage is found in the New Testament, where all demons are evil and work as Satan's agents. So also many early Christian writers consider demons as evil.

### *1.2.2 Daimonion*

Once used for "gods," it came to be used to mean an inferior divinity. *A.T. Robertson* held that it was a diminutive of *daimon*. This was an appropriate term to designate idols and pagan gods (as in the Septuagint). This is the most frequently used term in the New Testament, having 63 occurrences.

### *1.2.3 Pneumata*

Forty-three times demons are termed *pneuma* or *pneumata* (spirits). The context makes clear that these spirits are demons: for instance, the demon-possessed (*daimoni zomenouos*) were treated by Jesus and He cast out "the spirits" (*pneumata*). The interchange of terms "demons" and "spirits" substantiates the identification in Luke 10:17-20. "The unusual usage, 'spirits of demons' in Revelation 16:14 is apparently intended to distinguish them from human spirits. Not only are they 'unclean spirits' (v. 13), but they are not merely human, rather supernatural - 'spirits of demons' (v. 14)."

### *1.2.4 Angels*

The similar expressions, "the evil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41) and "Beelzebub the prince of the devils" (Matthew 12:24), seem to equate Satan's angels with demons.

## 1.3 Related Terms in the New Testament

Related terms for demons in the New Testament are as follows:

1. *Daimonizomai*;
2. *Daimonides*;
3. *Deisidaimonesterous*; and
4. *Deisidaimonia*.

### *1.3.1 Daimonizomai*

This verb means "to be possessed by a demon," and is used in several forms thirteen times.

### *1.3.2 Daimonides*

This adjective means "demonic," indicating the character of worldly wisdom in contrast to divine (James 3:15).

### *1.3.3 Deisidaimonesterous*

"This word occurs only in Acts 17:22 where Paul says that the Athenians are 'too superstitious,' or 'very religious.' It literally means that they were 'reverencing the demons (or "divine" things - "gods" in their thinking) more than usual.' It is derived from *deido*, meaning, 'to fear,' and *daimon*."

### *1.3.4 Deisidaimonia*

Derived from *deido*, meaning to fear or to reverence, and from *daimonion*, this word speaks of a reverencing of demons or divine things, gods. It occurs only in Acts 25:19 and is translated "superstition" or "religion."

## 2. THE EXISTENCE OF DEMONS

The Bible and the history of various religions give abundant evidence of the existence of demons, including:

1. proof from heathen religions;
2. proof from the existence of angels;
3. proof from the Old Testament;
4. proof from the New Testament; and
5. proof from Christ's teaching and ministry.

### 2.1 Proof from Heathen Religions

The history of various religions from the earliest times shows belief in Satan and demons to be universal. Spells, incantations, magical texts, exorcisms, and various forms of demonological phenomena abound in archaeological discoveries from Sumeria and Babylon. Egyptian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Greek, and Roman antiquity are rich in demonic phenomena. The deities worshiped were invisible demons represented by material idols and images. To an amazing degree, the history of religion is an account of demon-controlled religion, particularly in its clash with the Hebrew faith and later with Christianity.

### 2.2 Proof from the Existence of Angels

Evidence for the reality of angels and the reality of demons overlaps. That is, some of the same arguments pertain to both.

Satan's fall. When the highest of all angelic beings fell, he became evil. His existence as an evil angel has been settled in previous Chapter 24. If this evil angel exists, then there is probability that other evil spirit beings also exist.

Satan's following. It is obvious that other angelic beings shared in Satan's fall, and so became evil also (Ezekiel 28:18; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:4). It seems very probable that Satan's angels are known in Scripture as demons.

### 2.3 Proof from the Old Testament

The Old Testament regards demons as existing evil entities. Since man's fall, God's people have been attacked by Satan and demons. Satan may have instigated the first murder (Genesis 4:1-6; cf. John 8:44; 1 John 3:12).

Demons may have attacked the race in Genesis 6:1-10.

That the *shedhim* (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:36-37) were real demons, and not mere idols is proved by the Septuagint translation of the term by *daimonia* (demons); the Jews regarded idols as demons who allowed themselves to be worshipped by men (Bar. 4:7; LXX Psalm 95:5; 1 Corinthians 10:20). It seems certain, moreover, that the *seirim* were also demonic conceptions (Leviticus 17:7; 2 Chronicles 11:15; Isaiah 13:21; 14).

Consider also the spirit who volunteered to be a "lying spirit" through false prophets speaking to Ahab (1 Kings 22:20-22). Note also the spiritual powers behind the world rulers with whom Daniel's angelic visitor wrestled (Daniel 10:13, 20).

### 2.4 Proof from the New Testament

There are more than one hundred references to demons in the Bible, most of them occurring in the New Testament. All the writers of the synoptic gospels report several cases of demon possession to demonstrate the power of Christ over demons. We may briefly state that all the writers (though not every book) of the New Testament, except the author of Hebrews, mentions demons or evil angels.

### 2.5 Proof from Christ's Teaching and Ministry

Christ accepted the concept that Satan was the ruler of a host of demons (Matthew 12:22-28). He taught that Satan and his angels were morally responsible persons destined by God for the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41). A large portion of Christ's ministry involved the casting out of demons from those possessed (Matthew 12:22-29; 15:22-28; Mark 5:1-16). He gave His disciples power to cast out demons (Matthew 10:1) and viewed His victory over them as over Satan (Luke 10:17-18). He spoke of their reality and power to His disciples in private (Matthew 17:14-20). He never corrected anyone for believing in their existence and never gave any hint that they were not real.

## 3. THE ORIGIN OF DEMONS

Various suggestions have been made as to the origin of demons:

1. they are superstitious designations for certain natural diseases;
2. they are the spirits of wicked, deceased people;
3. they are the disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamic race;
4. they are the spirits of monstrous offspring of angels and women in Genesis 6:1-4; and
5. they are fallen angels.

### 3.1 Superstitious Designations for Certain Natural Diseases

This theory dismisses the existence of demons as personal, evil forces who are real. It does not deal with the

evidence in the Bible or in extrabiblical case experiences, but rather clashes with all the evidence of Scripture, history, and human experience. It cannot account for demons' terrible fear and animosity toward God, nor for their superhuman strength manifest through demon possession.

Consider the case of the demoniac in Mark 5:1-7. Note his supernatural strength, his isolation and self-mutilation, his ambivalence in coming to Christ and his fear of Christ, the conversation between him and Christ, Christ's casting out the demons, and the transference from the man to the swine, leaving the man healed.

### 3.2 Spirits of Wicked, Deceased People

This view seems to come from the ancient Greek and Chinese belief about demons as being the disembodied spirits of deceased people, especially those who were evil in life. It has no support whatsoever in Scripture, since the Bible always places the unsaved dead as confined in a place of torment, unable to roam on the earth (Psalm 9:17; Luke 16:23; Revelation 20:13).

### 3.3 Disembodied Spirits of A Pre-Adamic Race

#### *3.3.1 The theory*

Those who favor this view hold that Genesis 1:1 refers to the creation of a perfect earth ages ago and that Satan, then Lucifer, ruled over earth and a pre-Adamic race of man. They see a catastrophe between verses 1 and 2 as a result of God's judgment of the sin of angels and men. A great "gap" ensued before God recreated order from the chaos described in verse 2. Re-creation starts in verse 3. In the re-creation, the spirits of these fallen men now are demons.

To support this theory, its advocates say that:

1. Genesis 1:2 may be translated, "But the earth became formless and void," indicating a catastrophe resulting from judgment;
2. the Jewish distinction between angels and spirits (Acts 23:8-9);
3. in a Greek tradition that demons are the spirits of deceased men of a mythical age;
4. distinguish demons, as disembodied spirits, from angels, good and evil; and
5. angels are supposed to have spiritual bodies, as do the children of the resurrection (note Luke 20:36; 1 Corinthians 15:44; 2 Corinthians 5:2-3), so demons seem to seek desperately some body to inhabit, this clearly infers that at one time they had physical bodies.

#### *3.3.2 Evaluation*

Most of the evidence seems to be conjectural:

1. The gap theory of Genesis 1:1-2 has very little support from Hebrew scholars.
2. The Hebrew *waw* consecutive in verse 2, "And the earth was," is a continuative storytelling device that gives no hint of a break at all.

3. It is extremely doubtful that the verb in verse 2 could be translated "became."
4. But even allowing these two points, there is still no evidence of a pre-Adamic race or that their supposed spirits are now demons.
5. The Bible states that once unbelieving men die they do not reenter this world but are bound, awaiting the final judgment (Luke 16:26; Hebrews 9:22).
6. The rigid distinction between angels and spirits is questionable since Scripture refers to angels as spirits (Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 1:4).
7. We note that demons are equated with spirits in Matthew 8:16 and in Luke 10:17-20.
8. The desire of demons for human bodies is that demons regard control of humans as the best means to accomplish their deceptive purpose.
9. They gain sensual pleasure through the use of human senses as an extension of their personality and pleasure they could not experience without a body.
10. The desire of some demons to enter swine is a desperate alternative which they suggested in preference to being sent to the abyss (Luke 8:32).
11. The classical Greek use of demons referring to the good spirits of departed men of the golden age, is at complete variance with the uniform New Testament usage of the word. To use its originally pagan concepts as the basis of a theory is totally unwarranted.

For the above reasons, we would reject this theory.

### 3.4 Spirits of Monstrous Offspring of Angels and Women in Genesis 6:1-4

#### *3.4.1 The theory*

This theory is based upon the interpretation that "the sons of God" (*bene elohim*) of Genesis 6 were evil angels who cohabited with certain women before the Flood. The results of this unnatural union were mongrel creatures, partly human and partly angelic. They may be the *nephilim* (Hebrew, fallen ones) rendered giants (from Greek, *gegenes*, probably meaning earthborn). Or they might be "the mighty men who were of old, men of renown" (Genesis 6:4). The Flood destroyed these monsters, according to theory, but their spirits became the demons who today seek to inhabit bodies and continue in sensuality.

#### *3.4.2 Evaluation*

Even if we should allow that "the sons of God" in Genesis 6 are fallen angels, still there is no evidence whatever that the spirits of the unusual progeny of angels continue to freely roam earth or that they should be identified with demons. If supporters should argue that demons seek bodies and sensual experiences and that demons are distinguished from angels, we would answer as we did with the previous theory. We reject this theory since it is based only on conjecture.

### 3.5 Fallen Angels

The theory that musters the most Biblical support is that demons are fallen angels.

#### *3.5.1 The theory*

All angels were created perfect, as was Lucifer (Job 38:7; Ezekiel 28:15). In Satan's original rebellion, he drew with him a great number of lesser angels, perhaps a third of all created (Ezekiel 28:18; Revelation 12:4). So we read of "the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). Satan's angels are now called demons.

Of those who hold this point of view, some call only the free fallen angels demons. Others hold that both the confined and nonconfined fallen angels constitute the whole company of demons.

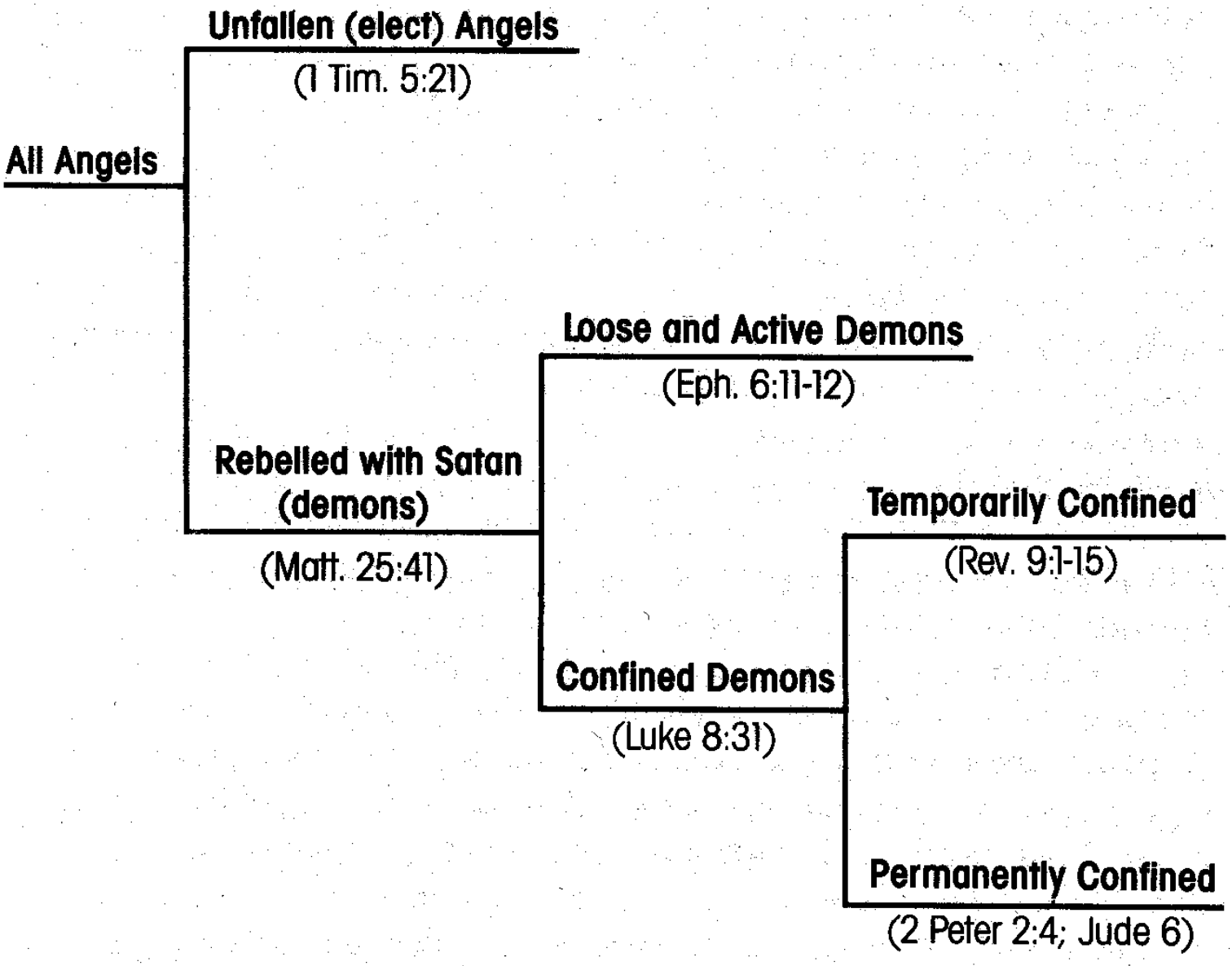
Demons, then, are Satan's subjects and helpers in his program of opposition to God and His people. Expelled from heaven with Satan, they have their abode in the second heaven. Their warfare may be carried on with elect angels there and with believers in the heavenlies. The unconfined seem free to roam the earth and carry on Satan's work here.

### *3.5.2 The confinement of demons*

Of the angels that followed Satan, there are two general classes, the free and the bound. Of those bound, there are two places of confinement. Some are in *tartarus* (translated "hell," 2 Peter 2:4). These seem to be confined permanently until the final judgment of angels, not because of their original rebellion with Satan, but because of some other terrible sin. If they were bound in *tartarus* because of the fall, no angel or even Satan would be free. They are thought by many scholars to be "the sons of God" of Genesis 6:1-4.

Other evil angels are bound in the abyss (Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:1-3, 10). Some of those expelled from possessed persons were sent there by Christ, but possibly not all. On one occasion the Lord Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to leave a boy and not to return again (Mark 9:25). This may indicate the possibility of return. Some regarded as demons are now bound and will be released to afflict wicked men in the tribulation period (Revelation 9:1-3, 10).

To sum up these matters of the existence, origin, and confinement of some of the fallen angels, one might chart the concepts like this (The chart is originated from: *Charles Caldwell Ryrie*, **Basic Theology**, Chapter 26, ChariotVictor Publishing, 1986, p.160):




### *3.5.3 Evaluation*

We favor the theory that demons are fallen angels for the following reasons:

1. similar relation to Satan;
2. similar essence of being;
3. similar activities; and
4. sufficient identification.

#### *3.5.3.1 <u>Similar relation to Satan</u>*

Certain parallel expressions seem to identify fallen angels with demons (e.g. "the devil and his angels," Matthew 25:41; "the dragon and his angels," Revelation 12:7; "Beelzebul the ruler of the demons," Matthew 12:24). Beelzebul is interpreted by the Lord Jesus as Satan (Matthew 12:26). Moreover, when Beelzebul is designated as 'ruler of the demons,' the word that is used is *archonti* which has the basic meaning of 'first.' As 'first of the demons' he is their ruler.

In the tribulation period, certain locusts are released from the abyss. From their description, activity, and place of confinement (see Luke 8:31), many take these to be demons. They have over them an angel, Abaddon (Apollyon), who may be Satan. If their king is an angel, then these demons may also be angels fallen with their leader, Satan.

#### *3.5.3.2 Similar essence of being*

Angels are termed "spirits" (Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 1:14). Demons are also designated as "spirits" (Matthew 8:16; Luke 10:17, 20). In other places, demons are termed "unclean spirits" (Luke 11:19-26) and "evil spirits" (Luke 8:2). The latter term fits one title of Satan, "the evil one" (John 17:15; 1 John 5:18).

#### *3.5.3.3 Similar activities*

Just as demons seek to enter and control men (Matthew 17:14-18; Luke 11:14-15), so also may angels, such as Satan (Luke 22:3; John 13:27). Evil angels join their leader, Satan, in warfare against God and man (Revelation 9:13-15; 12:7-17), and so do demons (Mark 9:17-26; Revelation 9:1-11). The many kinds and ranks of Satan's helpers listed in Ephesians 6:10-12 and Romans 8:38-39 may indicate the inclusion of angels as demons working against believers.

#### *3.5.3.4 Similar identification*

Every mention of Satan's angels and demons seems to be parallel, and there is no sufficient reason for distinguishing the two. In fact, if they are not identical, then no other origin of demons is anywhere revealed in the Bible. We should think that God would identify our enemies and their source if we are to understand their nature and activity and combat them intelligently. And we believe that He has identified demons as fallen angels under Satan.

### 3.6 Summary

Demons, like angels, are not the product of an overactive imagination nor the superstitious designation for certain natural diseases. Neither are they the disembodied spirits of a supposed race of men before Adam. Nor are they the monstrous offsprings of angelic cohabitation with women before the Flood. There is little, if any, evidence for these views that can stand critical evaluation. However, there is solid and substantial evidence to believe that they are fallen angels. They were part of Satan's original rebellion and share in his work today.

## 4. THE NATURE OF DEMONS

Since demons belong to the same class of beings as angels and Satan, all these creatures have much in common.

### 4.1 Their Personal Nature

Demons are not forces or concepts that merely exist in our minds. Demons exist; their reality does not depend on the existence and ability of human beings to conceive of them. Their personal nature are as follows:

1. *Intelligence.* They possess intelligence, knowing who the Lord was while He was on earth (Mark 1:24) and knowing their own eventual doom (Matthew 8:29). They also know what the plan of Salvation is even though they cannot accept it (James 2:19).

2. *Emotions.* They can exhibit emotion, especially when confronted with judgment (Luke 8:28; James 2:19).

3. *Wills.* They can give expression to their wills (Luke 8:32).

4. *Personality.* They are described by personal pronouns (Luke 8:27-30).

5. *Spiritual.* In contrast to flesh and blood beings, demons are spirit beings (Ephesians 6:12). Nevertheless, they are localized, since, as creatures, they are limited and not infinite as God is. Generally they are invisible to human beings, though on occasion their presence was apparent through various means (Acts 19:15; Revelation 9:1-12; 16:13).

**4.2 Their Intellectual Nature**

Demons show great intelligence as would be expected from such a high order of beings. They knew who Jesus is (Mark 1:24). They realized their own eventual doom (Matthew 8:29). They know the plan of Salvation (James 2:19). They develop and promote systems of doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1-3), an activity that will apparently increase as the end of the age approaches.

Intelligence can be enhanced by experience. Every demon, of course, has existed throughout all the span of human history. Though each one has not observed everything that has transpired throughout history, their longevity gives an added dimension to their native intelligence. They have observed human beings in almost every conceivable situation; therefore, they can accurately predict what individuals will do in most circumstances.

**4.3 Their Immoral Nature**

Demons are designated as "unclean spirits" (Matthew 10:1), as "evil spirits" (Luke 7:21), in one place, as "the spirit of an unclean demon" (Luke 4:33), and "spiritual forces of wickedness" (Ephesians 6:12). All of these terms clearly indicate the immoral nature of demons.

Immorality is whatever is inconsistent with good, but good must ultimately be defined in relation to the will of God. Therefore, the immoral activities of demons may include anything that opposes the will of God.

Here are some observations of one who was deeply involved in spiritism:

> *"The spirits I encountered at seances were, for the most part, very moralistic. They encouraged us not to smoke or drink or do anything else that would harm our minds and bodies. Ministers were told to preach morality, good manners, and civic pride. I knew ministers who actually had spirit messages taken down by their secretaries and then used them from the pulpit! The spirits often talked about an ethical Jesus, but never about the Savior who died a sacrificial death for sin. In contrast to the high moral and ethical tone of the seances in our home, I attended some where the spirits were blasphemous and sensual"* (*Victor H. Ernest,* **I Talked with Spirits**, Wheaton: Tyndale, 1970, p. 38).

The immoral goals of demons must include both the promotion of evil immorality and good immorality. This is completely in line with Satan's goals and his desire to counterfeit what is right.

### 4.4 Their Powers

#### *4.4.1 Their strength*

At times demons can exhibit superhuman strength as they work through human beings. The demon-possessed maniac of the Gerasenes was able to break all shackles and chains (Mark 5:3). The sons of Sceva were overpowered by the demon-possessed man in Acts 19:16.

#### *4.4.2 Their intelligence*

I have already mentioned their superior intelligence. But the question always arises, do demons know the future? Certainly they can understand the plan of God for the future as they find it in the Bible. Does Acts 16:16 indicate they can predict the future? Evidently not, for the word "fortune-telling," used only here in the New Testament, must be under stood in a bad sense; that is, "pretending to foretell the future." When it is used in the Septuagint it invariably refers to the words of lying prophets or those who practiced evil arts that were forbidden by the Law.

#### *4.4.3 Their presence*

Demons are not infinite; they are limited and they are creatures, albeit superhuman ones. Apparently they are not present everywhere; yet they are not so restricted as humans are by the normal barriers of space (Luke 8:30 - a legion of demons dwelt in one man). The very fact that demons can enter human or animal bodies shows they can pass through barriers that would restrict human beings.

However, the very large number of demons may make them seem to be everywhere present though that is not so. Yet Satan working with them can use their number to attempt to promote his plans everywhere.

### 4.5 Summary

To sum up: Demons are not humans; neither are they God. But they are superhuman with superior intelligence and experience and powers. To deny the existence of demons is not skepticism; it only displays ignorance. To be unrealistic about their power is foolhardy.

## 5. THE DUTIES OF DEMONS

The activities of demons are quite diverse but always directed toward the promotion of unrighteousness and ultimate destruction of that which is good. Their activities parallel those of Satan to a great degree, including:

1. promotion of Satan's program;
2. opposition to God and His program;
3. oppression of mankind;
4. opposition of the saints; and
5. overruled by God.

### 5.1 Promotion of Satan's Program

In general, demons are Satan's untiring and devoted henchmen, organized to accomplish their common purposes.

#### *5.1.1 Extension of Satan's power*

Because of his creaturely limitations, Satan must extend his power through his angels. They obey him and serve his purposes. He is their god (Matthew 12:24; John 12:3 1; Revelation 12:7). Of their activities for Satan, we note two important aspects:

1. *Their industry.* Evil spirits never cease in promoting Satanic deception and wickedness. They participate in the character and devotion of their leader to his evil ends. (Note Job 1:7 and 1 Peter 5:8 as illustrations of Satanic industry.)

2. *Their influence.* Satan is not omnipresent, omnipotent, nor omniscient. But his presence, power, and knowledge are greatly extended through his demons. Because of this, Satanic power is felt in many places simultaneously and in some places constantly. Pooling their resources and millennia of experience, they multiply effects, whether in individuals, nations, or the world system. Demonic cooperation is evident several places in Scripture (Matthew 12:26, 45; Luke 8:30; 1 Timothy 4:1).

#### *5.1.2 Expression of Satanic philosophy*

The expression of Satanic philosphy is as follows:

1. *In individuals.* To cause men to walk according to the philosophy of this world and according to the prince of the power of the air, demons must be actively involved in the process (Ephesians 2:1-2). The promotion of fleshly desires, sensual pleasures, pride, and materialism comes from a Satanic-demonic world system (John 16:11; 1 John 2:16).

2. *In political governments.* Satan and his demons are working behind the scene in determining the

philosophy, course, and actions of world powers (Daniel 10:13, 20). Often governmental policies opposing the spread of the gospel can be traced to demonic influence.

3. *In the world system.* A spiritual world system extends Satan's influence through demons and men. To control the world, demons organize and cooperate in large-scale warfare under Satan, their leader (Matthew 12:26; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Ephesians 6:11-12; 1 John 5:19).

### 5.2 Opposition to God and His Program

Satan and his demons are opposed primarily to God and secondarily to man in the following ways:

1. promoting rebellion;
2. positing slander;
3. promoting idolatry;
4. rejecting grace; and
5. promoting false religions and cults.

#### *5.2.1 Promoting rebellion*

After their original rebellion against God, Satan and the demons have continued to promote a spirit of rebellion among men. Satan started with the first man (Genesis 3), successfully involving him in rebellion. His final man, the Antichrist, heads the list of rebels among men. He is "the man of lawlessness ... who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god ... displaying himself as being God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Demons, deceiving men, gather them together to wage war against God in the Great Tribulation (Revelation 16:14). They cause men to become so entrenched in rebellion that even in the face of the wrath of God through demons, they do not repent of their evil works or of worshiping demons (Revelation 9:20-21).

#### *5.2.2 Positing slander*

Sharing in the character of the devil ("slanderer"), demons undoubtedly participate in his slandering work, including:

1. *Slandering God.* From the beginning, the devil slandered the goodness of God before man (Genesis 3:1-5). He would yet cause men to blame God for all the restriction on free expression and for the existence of evil in the world (Romans 3:5-8; 6:15; 9:14, 19; James 1:13).

2. *Slandering men.* Satan slanders men before God (Job 1:9, 11; 2:4-5; Zechariah 3:1; Revelation 12:10). Since Satan's angels are mentioned in the context of his slandering of the saints, it is probable that they are also involved in the process, either in gathering information or in pressing the charges (Romans 8:33, 38-39; Revelation 12:9).

Since demons are able to affect the thoughts of the mind, they may cause self-incriminating and condemning thoughts. The answer to any condemnation is found in Christ's advocacy for the believer (1 John 2:1-2) and in genuine confession and resultant cleansing (1 John 1:9).

#### *5.2.3 Promoting idolatry*

The Bible points to demons as the dynamic behind idolatry. In turning men from God, Satan and his hosts often turn them to idols. The Hebrew Old Testament clearly reveals demons promoting and receiving the worship given to idols (Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 96:4-5; Isaiah 65:11). Israel mingled with the nations and were infected by their practices, *"And served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons ... whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan" (Psalm 106:36-38).* As a result, they polluted the land, became unclean in their practices, and played the harlot (vv. 38-39).

The demonizing of heathen gods, so conspicuous in the Septuagint (Psalm 91:6, LXX 90:6; 96:5, LXX 95:5, and Isaiah 63:3, 11) is proof, that already in the third century B.C. demonism was recognized as the dynamic of idolatry, and idol-worship was considered but demon-worship.

The same is true in the New Testament. Denying, as does the Old Testament, the reality of other gods or any genuineness of idols, Paul says *"that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons" (1 Corinthians 10:20).* The Corinthians formerly had been *"led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led" (1 Corinthians 12:2).* Demons will promote idol worship on a wide scale during the reign of Antichrist in the Great Tribulation (Revelation 13:4, 15; see also Revelation 9:20).

### *5.2.4 Rejecting grace*

Satan and demons abhor God's grace. Incapable of repentance or of being saved themselves, they do not understand grace, nor do they want men to understand it. Therefore they hide, cloud, and twist God's grace in Salvation and distract men to lies.

Satan seems to have instigated or encouraged Cain to refuse to offer the blood of a substitute sacrifice and to offer, through his works, the fruit of a cursed earth (Genesis 4:1-7; see also 1 John 3:12).

Satan undoubtedly uses demons to blind the minds of the unsaved, to keep them from seeing God's Salvation by grace through faith in His Son (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). So he misconstrues the true purpose of the Mosaic Law (2 Corinthians 3:6-7, 13-14; Galatians 2:21-3:1) by "bewitching" through false teachers. Demons cause men to depart from the truth of grace and promote doctrines of works-righteousness (1 Timothy 4:1-8), of self-advancement through angelic intermediaries (Colossians 2:18-23), and of lawlessness (2 Peter 2:1-2). All their teachings are anti-Christ, denying that the Lord Jesus is the God-man, a genuine substitute sacrifice for the condemning sin of man (1 John 2:22; 4:1-4).

### *5.2.5 Promoting false religions and cults*

In promoting his lie, Satan and demons work inside and outside true Biblical religion, including:

1. *World religions.* Satan and his demons will encourage all sorts of errors to keep men from God and His grace. In primitive religions where magic, superstition, and worship of evil spirits are key factors, demons provide the power to keep men enslaved.

2. *Cults of Christendom.* Perversions of the scriptural view of the Person of Christ, His atonement, the method of Salvation, and the essence of the Christian life cause divisions among so-called Christians. John warns believers to test the spirits, whether they be of God or of Satan (1 John 4:1-4). We are not to have a completely open mind in religious matters. Demonism is the cause for many such divisions and cults, and sound Biblicism is the cure.

The New Testament warns us against heresies and cults that distort the truth while retaining some of it (2 Corinthians 11:13, 15, 22-23; Galatians 1:6-8; Colossians 2:18-23; 1 Timothy 4:1-4).

### 5.3 Oppression of Mankind

Demons act toward men in deceptive, degrading, and destructive ways. Though at times they may seem to promote some good, they are merely distracting from the best to promote evil in the end. In their opposing God and promoting Satan's program, they really oppress mankind. Some idea of this truth shows up in the previous sections of this chapter. A few specifics here demonstrate their malevolent treatment of man, including:

1. distressing through nature;
2. degrading man's nature;
3. distracting from the truth;
4. disabling the body;
5. deranging the mind;
6. driving to injury;
7. destroying life; and
8. dominating individuals.

#### *5.3.1 Distressing through nature*

Sometimes Satan and demons may use natural phenomena to afflict men. Satan may have used demons to cause injury and death in Job's family (Job 1:12, 16, 19; 2:7).

#### *5.3.2 Degrading man's nature*

Through the promotion of base desires and the philosophy of self-centeredness, demons degrade men made in the image of God (Ephesians 2:1—3). Immorality and degradation of God-given pow ers follow when demons lead men from God to idolatry and cor rupt humanism (Romans 1:18—32). Clinical evidence substantiates that demon-influenced persons have considerable difficulty with a healthy self-esteem.

#### *5.3.3 Distracting from the truth*

Demons blind men to spiritual truth in Christ and distract them to perversions of the truth (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-4; 1 John 4:1-4). They will often promote what seems good in religion, behavior, philosophy, science, and economics to accomplish their evil purposes. The promotion of humanism can be a form of idolatry (Romans 1:23). Occupation with worldly possessions and comforts stems from a world-philosophy promoted by demons (Ephesians 2:1-3). Some benefits may come to mankind through a future ecumenical religion called Babylon (Revelation 18:9-19), but its true effect upon men is destructive (Revelation 18:13, 23-

24; 19:2). The cause of this destruction is tied to demon activity (Revelation 18:2-3).

### *5.3.4 Disabling the body*

Demons may cause many sorts of physical ailments and injuries, for examples:

1. *Dumbness* (Matthew 9:32-33; 12:22; Mark 9:17-29).

2. *Blindness* (Matthew 12:22).

3. *Deformity* (Luke 13:11-17). Note that her trouble was attributed to "a spirit" (v. 11) who was regarded as an agent of Satan (v. 16).

4. *Seizures* (Matthew 17:15-18). The term describing the boy in Matthew is "moon-smitten," but the parallel passages describe the effects of the malady. Mark 9:20 states: "the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling about and foaming at the mouth." Luke 9:39 says, "a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth, and as it mauls him, it scarcely leaves him."

The Bible does not attribute all physical ailments to demons, but it clearly distinguishes natural ailments from demonic ailments (Matthew 4:24; Mark 1:32, 34; Luke 7:2 1; 9:1).

### *5.3.5 Deranging the mind*

Certain mental disorders stem from demonic influence and control. Again, not all mental illnesses result from demon activity.

1. *Insanity*. Withdrawal, nudity, moroseness, filth, and compulsive behavior seemed to characterize the maniac of the Gerasenes (Luke 8:27-29). After Christ cast out the demons, he was "sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind" (v. 35).

2. *Suicidal mania*. A demon who controlled a boy from childhood often threw him "both into the fire and into the water to destroy him" (Mark 9:22). A few modern cases of suicidal tendencies are recorded by many missionaries.

### *5.3.6 Driving to injury*

One demoniac kept gashing himself with stones (Mark 5:5). Another was thrown into the fire and water for destruction (Mark 9:22). The same boy was repeatedly mauled by a demon (Luke 9:39).

### *5.3.7 Destroying life*

Demons may move men to destroy human life (Revelation 18:2, 24), or they may directly slaughter men (Revelation 9:14-19).

### *5.3.8 Dominating individuals*

Through demon possession, Satan's agents control certain men at will to use them in any way-in the promotion of immorality, false religions, the occult practices, and other deceptions. Some of these cases are listed above. Other examples may be found in the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:7-18), Simon (Acts 8:9-24), Elymas (Acts 13:8-11), and a certain "slave-girl" in Philippi (Acts 16:16-19).

### 5.4 Opposition of the Saints

In opposing God, Satan and demons ply their trade also against believers. "The activity of demons is so intimately and inseparably bound up with their prince-leader that their work and his is identified rather than differentiated."8 So when Jesus healed those who were oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38), He was involved in delivering men from demons (Matthew 4:23—24; Mark 1:32; Luke 7:21). Certain activities against believers are traced to demons. It may surprise some that more than sixteen passages of the New Testament speak of demonic opposition to believers in Christ.

1. against believers in general;
2. against individuals; and
3. against the church.

#### *5.4.1 Against believers in general*

We struggle "not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). These forces are arrayed against us to accomplish "the schemes of the devil" (v. 11). Satan and demons are constantly conniving to discourage and defeat the saints in their individual and corporate life and ministry.

Paul does not say that all our struggle with evil comes immediately from demons. Much of it stems from our own evil natures within (Romans 7:21-24; James 1:14-15) and the world of men about us (Ephesians 2:2-3; 1 John 2:15-17). But we must recognize the great unseen hosts of evil spirits arrayed against us and prepare for battle by putting on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11).

#### *5.4.2 Against individuals*

Demons against individuals in the following ways:

1. *Attacking confidence and commitment*. The armor of God reflects the kind of attack we may expect. Ephesians 6:14-18 suggests that Satan and demons hit us at the basis of our usefulness for God. If confidence in God's truth and our standing in Christ can be shaken, we have no experiential ground for victory (v. 14). The shield of faith not only gives us assurance of victory, but purpose and perspective for Christian service (v. 16). It answers slanders and temptations and enables us to prepare and participate in the spreading of the gospel of peace (v. 15). We need all of God's armor.

2. *Tempting to sin*. Satan moved David to put confidence in human resources; so he numbered Israel (1 Chronicles 2 1:1-8). Demons may encourage the same type of thing. They appeal to the flesh of

believers and encourage selfish and lustful desires (1 Chronicles 5:1-5; Ephesians 2:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; 1 John 2:16). Christ warns the church in Pergamum about Satan's influence and the sin of idolatry and immorality (Revelation 2:12-14). The same type of warning also came to Thyatira, where demonic influence in idolatry also led to immorality (Revelation 2:20-24). In general, through the world system, they tempt to pride, covetousness, and expression of passion (1 Timothy 3:6; 1 John 2:16).

3. *Inflicting maladies*. Satan probably used demons to afflict Job to get him to turn against God (Job 2:7-9). Satan afflicted Paul with a "thorn in the flesh." This physical difficulty or sickness (some suggest eye trouble or malaria) Paul termed "a messenger [angel] of Satan" (2 Corinthians 12:7). Most likely a demon caused his affliction, but only under God's permission, as with Job (see vv. 7-9).

### *5.4.3. Against the church*

Satan and demons seek to oppose the main purposes of the body of Christ. She is to glorify God, extend the gospel, and edify herself in God's truth (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:7-11). God would demonstrate to angelic forces His wisdom in and through the church (Ephesians 3:10). These *"rulers ... and authorities in heavenly places"* could include demons as well as the holy angels. We could expect demons to seek to frustrate these purposes. In fact, the Lord Jesus promised that He would build His church despite the opposition of the authorities of the unseen world (*"gates of Hades,"* Matthew 16:18). Demons against the church in the following ways:

1. creating divisions;
2. countering the gospel ministry; and
3. causing persecution.

#### *5.4.3.1 Creating divisions*

The Holy Spirit established the body of Christ in unity (Ephesians 4:4-6). The church is to maintain the spirit of unity in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). Demons would divide and defeat unified efforts in the church, whether locally or universally in the following ways:

1. *Demons promote doctrinal divisions*. They speak through false teachers or fadists (1 Timothy 4:1-3). They generally deny or cloud the genuine deity, the genuine humanity, or the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ with its appropriation by faith (1 John 4:1-4). They hold to "a form of godliness, although they have denied its power" (2 Timothy 3:5). They also oppose the truth as did the demon-inspired Jannes and Jambres, court magicians of Pharaoh (v. 8). They may promote legalistic asceticism (1 Timothy 4:3-4, 8) or promote liberalism (2 Peter 2:1-2). God's servants should gently teach and correct them and their followers that "they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil" (2 Timothy 2:26, cf. vv. 24-26).

2. *Demons may promote practical divisions*. Jealousy and selfish ambition, arrogance and false practice reflect demonic wisdom (James 3:14-16). Demons accomplish their purposes through their toehold in our old, sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21, 26). They cause believers in carnal wisdom to rally around God's servant and not Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). They would create hard feelings toward a sinning

brother or differences of opinion as to his treatment (2 Corinthians 2:5-11). Resentment or lack of full forgiveness may stem from their work. Their strategy is "divide and conquer."

#### *5.4.3.2 Countering the gospel ministry*

Demons seek to hide the gospel message from lost sinners. So they blind their minds (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) and pervert the gospel. They seek to hinder the gospel minister from performing his responsibilities (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18). As a result, they sometimes promote misunderstandings (vv. 2-16). Their influence extends to controlling the attitude of local and national governments so as to resist the gospel ministry (2 Corinthians 4:3). The title "world forces" may suggest this (Ephesians 6:12). World leaders crucified Christ (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). Believers are to pray for deliverance from such powers so that the message and ministry may spread rapidly to God's glory (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

#### *5.4.3.3 Causing persecution*

Christ warned the church in Smyrna of Satanic persecution that would imprison some of them and cause tribulation and possibly death (Revelation 2:8-10). Demons would be involved in this. They often promote persecution from religious sources, such as "a synagogue of Satan" (v. 9). Some may think that in opposing true believers they are doing God a service (John 16:1-3). In the last great apostate ecumenical religion, demons will move men to persecute and kill true believers (Revelation 18:2, 24).

### 5.5 Overruled by God

Despite the intentions of Satan and his demons, their activity is often overruled by God to the accomplishing of His glory and our good in the following ways:

1. in disciplining the believer;
2. in defeating the ungodly; and
3. in displaying God's righteousness.

#### *5.5.1 In disciplining the believer*

In this action, God is not doing evil that good may come. Rather, He is allowing responsible moral persons, though evil, to work their desires; and yet His sovereignty so limits and controls them and their effects that His good purposes are accomplished despite them in the following ways:

1. *Correcting defection*. Hymenaeus and Alexander were "delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:19-20). The incestuous Corinthian was delivered "to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5, cf. vv. 1-5).

2. *Creating discernment*. Job had to learn of the greatness and goodness of God through suffering induced by Satan. He did not understand that God works in the believer's life by grace and that suffering is not always recompense for evil. He learned that trusting God through all trials was true wisdom (Job 40:1-

3; 42:1-6). He also later learned of the great invisible battle between God and Satan and his armies, in which Job was the prime human contributor to God's glory.

3. *Cultivating dependence*. Paul prayed that his "thorn in the flesh," a messenger of Satan," might be removed (2 Corinthians 12:7). Receiving adequate answer in three unsuccessful attempts, he submitted to God's purpose. It was to prevent his boasting of privilege and to cultivate further dependence upon God's strength instead of relying upon his own (vv. 9-10).

### *5.5.2 In defeating the ungodly*

In pouring out His punishment on Egypt, God seems to have used demons. Psalm 78:49 says He sent "a band of destroying angels" ("Lit., A deputation of angels of evil," margin).

God led wicked Ahab to death through the mouth of a lying prophet energized by a lying spirit (1 Kings 22:20-23, 37-38). However, God warned Ahab of the lying prophet through a true prophet (vv. 24-28). Ahab still chose to follow the lie.

Demons will lead rebellious armies of men against God in the war of Armageddon, where great slaughter awaits them (Revelation 16:13-16).

### *5.5.3 In displaying God's righteousness*

God's righteous Son demonstrated His power over all wicked forces as He cast out demons Himself and through His disciples (Luke 10:17-19). Christ is the One who overpowers "the strong man" and releases the captives (Matthew 12:28-29). His teaching was backed by His authoritative miracles when demons obeyed Him (Mark 1:27).

God's righteous judgment will be displayed in the final defeat of Satan and demons when they are consigned to the lake of fire prepared for them (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). The cross of Christ and the lake of fire vindicate God's permitting their existence and activity. Through their punishment, God will demonstrate the futility of evil, its exceeding wretchedness, and its ultimate defeat.

## 5.6 Summary

Demons' activities range widely. Basically, they promote Satan's program of the lie, extending his power and promoting his philosophy. As does Satan, they oppose God and His program by promoting rebellion, positing slander, promoting idolatry, reject ing grace, and fostering false religions and cults. In their wickedness and cruelty they oppress mankind, distressing them through natural phenomena, degrading man's nature, distracting from truth, afflicting the body, causing mental problems, driving men to injury, destroying life, and dominating through possession.

They oppose believers by waging spiritual warfare on all fronts. They seek defeat of individuals through attacking confidence, tempting to sin, and inflicting maladies. They seek the defeat of the church through creating divisions, countering the gospel ministry, and causing persecution. In all these activities, God's

sovereignty and grace overrules, using them to discipline the believer, defeat the ungodly, and display God's righteousness.

## 6. DOMINATION BY DEMONS

Humanism has deluded the human race into thinking that man is a mere product of natural forces and not affected by the spirit world. It denies humans the dignity of being made in the image of God and the reality of the degradation caused by sin. So there is no real purpose to life, and there is no need for a Savior from sin, guilt, demonic deception and domination.

Demon possession - or demonization - is written off as a religious fear left over from the dark ages. It is diagnosed variously as hysteria, paranoid schizophrenia, manic depression, or some other personality disorder. Some counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists with humanistic training and Western mind-sets have excluded demon influence and demonization from their worldview and, therefore, from their diagnoses.

### 6.1 The Reality of Demonization

It is time for Christians to shake off the chains of humanism and scientism and to face the reality of Satanic oppression and demonization. This is necessary to account for the phenomena we face and to provide help for the persons demonically afflicted.

The reality of demon possession is clearly stated and described in the New Testament. The synoptic gospels and the preaching of the apostles recorded in the book of Acts make Christ's casting out of demons from the demonized an evidence of His deity and Messiahship (Matthew 12:22-23, 28-29; Acts 2:22; 10:38). The apostles and evangelists substantiated the truth of the gospel by miracles, which included casting out demons (Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16-18; 19:12). The enlightened Christian should doubt neither the historicity nor the present possibility of demonization. The Bible states, *'The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8). Christ Himself placed demons and demonization on the same factual level of reality as His Messiahship. He claimed that the power to cast out demons was genuine and that it came from His Father (Luke 11:20).

### 6.2 Frequency of Demonization

There may be several cases in the Old Testament, but the New Testament provides sufficient evidence of the phenomena associated with demonization. It is mentioned on seventeen occasions in the gospels. Some of these references state that Christ treated many demonized persons (Matthew 8:16; Mark 1:32; Luke 4:41). The Lord Jesus treated nine specific cases:

1. Mark 1:21-28 (Luke 4:31-37);
2. Luke 8:2;
3. Matthew 12:22-29;
4. Matthew 8:28-34 (Mark 5:1-17; Luke 8:26-37);
5. Matthew 9:32-34;

6. Mark 7:25-30;
7. Matthew 17:14-20 (Mark 9:14-28; Luke 9:37-42);
8. Luke 11:14; and
9. Luke 13:10-21.

Christ gave authority to the twelve apostles to cast out demons, and He instructed them to do so (Matthew 10:1, 7-8). He did not limit His delegation of authority to the twelve but granted it also to the seventy disciples. They returned and reported that demons obeyed them in Christ's name (Luke 10:17). However, Christ reminded them that their relationship to God was more important than the authority they exercised (Luke 10:20).

The book of Acts records several occasions of demonization and the casting out of demons. People brought the sick and the demonized to the apostles to be healed (Acts 5:16). The evangelist Philip saw many relieved of inhabiting demons as he preached and exercised the authority of Christ in miracles and in removal of demons in the area of Samaria (Acts 8:4-8). It may be that Elymas the magician was demonized (Acts 13:8-11). Certainly the fortune telling slave girl in Philippi was demonized, for the apostle Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her, and it left her that very moment (Acts 16:16-19). Paul's ministry in Ephesus was marked by the removal of evil spirits (Acts 19:11-12). Certain Jewish exorcists sought to cast out demons by ritually using Christ's name, but the evil spirit spoke through the demonized man and used his body to leap upon the unbelievers, overpowering them, stripping them of their clothes, and wounding them (Acts 19:13-17).

### 6.3 Character of Demonization

We must start with an analysis of the Biblical information to properly understand what is involved in demonization.

#### *6.3.1 Contribution of etymology*

Etymology deals with the meaning of a word in its root and original meaning. The verb *daimonizomai* means to be possessed by a demon. We must remember that the Old English word "possessed" has the connotation of control rather than ownership.

The participle from the same root, *daimonizomenos* is used twelve times in the Greek New Testament. It is used only in the present tense, indicating the continued state of one inhabited by a demon, or demonized. This participle has components to its structure. First there is root, *daiman*, which indicates the involvement of demons. Second is the causative stem, *iz*, which shows that there is an active cause in this verb. Third is the passive ending, *omenos*. This conveys the passivity of the person described as demonized.

Putting it all together, the participle in its root form means "a demon caused passivity." This indicates a control other than that of the person who is demonized; he is regarded as the recipient of the demon's action. In other words, demonization pictures a demon controlling a somewhat passive human.

Translating this word as "demon possessed" has caused confusion. Some take it to mean ownership. This

cannot be. The demons own nothing. They are intruders and usurpers. The New restament regards them as squatters and invaders of property that does not belong to them. Actually, demons are owned by God as His creatures who are responsible to Him. This faulty translation misleads people regarding the condition of demonized persons and causes terror to the afflicted and those concerned for them.

### *6.3.2 Definition of demon possession (demonization)*

The definition of demon possession is:

> The inhabiting of a human by one or more demons who exercise various degrees of control with resultant physical, psychological, and spiritual manifestations (*C. Fred Dickason,* **Angels: Elect & Evil**, Chapter 20, Moody Press, 1995 Edition, p.198).

The results may be mild - as in the case of the woman with the bent back (Luke 13:10-17) or the blind and mute man (Matthew 12:22-29) - or wild - as in the case of the maniac of the Gerasenes who was exceedingly violent and in whom there was a legion of demons (Luke 8:26-39).

### *6.3.3 Equivalent terms*

Other expressions describe demonization, such as "to have a spirit" (Luke 4:3 3, Gr., "having the spirit of an unclean demon"), "a man with an unclean spirit" (Mark 1:23), "those who were troubled with unclean spirits" (Luke 6:18), "oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38), "afflicted with unclean spirits" (Acts 5:16), and "cruelly demon-possessed" (Matthew 15:22).

### *6.3.4 The concept of inhabitation*

Demonization, as in the definition above, is always presented as an evil spirit inhabiting a human. This is evidenced by the expressions such as "for many demons had entered him." Here the spirit who is external to the man is seen as invading the body, most likely the control centers of the brain that affect his mind, behavior, and physical strength (Luke 8:30).

### *6.3.5 Christ's description*

Christ's own words vividly describe a case of demonization (Matthew 12:43-45):

> *"When the unclean spirit goes out of a man. ... Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied ... Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there."*

Note that He regards the demon as residing in the man as its home, a place where it lives by choice. Note also that more than one demon may inhabit a person.

### *6.3.6 Change of personality in the demonized*

As noted, the manifestation of the demon inhabitation may be mild or severe. It may vary from mild harassment to severe subjection. Present-day counselors have found that in some cases there may develop:

1. supernatural abilities to heal;
2. to speak in unlearned languages or nonsensical babblings;
3. to foretell the future;
4. to have predictive dreams;
5. to speak with another voice;
6. to work miraculous-type feats (as did the magicians of Egypt); and
7. to "psychically diagnose" illnesses or troubled thought.

In other cases, demonized persons may become suddenly angry. They may be driven to hurt themselves or others or become depressed and suicidal. This seems to parallel the case of the demoniac of Gadara/Gerasene (Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-35).

In demonization, the personality of the demon controls to some degree and at times eclipses the personality of the person he inhabits to display something of the inhabiting demon's personality through the means of the victim's body. Note again the case of the demoniac of Gadara where the human ran to Jesus, but the demon wanted to retreat. There also the voice of a demon spoke not for the man but for the legion of demons inside the man. They asked to be sent into the swine. When Jesus allowed their exit, the man was left in his right mind and with changed behavior (Luke 8:35).

### *6.3.7 Cause for possession*

Causes for initiating the condition vary and are often complex. Probably in the great majority of cases possession is doubtless to be traced to yielding voluntarily to temptation and to sin, initially weakening the human will, so that it is rendered susceptible to complete or partial eclipse and subjugation by the possessing spirit.

In other cases, moral responsibility may be less, as in the case of the boy who suffered possession from childhood (Mark 9:21). It may be in such cases that the occult sins of the parents back to the third or fourth generation preceding have rendered children susceptible. The second commandment, forbidding idolatry, warns that God will recompense this iniquity of the fathers on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him (Exodus 20:4-5). Demons are the dynamic behind idolatry, and they may be allowed to lay claim to their devotees.

### *6.3.8 Continuation of possession*

Moral responsibility for continuing in the state of possession and for acts committed while in that state are a clouded issue. When the demons control the victim, the possessed person is not capable of controlling his mental and moral actions. At that time, the victim is not responsible. When the demons are not actually controlling and the person has charge of his faculties, he may be responsible for seeking help. However, in some cases, blackouts of consciousness during attacks may prevent the person from realizing his plight and seeking help. It is difficult to determine whether thoughts or actions are due to the victim or the demon. In any case, an analyst should not lay unnecessary guilt upon the sufferer.

## 6.4 Symptoms of Demonization

What are the marks of demonization? The chief characteristic of demon possession is the automatic projection of a new personality in the victim. This we treated above. In addition, certain marks give substantial evidence.

### *6.4.1 Marks suggested by Scripture*

*Koch* analyzes the story of the Gadarene (Gerasene) demoniac in Mark 5. He suggests eight distinct symptoms of possession:

1. Indwelling of an unclean spirit (v. 2). This is the cause of the symptoms. It means he was possessed.
2. Unusual physical strength (v. 3).
3. Paroxysms or fits of rage (v. 4). He broke chains and fetters.
4. Disintegration or splitting of the personality (vv. 6-7). The demoniac ran to Jesus for help, yet cried out in fear.
5. Resistance to spiritual things (v. 7). He asked Jesus to leave him alone.
6. Hyperaesthesia or excessive sensibility (v. 7). He knew immediately, without former contact, the true identity of Jesus.
7. Alteration of voice (v. 9). A legion of demons spoke through his vocal facilities.
8. Occult transference (v. 13). The demons left the man and entered into the swine.

The last four characteristics fail as psychiatric illnesses. For example clairvoyance itself is never a sign of mental illness, and a mental patient will never be able to speak in a voice or language he has previously not learned. Yet this is exactly what has happened and still does happen in some cases of possession.

Strictly speaking, transference cannot be classified as a characteristic of the possessed. It is a result of the casting out of demons. At that time they may turn their attention to other objects.

There are cases where demonization is not as clearly evidenced. Consider the woman with the horribly bent back (Luke 13:10-13); the blind and mute man (Matthew 12:22-29); the boy with seizures, incorrectly identified as epilepsy (Mark 9:17-22); magical powers found in the magicians of Pharaoh (Exodus 7:11; 8:7) and in the Samaritan magician Simon (Acts 8:9-10); and the predictive abilities of a slave girl (16:16-18).

### *6.4.2 Marks suggested by counselors*

Counselors of the possessed note several symptoms not unlike the list above. The agreement of many counselors stands as significant.

*Unger* lists several:

1. projection of a new personality;
2. supernatural knowledge (including the ability to speak in unlearned languages);
3. supernatural physical strength;

4. moral depravity;
5. deep melancholy or seeming idiocy, ecstatic or extremely malevolent or ferocious behavior;
6. spells of unconsciousness; and
7. foaming at the mouth.

(Note some of these in Luke 9:39, 42.)

From his counseling, *Koch* lists these:

1. resistance to prayer or Bible reading;
2. falling into a trance during prayer;
3. reaction to the name of Jesus;
4. exhibition of clairvoyant abilities; and
5. speaking in unlearned languages.

He warns those who put so much stress on speaking in tongues that Satan has his counterfeits.

*Lechler* lists the following:

1. passion for lying and impure thoughts;
2. restlessness and depression and fear;
3. compulsion to rebel against God or blaspheme;
4. violence and cursing;
5. excessive sexual or sensual cravings;
6. resistance and hatred of spiritual things;
7. inability to pronounce or write the name of Jesus;
8. appearance of mediumistic or clairvoyant abilities;
9. inability to act on Christian counsel;
10. resistance to a Christian counselor;
11. inability to renounce the works of the devil;
12. seizures or spells of unconsciousness;
13. speaking in unlearned languages;
14. extraordinary physical strength; and
15. molestation with pain unrelated to illnesses or injuries.

He advises that some of these marks may stem from mere subjection or affliction rather than actual possession, since their marks have much in common.

From the above symptoms listed by counselors of present-day demon-possessed persons, we can see the similarities to Biblical examples. We also note that some symptoms of demonization may overlap with some psychological disorders and others extend beyond what can reasonably be explained by that designation.

**6.5 Degrees in Demonization**

We have already noted some differences in the effects of demonization. However, a few observations are in order here.

It is evident, then, that all demonic invasion is demonization of whatever degree of mildness or severity. To call it "demon possession" rather than demonization is Biblically permissible, only insofar as the usage does not attempt to differentiate it from demonization in general or limit it to some cases (the milder forms) rather than all cases (including the more severe forms). While cases of severe demonization are indeed a far cry from very mild forms, they are nevertheless mere variations in degree of the same supernatural phenomenon. Both involve demonic invasion and both involve a degree of Satanic control.

Why would there be varying degrees of effects in demonization?

The varying degrees of effects in demonization are due to:

1. The degree of wickedness in the character of the demons, as Jesus noted (Matthew 12:44-45).
2. The number of demons inhabiting. This could result in more control and possibly more violent manifestations. Consider the case of Legion's effect on the Gadarene (Luke 8:30).
3. The rank of the inhabiting demons may contribute. The higher ranks exercise more control (See Chapter 23 for ranks of angels.).

We cannot deduce from the Biblical examples, though sufficient to evidence the reality of demonization, that we have seen all the symptoms that demonization may produce. Many were oppressed by inhabiting spirits. We are given the ones with notable manifestations so that we can see that Christ performed miraculous deliverances which could not be denied. Some cases may be more unnoticed and perhaps even unknown for some time to the person demonized.

### 6.6 Continuation of Demon Possession

The Biblical phenomenon of demon possession continued through the days of the early church, was cited at various points in church history, and continues today in many regions.

#### *6.6.1 In the days of Christ*

During Christ's public ministry there broke out an unusual display of demonism. The synoptic gospels recount many stories of Christ delivering men, women, and children from possession by unclean spirits. The gospel of Mark, for instance, frequently shows His power as the Servant of God over these evil forces (Mark 1:23-27, 32-34, 39; 3:11-12; 5:1-20; 7:25-30; 9:17-29, 38). Christ also delegated power over demons to the twelve (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:14-15) and to the seventy (Luke 10:1, 17).

#### *6.6.2 In the days of the apostles and early church*

Cases of demon possession and expulsion continued through the apostles and evangelists in the narrative of

Acts (5:16; 8:7; 16:16-18; 19:13-19). Casting out demons in Jesus' name became a sign of apostolic authority and of the genuineness of the gospel they preached.

### *6.6.3 In the annals of church history*

References to demon possession can be found in some of the early church Fathers and writings. "The Shepherd of Hermas" treats demon possession. *Justin Martyr* and *Tertullian* show acquaintance with the phenomenon. *Oesterreich* believes that much of so-called demon possession can be explained in terms of psychology and sociology, something like a social hysterical neurosis, yet his work testifies to genuine examples of demon possession with examples taken from all ages and many countries. His findings support the fact that the symptoms of possession follow from Christ's time to the present.

### *6.6.4 In the present day*

*Nevius*, missionary to China in the last half of the nine-teenth century, was forced to recognize the reality of demon possession in modern pagan China. The cases he presents bear many parallels with what we have seen of demon possession in the New Testament. *Unger* cites several sources documenting the continuance of demon possession at the present time. He claims that it manifests itself more noticeably where Christianity has not penetrated and affected society very much. *Unger's* later book, **What Demons Can Do to Saints**, presents several modern-day cases. In *C. Fred Dickason*'s book **Demon Possession and the Christian**, several recent cases are described by various counselors. He estimates that in the last twenty-five years he has personally counseled more than five hundred demonized persons.

### 6.7 Summary

The Bible certifies demon possession as a reality, not just superstitious misconception. The Scripture's terms, the Savior's own description, and the testimony of the apostles and Christian workers support this. Possession is marked by a drastic change of personality and certain other well-defined characteristics - a demonic syndrome, obvious in Scripture and in case studies today.

## 7. WHETHER OR NOT A GENUINE CHRISTIAN CAN BE POSSESSED BY DEMONS?

Can a genuine Christian be possessed by demons? Bible scholars differ on this question. Here we will present three different considerations:

1. Biblical considerations;
2. doctrinal considerations; and
3. experiential considerations.

### 7.1 Biblical Considerations

Verses cited to support the view that believers can be possessed by demons are usually these:

1. 1 Samuel 16:13-14;
2. Luke 13:11-16;
3. 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 12:7; and
4. Acts 5:3.

But when these verses examined they do not prove that believers can be demon-possessed. Perhaps the question should be restated. Instead of asking whether a believer can be demon-possessed, we should ask whether or not Satan or demons can work from within a believer as well as from outside.

### *7.1.1 1 Samuel 16:13-14*

The reference in 1 Samuel says that an evil spirit tormented Saul, but the base of operation is not stated. Nor do we know definitely Saul's spiritual condition before God.

### *7.1.2 Luke 13:11-16*

Luke attributes the woman's deformity to a demon, and the Lord calls her "a daughter of Abraham." Some understand this to be a clear case of a demon working within a believer. However, it is unclear whether "daughter of Abraham" indicated a believer or only that she was one of God's chosen people, Israel. Clearly she was not a Christian in the post-Pentecost sense of the word.

### *7.1.3 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 12:7*

The punishment on the sinning brother in 1 Corinthians 5 involved delivering him over to Satan (see also 1 Timothy 1:20). But whether this meant that Satan and or demons would work from within his life or simply that he was now being put out of the fellowship and protection of the church into the domain of Satan, the world, is debatable. The "different spirit" of 2 Corinthians 11:4 is not a demon any more than "another Jesus" in the verse is. It is another gospel which brings bondage. The base of operation of the messenger of Satan (a demon) which God sent to afflict Paul is unstated in 12:7. Though the result was a thorn in the flesh, this did not mean that the demon had to reside in Paul.

### *7.1.4 Acts 5:3*

Acts 5:3 clearly states that Satan filled the heart of Ananias to cause him to lie to the Spirit. The word "fill" is the same as used in Ephesians 5:18 of the filling of the Spirit. Since there is no reason not to believe that Ananias was a believer, here is a clear statement that Satan did fill the heart of a believer. Nothing is said about demons here, though presumably if Satan filled his heart, demons could have also.

How can this evidence be evaluated?

A believer may be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, the spirit will be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 5:5). Whatever Satan or demons can do to a believer, and whether from without or within as their base of operation, their control cannot permanent and eternal. John clearly declares that the evil

one cannot "touch" the one who is born of God (1 John 5:18). The word "touch" here means holding on to someone. Satan can never hang on to the believer with the purpose of harming him, for that believer belongs eternally and irrevocably to God. Satan (or demons) may afflict and even control for a time, but never permanently or eternally.

### *7.1.5 Conclusion*

The Biblical evidence is not conclusive. There is no direct statement on the matter, and interpretations of relevant data vary.

## 7.2 Doctrinal Considerations

From the doctrinal point of view, there seem to be three main considerations:

1. personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit;
2. spatial limitation; and
3. personal identity with Christ.

### *7.2.1 Personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit*

*Unger* previously said, "To demon possession, only unbelievers are exposed." In this he argued from the assumption that an evil spirit could not indwell the redeemed body together with the Holy Spirit. Later, on the basis of the claims of many missionaries all over the world, he modified his opinions to allow that in certain cases a true believer may become possessed or repossessed, particularly in idolatrous cultures.

How shall we evaluate the argument against possession from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

It is true that every genuine Christian is indwelt with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). But to say that His presence excludes the presence of any evil within the believer is to forget that the sin nature, an entrenched evil, remains in the believer (Romans 7:15-24) and the Holy Spirit's presence is required to control it (Galatians 5:16-17). If one argues that the sin nature has been judged (Romans 6:6), he must remember that Satan and demons were also judged by the same instrument, the Cross of Christ (John 12:31; Colossians 2:15). Victory over the influence of the sin nature results not from the mere presence of the Spirit, but from His control in filling (Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:16-17; Ephesians 5:18). This involves a willful yielding on the believer's part (Romans 6:11-14; Galatians 5:16, 25).

### *7.2.2 Spatial limitation*

Some say that there is not room for both the Holy Spirit and a demon, appealing to spatial limitation. Spatial considerations do not affect the matter. The omnipresent Holy Spirit can in His total person indwell each believer despite our limited bodies. Furthermore, a legion of demons may dwell in one person (Mark 5:9). Space would not crowd out the possibility of the Holy Spirit and a demon residing in the same body.

### *7.2.3 Personal identity with Christ*

Some argue that one who is "in Christ" eternally and unforfeitably and who is Christ's own possession cannot fall to demon possession. We agree that genuine children of God stand forever secure in their Salvation. They will without a single failure arrive in glory (Romans 5:1-10; Ephesians 1:4, 13-14; 4:30). No demonic force, no creature is able to separate such a one from the love of God and the life of the Savior (Romans 8:38-39). To this end the Savior prayed and was heard (John 17:15, 24).

However, the question is, Can demons temporarily inhabit and control the believer?

If sin can control and dominate the believer's practice so as to cause carnality, defection, and chastisement unto death (1 Corinthians 3:1-4; 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 1:19-20), then position in Christ does not guarantee spiritual living. Again it is a matter of the control to which the believer yields - to sin or to the Savior (Romans 6:16). It is possible for a weak or ignorant believer to trifle in the occult or to return to pagan practices associated with Satan.

### *7.2.4 Conclusion*

The arguments from the Holy Spirit's presence or the Savior's property do not shut out the possibility of a genuine believer being possessed.

## 7.3 Experiential Considerations

We do not base doctrine on experience. For this, Scripture is sufficient (2 Timothy 3:16-17). But where Scripture is not decisive, we may gain insight from experience, keeping aware of possibilities of misinformation, lack of information, and misinterpretation of evidence. With this in mind, we yet recognize that evidence from mission fields and clinical counseling seems to say that a genuine Christian may, under unusual circumstances, become possessed or repossessed.

### *7.3.1 Evidence from mission fields and clinical counseling*

From *C. Fred Dickason's* interviews with those who have carefully and Biblically treated the demon possessed, he conclude that, under unusual circumstances, genuine Christians may become possessed at least to some degree, even to the point where they speak with strange voices or in foreign languages.

The popular author *Hal Lindsey* holds that a Christian rarely has the same degree of complete subjugation as a non-believer. He adds, "However, I've talked to many missionaries who have had to deal with these things personally, and I must say that it seems to be possible for a Christian to have a certain degree of demon possession." He refers also to an example of demon possession of an unquestionable believer. *Dick Hillis* of Overseas Crusades reported that a Chinese man, an elder in the church, became so possessed that his personality changed, his language became vile, his strength greatly increased, and he spoke in a strange voice with which *Hillis* conversed as with a demon.

*Koch* in his book (*Kurt E. Koch*, **Occult Bondage and Deliverance**, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1970) cites several examples, including the case of a missionary who was himself possessed and changed his concept on the matter. He suggests an example of what type of unusual circumstances must pertain for a Christian to be

possessed. In the Philippines, a boy had been a Christian for about one year. As *Dr. Koch* prayed with him, "a rough voice called out of him, *'He belongs to us. His whole family has belonged to us for more than 300 years ... His ancestors have subscribed themselves to us. He is ours by right.'* The conversation revealed that the ancestors of this unhappy student had not only practiced sorcery, but some of them had even subscribed themselves to the devil with their own blood. This was the reason why, in spite of his conversion, the student had become possessed."

*Koch* is inclined to agree that it is possible, but he suggests points of consideration:

1. perhaps the person was not a genuine believer,
2. perhaps obsession or influence is confused with possession;
3. possibly God allows temporary possession for chastisement regarding a stubborn sin; and
4. he holds that believers are only temporarily possessed, whereas unbelievers can remain possessed.

### *7.3.2 Circumstances for a Christian to be possessed by demons*

The circumstances for a Christian to be possessed by demons are as follows:

1. It is the result of persistence in rebellious and wicked works, such as pursuing occult practices or continuing in gross and vile lusts. Possession does not usually come in just one moment, but results from a course of pursuing sin and not responding to God's clear warnings through the Word, Christian counselors, or the Holy Spirit working in the conscience.

2. The ancestors of the Christian had subscribed themselves to the devil with their own blood. This was the reason why, in spite of his conversion, the Christian had become possessed.

### *7.3.3 Christian can help himself by turning from sin to Christ*

In any case, a Christian does not need to continue under demon influence or control. He can help himself by turning from sin to Christ. Never does he become separated from God's family or the love in Christ, not even by his own life or demonic forces (John 17:15, 24; Romans 8:38-39).

If a person was possessed before conversion, and the demons linger on to claim the person, then renunciation of the devil and all his works, specific confession of known sins, and commitment to Christ as Lord can help solve the problem.

### *7.3.4 No Christian who is walking in fellowship with God can become demon possessed*

We must make clear that no Christian who is walking in fellowship with God and obeying God's Word can become demon possessed. We have no fear of this, for if we walk in the Holy Spirit's control, neither the flesh nor demons can possess us or control us.

### *7.3.5 Warning*

A word of warning is due here:

1. Some Christian counselors see demon influence or possession as the cause or possible cause behind every sin or sickness, physical or mental. They actively seek out "demons" in Christians, pursuing their "deliverance ministry." Remember, first, that the Bible distinguishes between the demonic and disease.

2. Satan would have us to over-estimate his power and activity and to become occupied with his power and influence, thus causing fear and imbalance in our thinking.

3. Sensitive souls cannot handle the uncertainty and fear created by such overemphasis.

4. Satan would love to divide churches over this issue, and overemphasis and radicalism contribute to this.

5. Satan would encourage pride in those who cast out demons. Jesus said not to rejoice in our power over demons, but in our relationship to Him (Luke 10:20). This relationship should be our joy and the main emphasis of our preaching. We must preach the whole Word in balanced fashion (Acts 20:20, 27; 2 Timothy 4:1-2).

### 7.4 Summary

Christians disagree on whether believers can be possessed, and Biblical evidence is inconclusive. Certain case studies seem to indicate that they can, under unusual circumstances, become or remain possessed after conversion. But there is a sure cure found in the deliverance that only Christ gives. Those in fellowship with Christ should not fear becoming possessed. The New Testament dispels the fears of demons from Christians while keeping them aware of the reality and power of demons.

## 8. CONQUEST OF DEMON POSSESSION

There is a cure for demon possession. No one, especially a Christian, need remain in that condition. There is help in Christ and in Christian counselors.

### 8.1 Conquest in Christ

Christ conquest demons in the following ways:

1. *In His career*. Christ released those possessed by casting out the demons in His own power, a public display of His authority over the spirit world (Matthew 8:16, 32; 9:33; and particularly Matthew 12:28; Mark 1:27). The cure was instantaneous and lasting (Mark 5:15).

2. *In His commission*. Christ gave to His disciples authority over demons (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:14-15). When the seventy returned with reports that even the demons were subject to them in Christ's name, the Lord connected this to the defeat of Satan, the enemy (Luke 10:17-20).

3. *In His Cross*. Christ judged Satan and demonic forces in the judgment of the Cross (John 12:31-33; 16:11). His death for man's sin delivered men who were once bondslaves to Satan and his demons (Hebrews 2:14-15). By the Cross, Christ disarmed or stripped them of their spoil, making a public display of them (Colossians 2:14-15). The resurrected Savior stands exalted over them (1 Peter 3:22), and they are subject to His name (Philippians 2:9-11).

Christ stands victor over Satan and demons and is the deliverer of those who trust Him. Only by coming to Christ are men freed.

**8.2 Conquest by Christians**

Christ promised that the authorities of the unseen world would not be able to resist those who follow Him (Matthew 16:18). Christians who are qualified may help others find release from demon powers. Christians can conquest demons by Christ's power and Biblical principles:

***8.2.1 By Christ's power***

Just as the Lord granted power to His own to cast out demons in His day on earth, so today genuine followers may do the same (Matthew 10:1). The apostles and their followers cast out demons in their day (Acts 5:16; 16:16-18), and Paul states that Christians have all they need to wage warfare against Satan (Ephesians 6:10-18). Though we have no resources of our own, we have all we need in Christ by virtue of our union with Him (Colossians 2:9-15). It should be carefully noted that casting out demons is not a spiritual gift nor the peculiar ability of a few Spirit-filled believers. We need not live in terror of Satan or demonic power as if Christ had not defeated them and as if they were not subject to Him and to us as we abide in Him. Where there is need for deliverance, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ must appropriate His promise and do His works (Matthew 16:18).

***8.2.2 By Biblical principles***

The Biblical principles are as follows:

1. diagnosis;
2. prayer for deliverance;
3. to order the demon to name himself or to discover if there are more than one present; and
4. direct command to the demon resident in the possessed to depart.

***8.2.2.1 Diagnosis***

First there must be diagnosis. Not every suspected case is in reality demon possession. Extreme caution must be used here, because the suggestion of demon power can further complicate the plight of one mentally or emotionally disturbed. But, if it becomes transparently clear that the demonic is present, then the person concerned must be told quite definitely, but in love, that Satan has bound him to himself. Any resulting shock will only have a wholesome effect in the end. The patient must be made to realize who the enemy of his soul really. This seems to agree with the Biblical example of Peter dealing with Simon, the magician, who

continued under some Satanic delusion (Acts 8:9-24). It also fits Paul's treatment of the slave girl in Philippi (Acts 16:16-18). The Christian should pray for similar discernment.

#### *8.2.2.2 Prayer for deliverance*

Following proper diagnosis, there is deliverance. The believer must be armed with prayer, not just at the moment, but as a habit of life. However, there usually must be specific prayer. Jesus prescribed prayer for deliverance (Mark 9:29). Lack of prayer may exhibit lack of faith (Matthew 17:18-20). The prayer may best be corporate to enter into the special promise of Christ about two or more agreeing in prayer (Matthew 18:19-20).

#### *8.2.2.3 To order the demon to name himself or to discover if there are more than one present*

It might be necessary to order the demon to name himself or to discover if there are more than one present (Mark 5:9). This step is to make sure that we would completely expel all demons resident in the possessed.

#### *8.2.2.4 Direct command to the demon resident in the possessed to depart*

Deliverance demands a direct command to the demon resident in the possessed. The Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul both spoke to demons directly (Matthew 8:32; Mark 5:8; Acts 16:18). They commanded them to depart, and the demons had to obey the authority of Christ. There must be a firm stand in the power of Christ (Ephesians 6:10-12).

### 8.3 Qualification for the Counselor

Though exorcism is not a special spiritual gift, nevertheless there are certain qualifications that are preferable, including:

1. spiritual;
2. Scriptural; and
3. special.

#### *8.3.1 Spiritual*

The counselor must be born of the Holy Spirit by trusting Christ, having the assurance of his right standing before God (John 1:12-13; 1 John 5:4-5, 18). He must have dedicated his life to God so that he does not participate in Satan's sin of independence (Romans 12:1-2). Only in this way can he resist the devil (James 4:6-8). He must allow the Holy Spirit of God to control his life (Galatians 5:16-18, 25; Ephesians 5:18). Only in this way can he know God's power operating in his life to live for Christ and to help others.

#### *8.3.2 Scriptural*

The counselor must know God's Word. He must know what it says about the enemy, Satan, and the demons, their power and methods (2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14). He must know God's armor and how to use it (Ephesians 6:10-18). He must know of Christ's victory over Satan and be convinced of his position of power in Christ (Colossians 2:15). He should be acquainted with the Biblical accounts of Christ and the apostles in their

dealings with demons.

### *8.3.3 Special*

If possible, the counselor should have some medical qualifications and psychological training. Correct diagnosis is highly important, and distinction between disease and the demonic must be made. A mature Christian with experience in dealing with the demonic is preferred. There are definite symptoms of demonic possession, but discernment is essential. The wise counselor will seek advice and confer with other counselors for the oppressed when in doubt.

## 8.4 Summary

The healing of the demon-possessed is an essential part of the record in the Synopt[ics], and Acts. The crucial thing is that demons are expelled by a word of command issued in the power of God and not by the invocation of a superior but essentially similar spirit, nor by the use of material media. Christ defeated Satan through His death and resurrection, and He grants to believers power and wisdom to continue His work of destroying the works of the devil (Romans 16:20; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:11).

(Note: Read the course, Exorcism, for further information in this topic.)

# 9. DISTRACTIONS BY DEMONS - THE OCCULT

One of the outstanding marks of this age is a great and increasing attraction to occult practices. Many New Age leaders have introduced old occult practices under new, sometimes labeled "scientific," guises. Their mystical, magical, somewhat humanistic worldview is promoted as tapping our innate potential or realizing our "essential godhood." Many forms of occult sciences and practices have invaded our spiritually impoverished society offering a new view and new hope for those tired of the limitations and disappointments of humanistic materialism. Let's look at general definitions and characteristics, point out the source and effects of occultism, and set forth a plan of deliverance for those in bondage.

## 9.1 Definition of the Occult

### *9.1.1 Designation*

The term occult derives from the Latin *occultus*, a form of the verb *occulere*, to cover up, hide. It means hidden, secret, dark, mysterious, concealed. It is used to describe phenomena which transcend or seem to transcend man's senses or realm of natural experience. It is applied to the occult arts or sciences.

### *9.1.2 Description*

Occultism as a part of folklore has been practiced for thousands of years. Scholars divide the occult into three main categories:

1. divination;
2. magic; and
3. spiritism.

### *9.1.2.1 Divination*

From Latin, *divinare*, to foresee, divination refers to foretelling the future. It includes two divisions:

1. artificial or augural divination, interpreting signs or omens under indirect demonic control; and
2. inspirational divination, using a demon-controlled medium to forecast what he sees.

The forms noted in the Bible are varied. These include:

1. *rhabdomancy*, the throwing of sticks or arrows into the air (Ezekiel 21:21; cf. Hosea 4:12);
2. *hepatoscopy*, examination of the liver or other organs of an animal (Ezekiel 21:21);
3. *teraphim*, images used for divination (2 Kings 23:24; Ezekiel 21:21; Zechariah 10:2);
4. *hydromancy*, divination with water, done either by noting the reflections or by inducing a trance (Genesis 44:5, 15);
5. *necromancy*, communication with the dead (Deuteronomy 18:11; 1 Samuel 28:8; 2 Kings 21:6; condemned, Leviticus 19:31; 20:6; Isaiah 8:19-20); and
6. *astrology*, reading the stars and coming to conclusions on the basis of their positions and relations to each other, which was pronounced vain in Isaiah 47:13 and Jeremiah 10:2.

In its present forms, divination includes:

1. astrology;
2. cartomancy;
3. palmistry;
4. divining rod and pendulum;
5. psychometry;
6. dreams and visions; and
7. Ouija boards, crystal balls, and water dowsing.

**Astrology** is an ancient art or pseudoscience which claims to foretell events on earth by interpretation of the relative positions of the sun, moon, planets, and constellations. It claims to predict human character and fate. Actually, it invites the intervention of demons because it originated in star worship and seeks secret knowledge in opposition to God's will and God's Word. Scripture specifically forbids such and prescribes the death penalty for one guilty of such evil (Deuteronomy 17:1-7; Isaiah 47:13-14; Jeremiah 10:2).

**Cartomancy** is the art of forecasting by the laying of cards whose faces and relationships have certain meanings. Tarot cards would fall in this category. The same condemnation applies to this as to astrology.

**Palmistry** seeks to tell the future through interpreting the lines, elevations, and depressions in a person's palm. It is some what related to astrology.

**The divining rod and pendulum** are used on location or on a chart or map to locate unseen objects, such as deposits of oil or water. They may also be used to diagnose illness in the human body.

**Psychometry** is a type of clairvoyance that can identify some thing about a person through some object he wore or used. The clairvoyant claims he can detect such things as character or location by sensing impressions emanating from the person.

**Dreams and visions**, though used in Biblical times (note Genesis 28:12-15; Isaiah 6:1-11; Daniel 7-12; Zechariah 1-6), are part of the occult experience. Prognostication in any form is highly suspect.

The Bible prohibits divination in any form (Deuteronomy 18:10-11). Fortune-tellers were to be put to death in Israel. God warned, "For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name'" (Jeremiah 29:8-9). The Bible sees divination as open to demon influence and producing spiritual degradation. So the Bible consistently condemns it (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Isaiah 44:24-25; Ezekiel 21:21; Hosea 4:12; Amos 5:25-26; Zechariah 10:2; Acts 7:41-43; 16:16-18; Galatians 5:20).

### *9.1.2.2 Magic*

Magic seeks accomplishment of results beyond human power by recourse to superhuman spirit agencies, such as Satan and demons. Divination taps secret knowledge, whereas magic taps secret power. The magician or sorcerer seeks to affect circumstances by trying to compel a god, demon, or spirit to work for him; or he follows a pattern of occult practices to bend psychic forces to his will. Magic includes the healing and inflicting of diseases, love and hate magic, curses, fertility charms, persecution and defense magic, banning and loosing, and death magic.

The Bible recognizes the reality of magic and attributes it to Satanic and demonic forces. Pharaoh's magicians performed supernatural feats (2 Timothy 3:8) in opposing Moses' miracles (Exodus 7-11). Their power was limited by God, however. The magicians of Daniel's day had obvious occult powers (Daniel 1:20; 2:2, 27; 4:7), but Daniel's God-given wisdom surpassed them (Daniel 1:20; 4:9; 5:11). Jesus acknowledged that miraculous works might be done by those whom He never knew as His own (Matthew 7:22-23).

The apostles recognized the evil of magic and dealt severely with the magicians Simon and Elymas (Acts 8:9-24; 13:4-12). Paul encouraged those who practiced magic to bring their books and magic items for burning (Acts 19:18-19). They considered this clean break necessary to stand against evil supernaturalism.

The Antichrist who precedes Christ's coming will do lying miracles (2 Thessalonians 2:9), and so will his religious supporter (Revelation 13:11-15). In fact, many may have the ability to show great signs and wonders (Matthew 24:24). Unrepentant magicians during the Great Tribulation are classified with murderers and immoral persons (Revelation 9:21). Magicians (sorcerers) will have their part for eternity in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8; 22:15).

All magic of supernatural origin (not mere sleight of hand) is anti-Christ and demonic, even the practices that

call on the name of Christ and the Trinity - one way to take the name of the Lord in vain.

### *9.1.2.3 Spiritism*

Some are persuaded that certain mediums can make contact with the spirits of deceased humans. From this they receive comfort and revelation. It results in pride, deception, and bondage to occult powers. Consulting with those who had familiar spirits or with wizards was banned in Israel (Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:10-11). Severe penalties were attached to guilty persons (Leviticus 20:6, 27).

The term "familiar spirit" or "familiar" refers to the alleged spirit of a deceased person, as a servant or part of the family, and so acquainted with the person calling him up. **It is a knowledgeable spirit who can imitate or impersonate him, deceiving the one desiring to communicate with the dead.**

King Saul, even though he had put away familiar spirits and wizards from the land (1 Samuel 28:3, 9), sought to contact Samuel through the witch of Endor. For this sin, along with other rebellion, he died (1 Chronicles 10:13-14). The unusual case of Samuel returning to speak judgment to Saul stands as God's expose of spiritism as a fraud and as a sign of His unequivocal condemnation of all traffic in occultism and His sure punishment of all who break His divinely ordained laws in having recourse to it. We may explain the incident of Samuel's appearance as the intervention of God allowing Samuel to appear pronounce judgment on Saul. The medium was terrified in surprise when Samuel actually appeared, not in body, but in spirit representation by God's special power and permission. The rebuke to Saul and his death as predicted by Samuel were evidences of God's intervention.

Spiritistic phenomena may be divided into the following categories:

1. physical phenomena (levitations, apports, and telekineses);
2. psychic phenomena (spiritistic visions, automatic writing, speaking in a trance, materializations, table lifting, tumbler moving, excursions of the psyche);
3. metaphysical phenomena (apparitions, ghosts);
4. magic phenomena (magic persecution, magic defense); and
5. cultic phenomena (spiritistic cults, spiritism among Christians).

Those who seek contact with angels for guidance, secret information, and healing are involved in a form of spiritism. These angels are considered to take the place of God as minor deities. Colossians 2:18-19 warns against seeking the favor of angels or intermediate beings. Those who promote seeking contact with angels are defrauding their followers.

The dynamic behind these phenomena is demonic. Demons with their great power and intelligence accomplish many sense-defying effects. Behind the supposed communication with the dead are deceiving spirits who through the mediums under their control impersonate the dead. Through their large number and pooling of their great intelligence they may supply much information, even detailed personal matters; for they have long been observers of the human scene.

Christians who attend experiment with spiritism expose themselves to demonic oppression and become

disinterested or opposed to God's Word and work. Christians should recognize that departed spirits do not rise and praise God (Psalm 88:10). Jesus said the Scriptures are to be trusted and would not allow the dead to return, for there is a great gulf fixed that precludes the dead returning (Luke 16:22-31, particularly vv. 26, 29, 31).

## 9.2 Display of the Occult

### *9.2.1 Its popularity*

The occult has enjoyed a history of popularity among pagans for centuries. But recently a boom of interest has descended on modern countries. The new witchcraft, the romanticizing of Satan, the rise of astrology to new heights in the use of the computer, television and movie programming, New Age books, holistic medicine, and the seeking of angels or spirit guides all witness to the rise of occultism. Unbelievers have little discernment, if any; and Christians are often caught up in the deception by Satan due to their ignorance.

In some modern countries we have seen the invasion of the occult through interest in foreign religions, the immigration of idolatrous peoples, the turn to the ancient wisdom and healing arts of the East. Even medical doctors are using occult or psychic means of diagnosis and healing.

### *9.2.2 Its promotion*

Why the popularity? Why do several million Germans subscribe to some form of the occult? Why do some experts estimate as many as two hundred thousand witches in America?

There are several reasons:

1. man's sense of personal inadequacy - he needs outside help in this complex and confusing world;
2. the impersonalization of society that treats man as a number on a list to be used and discarded;
3. the inadequacy of science to contribute to the real meaning and purpose of life with personal dimensions; and
4. the bankruptcy of religion that has no answer, no absolutes, no dynamic.

So men have turned to the mystical to peer into the depths of their personality in self-contemplation. They have taken the "leap upstairs" to fill in the God-dimension with the supernatural and the occult. The craze for the occult may be analyzed as a retreat to nature or the rise of a counter-religion. Man wants not to be isolated from meaning and power, but to be at one with the universe about him, tapping its sources for the meaning and power he needs for self-assertion and gratification.

This is the essence of the New Age movement that views God as boundless energy waiting to be tapped. Instead of viewing God as a person separate from and above His universe (transcendent) and yet present in His universe (immanent), they view their god as human potential. We are all sleeping gods, they say; and we need to shake off our ignorance and tap the rich resources within our very beings. When we all do this, society and the whole world will experience healing, power, and fulfillment.

## 9.3 Derivation of the Occult

### *9.3.1 Pagan*

Occultism is not new. Archaeological discoveries from Sumeria and Babylon, the earliest of civilizations, display the occult practices of that day. Egyptian, Chaldean, Greek, and Roman antiquity are rich in demonic phenomena. The great ethnic religions of India, China, and Japan as well as the animism of Africa, South America, and many islands abound with occultism and demonism. History pictures demon-controlled religions clashing with the Hebrew faith and later with Christianity. Degenerating from monotheism, men took to idolatry and attendant occult practices (Romans 1:21-32). By Abraham's time, men had sunk to crass polytheism influenced by evil spirits.

### *9.3.2 Satanic*

The original source of all false religions is Satan. He sought to replace God (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:12-20). He is a liar from the beginning and is the father of lies (John 8:44). He and his demon-angels actively promote occultism, promoting interest in the supernatural and providing its dynamic that enslaves men (1 Timothy 4:1-2; 1 John 4:1-4; Revelation 13:11-18).

Satan promoted occult-type interest to Adam and Eve, tempting them with knowledge and power beyond what God had provided and revealed (Genesis 3:1-5). He cast doubt on God's Word, denied God's Word, questioned God's goodness and restrictions, and promoted looking into forbidden things. When man succumbed to Satan, he was immediately brought into the bondage of sin and darkness (Genesis 3:6-7). Man was estranged from God and cursed because of rebellion (Genesis 3:8-19).

Today Satan's lie system promotes Satan in place of God (Isaiah 14:14). His demons would replace God's angels (Revelation 12:7). He rules over a kingdom of men and angels (Ephesians 2:1-2; 6:10-12). Satan preaches a message of "deliverance" through false prophets (1 John 4:1-4). His workers perform lying miracles (Exodus 7:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:9). They speak in tongues, heal, and predict the future. Antichrist would replace Christ, and Satan receives worship directed to him (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10). Satan's counterfeit system is at work.

### *9.3.3 Fraud*

Not all occultism is genuinely Satanic. Human greed and self-seeking account for much of it. Perhaps as much as 90 % of all fortune-telling is faked by frauds and swindlers. A Christian psychologist once said that 60 % of the inmates of his psychiatric clinic were not so much suffering from mental illness as from occult subjection or even demonization.

## 9.4 Domination by the Occult

The forms of bondage introduced by following the occult vary in extent and effect. Slavery must follow sin (John 8:34; Romans 6:16).

### *9.4.1 Extent*

Oppression is falling into three categories:

1. *simple subjection*, which can often pass unnoticed by the subject;
2. *oppression*, in which the subject is frequently harassed, usually externally; and
3. *demonization*, the invasion and attempted control of mind and/or body by inhabiting demons.

### *9.4.2 Effect*

There are sinister results from practicing the occult, whether in seriousness or in fun:

1. Christian faith and growth is prevented; some find it difficult to trust Christ.
2. Subjects change in character, becoming ill-tempered, moody, hard-hearted, extreme.
3. Mental and emotional disturbances such as depression, neuroses, oppression, suicidal thoughts occur.
4. Tendencies toward mental or emotional illness are frequent.
5. Mediumistic abilities opposed to the Holy Spirit develop.

We must not assume that the first four effects are immediately to be identified as stemming from demonic influences. They may be purely natural illness or human faults.

### *9.4.3 Cause*

How are men brought under domination by the occult? Bondage may result from any of three sources:

1. inheritance;
2. experimentation; and
3. transference.

#### *9.4.3.1 Inheritance*

Bondage or mediumistic abilities are not genetically transferred. However, if the parents back to the third or fourth generation were involved in the occult or had mediumistic abilities, subjection to demonic influence may result as a judgment from God, according to the Second Commandment, as He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the third and fourth generations (Exodus 20:4-6). The connection of demons to the idolatry forbidden in the commandment makes this a likely cause of much occult bondage.

#### *9.4.3.2 Experimentation*

Personal dabbling with occult practices, such as experimenting with rod and pendulum, water dowsing, Ouija boards, magic spells, and card laying may lead to becoming mediumistic. Submitting to occult healings, hypnotism, or using transcendental meditation, water witching, fantasy games, etc., may also lead to bondage or oppression. Martial arts, invented by priests from the Hindu worldview of spiritual pantheism that includes meditation, diet, special breathing, and the control of *Chi* (inner energy flowing through the body from the

world energy) has caused demonic oppression in some practitioners. These types of activity provide an open avenue for demonic powers to influence and invade the life of the one who rebels against the clear command of God to avoid occultism. God warns even believers, lest we provoke the Lord to jealousy in sharing with demons, and He chastens us. As wise men and women, we are to flee idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14-22).

#### *9.4.3.3 Transference*

Close contact with a person with occult or mediumistic powers may transfer those powers to the other person. Illicit sex, the laying on of hands, the holding of hands, or the treatment by a mediumistic person of a seeker or a patient may be enough to bring him into bondage and delusion. The so-called gift of tongues or the gift of healing may be transferred by occult means. Supernatural abilities and personal joy may result, but so do deception, bondage, and psychological disturbance. It is a tragedy when a Christian who has acquired mediumistic abilities through one of these three means assumes that they are gifts of the Holy Spirit. Satan is the great counterfeiter (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

### 9.5 Deliverance from the Occult

Since the occult deals with error and darkness, the remedy to its oppression and bondage lies in the truth and light in Christ. Whether human ignorance and superstition or actual demonic influence and power, relief from slavery comes from the person of God's Son and through the principles of God's Scriptures.

#### *9.5.1 Responsibility of the church*

The church of Christ has weapons of warfare that are divine ly powerful for the destruction of fortresses (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). She has the whole armor of God for defense against evil powers (Ephesians 6:10-20). She possesses the promise of her Head that the authorities of the unseen world will not prevail against her (Matthew 16:18). She must, then, actively oppose Satan and the occult in the following ways:

1. to expose the demonic; and
2. to exercise the ministry.

#### *9.5.1.1 To expose the demonic*

Christians must not dismiss the demonic as superstition, but recognize the reality and activity of Satan and his hosts in opposing God, the church, and the gospel. Pastors must preach the whole counsel of God in the face of apostasy (2 Timothy 4:1-4). They must point out the error of the occult as a doctrine of demons if they would be good servants of Christ (1 Timothy 4:1-6). Christians are not to participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, nor remain neutral, but rather expose them (Ephesians 5:11). Furthermore, the church must preach Christ as the Deliverer from darkness and bondage to Satan (Luke 4:18-19; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15) and exhort and warn men to turn to Him in faith and submission (John 16:7-11).

#### *9.5.1.2 To exercise the ministry*

The church is, through the authority of Christ, an instrument of deliverance to turn men from darkness to light

and from the power of Satan to the kingdom of Christ (Acts 26:18).

We are to **test the spirits** and their teaching, whether they are of God (1 John 4:1-3). The basis for testing is God's Word (Isaiah 8:20). Christians should pray for discernment in recognizing error and in applying Scriptural truth.

We are to **teach the saints** in the full-orbed life of the Holy Spirit in Christ so that they may know fulfillment and satisfaction and not seek after illegitimate spiritual experiences. Teaching involves warning against error and rebellion in the occult, and it involves positive answers in doctrine and in a method of deliverance.

We are to **train the specialists** who can exercise their spiritual gifts of pastoring and teaching in counseling those oppressed by Satan and the occult. Freeing men from occult bondage and delivering from demon possession are not special spiritual gifts, but trained persons acquainted with Scriptural principles and psychological practices may be more effective. Here we need mature and balanced men and women.

We are to **treat the slaves** of occultism. We cannot shun them, but we must minister to them in Christian love and spiritual power. We must let the oppressed go free. There is no place for fear or unbelieving hesitation. We must - with intelligent caution, loving consideration, and genuine dedication to God - fulfill our calling. Our personnel and our program must be adjusted to include ministering to this ever-increasing malady in our society.

### *9.5.2 Responsibility of the chained*

What must the person occultly oppressed do to receive deliverance?
*Koch* and *Unger* suggest the following basic elements:

1. receiving Christ;
2. confessing sins;
3. renouncing the devil and his works;
4. removing occult objects and connections;
5. resting in Christ and resisting the devil; and
6. submitting to Christ and cultivating spiritual life.

#### *9.5.2.1 Receiving Christ*

This must be the first step, because only in Christ is there the position and power for deliverance. There can be no co-operation with God against the evil forces unless there is a new capacity to co-operate through the new birth. This new position and new capacity comes from God when a person trusts Christ to save him from sin's guilt and power (John 3:3-7; Ephesians 1:18-21; Colossians 1:13; 2:15; 1 John 5:4-5, 18).

#### *9.5.2.2 Confessing sins*

Any personal involvement in the occult practices must be judged as rebellion against God and as a wretched sin of siding with Satan (1 Corinthians 11:31; 1 John 1:9). The sinfulness of family involvement, even back to

great-grandparents, must be confessed (Exodus 20:3-5). This is siding with God against Satan.

#### *9.5.2.3 Renouncing the devil and his works*

An official repudiation of Satan and his claims on the oppressed may be necessary, especially if there was an agreement made with the devil. This may involve a command to Satan and the demons that they depart. This must be done in Christ's name and in dependence upon His power, just as did Christ and the apostles (Matthew 8:16; Acts 16:16-18). Renunciation at the time of baptism seemed to be a practice in the early church when many were involved in the occult. Satan may claim the right to continue his influence in a life once voluntarily given to him unless there is specific separation and command.

#### *9.5.2.4 Removing occult objects and connections*

For this step we have the Biblical example of godly kings destroying idols and their groves of worship (2 Chronicles 14:2-5; 23:16-17). Converts to Christ, among those who practiced magic, destroyed their occult books, and idol makers were losing business in Ephesus (Acts 19:17-20). Many objects of idolatrous worship or books of magic carry with them a secret ban or curses invoked in demonic power. The possession of such objects is an invitation for demonic powers to concentrate their efforts on the owners of the objects. Refusal to destroy them becomes a willful rebellion against God and opens the door for Satan's influence.

Mediumistic contacts and friendships should also be broken. One cannot continue to have fellowship with those who traffic with demons and expect to have fellowship with Christ and know His deliverance (1 Corinthians 10:20-22; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 5:11).

#### *9.5.2.5 Resting in Christ and resisting the devil*

Christ promises forgiveness and deliverance to those who trust Him and call upon His name for deliverance in the occult. Confidence in our position and authority in Christ and in Christ's own concern and victory is essential (Colossians 1:13; 2:9-15; Hebrews 2:14-18). We are to take our stand against the devil in the will and power of God, and he will flee from us (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9).

#### *9.5.2.6 Submitting to Christ and cultivating spiritual life*

The mercies of Christ's deliverance from sin's condemnation and control encourage us to yield our total life to Him and follow His will in total (Romans 12:1-2). Submission to God is a prerequisite to victory over the devil (James 4:6-7). The new life in the Spirit demands a new walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

### 9.6 Summary

The occult is Satan's realm. When men seek secret power and knowledge through supernatural means, they open the door for demonic influence and control. Divination, magic, and spiritism are its three main divisions. The Bible clearly condemns any occult art or practice. It is a form of idolatry and apostasy. The extent of bondage it incurs varies, but the effect is always damaging to spiritual life, because it is anti-Christ. Men may enter its bondage by family involvement, personal experimentation, or transference. Deliverance is solely and surely found in Christ and His power and His provisions.

## 10. DEFEAT AND DESTINY OF SATAN AND DEMONS

Though they are formidable and cunning, Christ has defeated Satan and his hosts; and their doom is certain.

### 10.1 Their Defeat

The Lord Jesus, the Creator and Sovereign, will judge all creatures, including evil angels (John 5:22). He defeated Satan and his demons during His earthly life by invading Satan's territory and casting out demons from those possessed (Matthew 12:28-29). He anticipated the final defeat of Satan when His disciples returned with reports of demons being subject to them through Christ's power (Matthew 10:1, 17-20). But the cause of their defeat obviously centers in the death of the God-man. Why is this the case?

#### *10.1.1 The Cross realized the purpose of God*

God's great purpose is to glorify Himself. This is only right and necessary. God's grace and love are magnified in the gift of His Son as a sacrifice for human sin. Christ became human to offer Himself as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice for sin (Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 2:9-10; 10:4-7). All along the line, Satan opposed God's purpose in His program of self-glorification and Salvation of sinners. But the Cross finished the work for which Christ was sent (John 6:38; 12:23-27; 17:4-5; 19:30). In the accomplishment of the death of the Son of God, Satan was defeated. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when in referring to His coming death He said, "Now the ruler of this world shall be cast out" (12:31). Satan had desired to ascend to heaven and to be like God. Now by the Cross he is cast out and his purpose defeated.

#### *10.1.2 The Cross released the prisoners of Satan*

"The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Satan's work was to involve man in sin so as to captivate him in sin (John 8:34, 41, 44; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 3:10). Christ came to release Satan's prisoners (Luke 4:18-19). By His death Christ paid the price a righteous God required for releasing men from sin and Satan, and so broke Satan's power that operates in the realm of death (Hebrews 2:14). He delivers those who trust Him from the fear of death and from slavery (v. 15). By His incarnation and death as genuine man, the God-man led those once captive to Satan now captive to Himself (Ephesians 4:8-10), translated them from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of light in God's Son (Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13), and will one day lead them to glory as the Captain of our Salvation (Hebrews 2:10).

#### *10.1.3 The Cross routed the powers of evil*

Colossians warns against legalism and mysticism in which there was a worship of angels (Colossians 2:8, 16-23). The error probably was incipient gnosticism. Paul reminds believers that they are complete in Christ who is completely God as well as man (vv. 9-10). He is the Head of all angelic rule and authority. He not only delivered believers from spiritual death and condemnation from the law (vv. 11-14), but He "disarmed the rulers and authorities" (v. 15). This probably refers to a judgment that disarms the enemy of position and power. The Cross of Christ disarmed the flesh's control of the body (Romans 6:1-10; Colossians 2:11-12). The

Cross also disarmed demonic control of the believer in Christ. When Christ had stripped evil forces of their power, "He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them" (Colossians 2:15). Not only does the Cross cancel man's debt to God, but through it the powers that held men captive are themselves openly defeated and led in His triumphal march. Christ thoroughly routed and publicly embarrassed Satan and demons so that men would never have to fear or follow them again.

### *10.1.4 The Cross ratified the punishment of Satan*

Through His death and resurrection, Christ sealed the final judgment of Satan and demons. The Cross reveals God's hatred and judgment of all sin. The Just One had to die if the unjust ones were to be forgiven (1 Peter 3:18). He became legally identified with sin that we might be legally identified with God's righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). If God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for sinners, not only will He preserve those who own His Son, but He must judge those who disavow His Son (John 3:36; 5:22-23; Romans 1:18; 3:25; 8:32, 38-39). The Cross, then, was a judgment of all sin and, therefore, a judgment on the originator of sin, Satan, and all among men or angels who follow him. There will be a final judgment of Satan and his kingdom, the world of sinners, because judgment was passed on him at the Cross (John 16:11). He is a condemned criminal awaiting final judgment. The resurrected and exalted God-man will be the judge of Satan and his angels (John 5:22; Ephesians 1:21-22; Philippians 2:10-11; Colossians 2:10; 1 Peter 3:18-19, 22).

## 10.2 Their Destiny

The future course of activity and the final condemnation of demons have much in common with the outcome of Satan. Yet at certain points there are some distinctions.

### *10.2.1 Their career*

Their career include the following matters:

1. *Expanding activity in the church age*. The Holy Spirit has warned of increasing activity of deceitful spirits promoting doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1-3). False teachers of religion, empowered by Satan and demons, will continue to creep in and entrench themselves in the church (2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3; Jude 4). They will twist the character of God (2 Timothy 3:3-4; Jude 4), deny the deity and redemption of Christ (2 Peter 2:1), and scoff at the second coming of Christ (2 Peter 3:3-4). Present-day apostasy will grow worse (2 Timothy 3:13), and interest in the occult will escalate (1 Timothy 4:1).

2. *Empowering Antichrist in the Tribulation*. Satan energizes the man of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:8-9). Deception shall run wild when the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is removed (vv. 6-7, 9-10). Miraculous acts will cause awe and respect so that many will follow this world leader, who is a proud rebel against God (v. 9; Revelation 13:4-6, 11-15). Just as Satan, Antichrist will promise men much, but he will bring them into bondage (Revelation 13:7, 16-17). The outward manifestation of Satanic and demonic power will reach a high point during the reign of Antichrist.

3. *Engaging angels and saints in warfare*. Satan and his demons will persecute the saints and cause many to die (Revelation 13:7). Special persecution will come to the remnant of Israel (Revelation 12:3-6). At this time, Michael, the archangel, will lead God's holy angels into a great battle with Satan and his

angels (Daniel 12:1; Revelation 12:7). Satan and his angels will then be cast out of heaven and down to earth (Revelation 12:8-9). Yet, in rebellious madness, they will continue opposing God and the saints (vv. 12-13).

4. *Enduring arrest during the Millennium*. When Christ returns, He will defeat Antichrist and his followers, casting them into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:11-15, 19-21). Then Christ will bind Satan for one thousand years, eliminating his activity from the world scene. The true King of kings and Lord of lords will reign on earth (Revelation 19:16; 20:4). Not only Satan but all his angels will be cast into the abyss for this kingdom age so that the millennial kingdom is free from Satanic influence (Isaiah 2:17-18; 24:21-23; Zechariah 13:2).

5. *Energizing anarchy after the Millennium*. Satan will be released after the thousand years (Revelation 20:3, 7). Because of his limitations as a creature and because of the magnitude of the worldwide work and the shortness of time it takes (vv. 3, 7-8), the demons bound in the abyss must be released to aid Satan in leading the final rebellion against God and Christ. Isaiah 24:21-23 supports the idea that demons are bound during the millennial kingdom and are afterward released. They promote anarchy and march all unregenerate men against Jerusalem. But fire from God destroys all human participants, and Satan himself is judged (Revelation 20:9-10).

### *10.2.2 Their confinement*

Their confinement are as follows:

1. *Temporary confinement*. Some demons are now confined in the bottomless-pit or called abyss (Gr., *abyssos*). This seems to be a place of torment to which Christ sent some of the demons which He cast out of men (Luke 8:28-31). At least some of these demons are released for a short period during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 9:1-11).
    a. Some demons are bound in the *River Euphrates*. Four demons will be allowed upon their release to kill a third of mankind. They are probably leaders of a great army of free demons who aid them in the great slaughter (Revelation 9:14-19).
    b. Certain demons are bound in *tartarus* (2 Peter 2:4). We understand this to be a different place than the abyss, since these fallen angels are "kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). These fallen angels were involved in a peculiar type sin and therefore they are not released but are cast from *tartarus* into the final judgment.

2. *Permanent confinement*. Satan and his rebellious angels will come to their final judgment when they are cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). This is the place for which he was destined after his fall, and the demons following him must follow him there (Matthew 25:41). From this point on, there is never again the possibility of release for either Satan or demons. Just as with men, the smoke of their torment ascends throughout eternal ages (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 12:10; 14:9-11).

## 10.3 Evil Angels Are Non-Redeemable

What evidence is there for such a position? First, there is no record of any angel ever being delivered from sin. If Christ's redemption extended to angels, we could rightfully expect some mention of it in God's revelation of

the grace of His Son's work. We read of many other accomplishments of the death of Christ besides the redemption of man, but nothing of the Salvation of angels. We read of His Cross as their judgment (John 16:11; Colossians 2:14-15), but it is never presented as their blessing in any sense. Second, there is the definite statement that Christ did not take hold of angels to save them, but only of believing man (Hebrews 2:16). He passed by angels to help man.

If sinful men are redeemable, then why evil angels are non-redeemable? Is it unfair to evil angels? According to the Scripture, evil angels are non-redeemable due to the following main reasons:

1. Evil angels sinned consciously and voluntarily.
2. Christ could not lay hold on angels in like fashion to represent and redeem them.

### *10.3.1 Evil angels sinned consciously and voluntarily*

Angels are created in higher position and possess greater knowledge than human beings (Hebrews 2:7-9). Unlike Eve who was deceived by Satan, evil angels sinned consciously and voluntarily. Those that followed Satan in his sin fell decisively and are permanently left in their evil state without recourse or even the possibility of redemption. It may be that because of this, God made no provision of Salvation for the fallen angels. Scripture does say, "For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16).

### *10.3.2 Christ could not lay hold on angels in like fashion to represent and redeem them*

Hebrews 2:14-17 tells us that Christ saves those who are His "brethren" (Hebrews 2:11). He had to be made like them, in fact one of them, to save them; so He took upon Himself "flesh and blood" (Hebrews 2:14). This means that He entered into the race of men by the virgin birth, retaining His deity in essence and adding to His person sinless but genuine humanity. As the God-man He is a genuine representative of the race because He is truly human, as well as divine. On the Cross, Christ was the effective Mediator between God and men because He was the God-man, representing both God and man in the settlement of our debt of sin. For man He suffered the penalty as a genuine substitute, since He genuinely participated in our humanity.

On the contrary, it is evident from the very nature of angels, that Christ did not and could not lay hold on angels in like fashion to represent and redeem them, their very nature forbids it, including:

1. Angels are a company (Psalm 148:2) and not a race, they sinned individually, and not in some federal head of the race.
2. They are individually separate creations of God.
3. They do not procreate (Matthew 22:28-30).

They are not a race to which genuine additions may enter, they are individually separate creations of God, and they do not procreate (Matthew 22:28-30). Therefore, Christ could not become their Kinsman-Redeemer by birth or creation and so represent angels as a class before God.

But since Christ did become the last Adam, the Head of a new race of men reborn by faith in Christ, we have a

song no angel can sing - of Jesus the God-man and His saving grace (John 1:12-13; Hebrews 2:9-12).

We must reject any teaching of universal restoration of all men, or even of Satan, to God. Only humans can be saved, and only those who trust Christ in this life will be saved. The lake of fire is an eternal torment for wicked men and angels (Revelation 14:10-11; 19:20; 20:11-15).

### 10.4 Summary

Satan and the demons are no match for Christ, the God-man. In face of Satanic opposition, the Cross accomplished God's self-glorification, released the devil's prisoners, publicly routed evil spirits, and sealed their judgment.

Though judged, Satan and his angels are actively promoting apostasy and occultism. Their increasing activity will reach a high point during the Tribulation, when God's restraining is removed so that the human Antichrist may become a world ruler, and demons will, under Satan, persecute and kill men and battle with God's angels. Righteousness will characterize the kingdom when Satan and demons are bound, but upon their release they find rebels ready to join them in one final rebellion against God.

Some demons are bound now in the abyss, some in the River Euphrates, and some in tartarus, but all will be bound forever in the lake of fire.

Evil angels are non-redeemable because they sinned consciously and voluntarily; and Christ could not lay hold on angels in like fashion to represent and redeem them. Only those humans who trust Christ in this life will be saved. The lake of fire is an eternal torment for wicked men and angels (Revelation 14:10-11; 19:20; 20:11-15).

## 11. DEFENSE OF BELIEVERS AGAINST SATAN AND DEMONS

We must face the facts as they are. Satan is real. Demons are real. We can expect their evil influence to increase in the world and in the church. Our battle is real. What defense does the Christian have, and what direction should he take? Three words summarize our responsibility:

1. recall;
2. resist; and
3. rely.

### 11.1 Recall

We must keep certain facts in mind to govern our attitude in the battle if we are to be victorious, including:

1. power of Satan;
2. practice of Satan;

3. prince of victory;
4. position of victory; and
5. purpose of God.

### *11.1.1 Power of Satan*

The power of Satan is limited by God as follows:

1. Satan is never to be regarded lightly or contemptuously (Jude 8-9). He yet retains great dignity and power. Puny man is no match for him.
2. Satan is a mere creature and as such is limited by God in his power and activity. God carries him down to defeat (Job 1:12; 2:6; 1 John 4:4).
3. He cannot touch our Salvation or separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).

### *11.1.2 Practice of Satan*

We cannot remain ignorant of his devices as follows:

1. He accuses, deceives, plants doubt, tempts to pride and fleshly satisfaction, divides brethren, discourages, distracts - all this to oppose God's purpose.
2. He leads astray into the occult and New Age. He even distracts genuine believers to participate in mystical, magical practices.
3. He counterfeits what were in the early church age genuine spiritual gifts so as to divert Christian living into tangential matters.
4. He convinces the Western humanistic world that he and his demons do not exist.
5. He offers power, pleasure, and possessions to his followers. Their end result is bondage and death.

### *11.1.3 Prince of victory*

Christ is the prince of victory as follows:

1. Christ defeated and judged Satan by His redemptive death and resurrection. Satan and demons are subject to Him and to His final judgment (1 Corinthians 15:28; Ephesians 1:21-22; Colossians 2:15; 1 Peter 3:22). We are in His care, and He is our defense (Romans 8:31-39).

2. Christ prayed we might be kept from the evil one (John 17:15, 20). He intercedes for us and is our defense against Satan (Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2; compare Zechariah 3:1-2). The prayer of Christ is always answered (John 11:42).

### *11.1.4 Position of victory*

Our position "in Christ" means we stand before God in Christ's righteousness (Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:6). We also share His victory over the powers of evil (Colossians 2:9-10, 15). We are delivered from the realm of Satan's dominion (Hebrews 2:14-15). We are seated with Christ far above all principality and power

(Ephesians 1:21-22; 2:6). We operate against Satan out of a position of victory.

### *11.1.5 Purpose of God*

The purpose of God are as follows:

1. *God uses Satan*. God may use Satan to accomplish His good purposes (Job 1-2; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
2. *God keeps saints*. He keeps us through temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13), delivers us from evil (Matthew 6:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:3), and sees us through to glory (Romans 8:28-30, 38-39). Satan cannot thwart the purpose of the Almighty.

## 11.2 Resist

Victory demands more than a recalling to fix our attitude; it calls for victory in resisting the powers of evil. We resist in the following ways:

1. in allegiance to God;
2. in armor from God; and
3. in action of godliness.

### *11.2.1 In allegiance to God*

Victory demands submission to our Captain and obedience to His commands. We cannot love the world and God at the same time (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15). God resists those who side with Satan in pride (James 4:5-6). We are to humble ourselves and submit to God. Then we can resist the devil and he will flee from us (v. 7).

### *11.2.2 In armor from God*

We can stand against Satan and demons only in the armor provided by God. Each item mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 6:10-18 has its proper and necessary function. The whole armor (panoply) speaks of what we have in Christ as His provision for battle. There are defensive garments, useful garments, and offensive weapons included. Our victorious Captain has supplied us with all we need to successfully resist and defeat the devil. We must appropriate ("put on") these provisions to attain victory in our lives.

### *11.2.3 In action of godliness*

We may take the following action of godliness:

1. We can pray for deliverance from testings that are too much for us (Matthew 6:13; 26:41).
2. We can pray for protection of God's servants (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2) and for the advance of the gospel (Ephesians 6:18-19).
3. We can be alert, watching in soberness (Matthew 26:41; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8; 1 Peter 5:8).
4. We are to guard our attitudes and actions to avoid leaving an opening for Satan's fiery darts or temptations (1 John 5:18; Matthew 16:23).

5. Forgiving removes an occasion for Satan to cause division or discouragement among the brethren (2 Corinthians 2:10-11).
6. We are to make no provision for the flesh (13:14).
7. Anger must be controlled, lest bitterness develop and the devil take advantage of the opportunity (Ephesians 4:26-27).
8. We may command demons in that authority, as did Christ and the apostles, to depart from us, since we are children of God through faith in Christ.

In general, dedication to the cause of Christ, obedience to the commands of Christ, and cultivation of the life of Christ serve as a practical bulwark against Satan (James 4:4-8; 1 Peter 5:7-9).

**11.3 Rely**

Victory is found ultimately in relying upon God, trusting Him for our welfare and in our warfare. We can rely on the following supports:

1. the power of Christ;
2. the providence of God;
3. the promise of God; and
4. principles for the battle.

***11.3.1 The power of Christ***

There is no higher authority or power. God has given Christ all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23; Philippians 2:9-10). The Christian stands in the authority of Christ as His official representative (2 Corinthians 5:20). With such backing, we have nothing to fear. In that name we can resist and command evil powers, and they must obey. And yet in all this we must not glory in delegated power, but in our relationship to the Savior (Luke 10:17—20). However, we ourselves must be subject to Christ's authority (Romans 12:1-2). We must first submit to God, then we can resist the devil in the authority of Christ (James 4:7).

***11.3.2 The providence of God***

God cares for the believer and guards him as the apple of His eye (Deuteronomy 32:10). We are not to be fearful of men or angels (Hebrews 13:5), nor of events in this life or even death itself (Romans 8:38-39; Revelation 12:11). God is for us, and no one can prevail against us (Romans 8:31-32). He will provide all we or our loved ones need, and we are not to be overcome with anxiety (Philippians 4:6; 1 Peter 5:7-9). He is our refuge and will defeat our enemy (Deuteronomy 33:27). God rules over all, controls all, and uses all for His glory and our good. With such a God who providentially controls all things and cares for us, we have nothing to fear.

***11.3.3 The promise of God***

When we have done all to stand, we shall stand; for God is able to make us stand (Ephesians 6:10-11, 13). His

promise is clear: "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). When we have resisted him in the faith, standing firm in Christ, he must flee. It is the promise of God.

### *11.3.4 Principles for the battle*

The following principles are very practical actions to develop in spiritual warfare:

1. Develop a good concept of God. He is great and good and intervenes for those who trust and obey.

2. Develop a healthy, Biblically based self-esteem. We are procreated in the image of God. That gives us intrinsic, unchanging worth. The Son of God did not make worthless people or buy worthless people with His precious blood. His purchase proved our worth, though in ourselves we are completely without any merit. Our bodies are the temple of the Living God, and that grants us great dignity.

3. Develop a strong doctrinal foundation for life in all its aspects. We live and grow by the Word of God (1 Peter 1:22-2:3). The specific truths of Scripture are the sword that the Holy Spirit provided for us to attack the lies of the enemy (Ephesians 6:17).

4. Develop a strong devotional life. Daily worship, reading of Scripture, and daily prayer are elements that enhance our obedience and growth. Warfare praying is an essential part of gaining victory in spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:18).

5. Develop discernment between good and evil. This means becoming aware of the trickery of the enemy. We test all forms of philosophy, religion, and practice by the truth in Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). We must also discern between what is good and what is best. We can be easily distracted by attractive things, social and spiritual. Our love for Christ and His cause will help us to differentiate and follow the best (Philippians 1:9-11).

6. Develop control of thoughts and emotions. We can choose to think on the proper and the holy (Philippians 4:8). We are not subject to everything that enters our mind or tingles our emotions. We are to set our minds on the things of Christ (Colossians 3:1-3).

7. Develop Christian love and fellowship. We do not live as islands. We are members of one another and responsible to help and be helped by one another (1 Corinthians 12-13). We must provide an accepting climate for those who are hurting in the battle, for those who are longing for freedom from the enemy's attacks. We are to accept one another to the glory of Christ (Romans 15:5-7).

8. Develop a genuine hatred of evil. Though we are not to hate our enemies, we are instructed to hate evil (Psalm 97:10; 1 Peter 3:10; 1 John 2:15-17).

It is a disciplined soldier who stands in the battle and wins the well-fought day.

## 11.4 Summary

If we are to have the victory that is rightfully and certainly ours in Christ, we must remember Satan's power and schemes. We must recall that Christ is our Victor and that we are victors in Him. God may allow Satan

some actions, but He guards His own. We must resist the devil in allegiance to God, in the armor He provides, and in actions that leave no opportunity for his success. In the final analysis, we can and must rely upon God's authority, control, and promise of victory.

## 12. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY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# Chapter Twenty Six - The Work of the Holy Spirit

Just as the work of Christ is important in the accomplishment of salvation, so also is the work of the Holy Spirit. The deity and personality of the Holy Spirit were considered in Chapter 15. It was there noted that Holy Spirit is deity. It was further noted that the Holy Spirit is a person. Having considered His deity and personality, we move to His work.

This chapter, divided into eight major divisions, is a careful study of the work of the Holy Spirit:

1. We will provide a brief summary of the Biblical teaching of the Holy Spirit;
2. We will examine the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the world;
3. We will examine the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Scripture;
4. We will examine the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ;
5. We will examine the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to pre-evangelism;
6. We will examine the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to evangelism;
7. We will examine the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to conversion; and
8. We will discuss why blasphemy against the Spirit is the unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:12-32; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10).

## 1. SUMMARY OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Biblical teaching of the Holy Spirit is summarized in the following tables:

### 1.1 Titles of the Holy Spirit

| Title | Emphasis | Citation |
|---|---|---|
| One Spirit | His unity | Ephesians 4:4 |
| Seven Spirits | His perfection, omnipresence, and completeness | Revelation 1:4; 3:1 |
| The Lord the Spirit | His sovereignty | 2 Corinthians 3:18 |
| Eternal Spirit | His eternity | Hebrews 9:14 |
| Spirit of Glory | His glory | 1 Peter 4:14 |
| Spirit of Life | His vitality | Romans 8:2 |
| Spirit of Holiness<br>Holy Spirit<br>Holy One | His holiness | Romans 1:4<br>Matthew 1:20<br>1 John 2:20 |
| Spirit of Wisdom<br>Spirit of Understanding<br>Spirit of Counsel<br>Spirit of Knowledge | His omniscience, wisdom, and counsel | Isaiah 11:2<br>cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13 |
| Spirit of Might | His omnipotence | Isaiah 11:2 |
| Spirit of Fear of the Lord | His reverence | Isaiah 11:2 |
| Spirit of Truth | His truthfulness | John 14:17 |
| Spirit of Grace | His grace | Hebrews 10:29 |
| Spirit of Grace and Supplication | His grace and prayerfulness | Zechariah 12:10 |

### 1.2 Names, Personality and Attributes of the Holy Spirit

| Category | Description / Definition | Scripture Reference |
|---|---|---|
| **Names** | Holy Spirit | Luke 11:13; John 20:22; Acts 1:5; cf. Psalm 51:11 |
| | Spirit of Grace | Hebrews 10:29 |
| | Spirit of Truth | John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; cf. 1 John 5:6 |
| | Spirit of Wisdom and Knowledge | Isaiah 11:2; cf. 61:1-2; 1 Timothy 1:17 |
| | Spirit of Glory | 1 Peter 4:14; cf. Exodus 15:11; Psalm 145:5 |
| | Counselor | John 14:16; 16:7 |
| **Personality** | He is the third person of the Godhead, the Trinity. | Matthew 3:16-17; John 14:16; Acts 10:38 |
| | He has knowledge. | Isaiah 11:2; Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 2;10-11 |
| | He has feeling. | Isaiah 63:10; Ephesians 4:30; cf. Acts 7:51; Romans 15:30 |
| | He has will. | 1 Corinthians 12:11 |
| **Attributes** | He is divine. | Acts 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 3:18 |
| | He is eternal. | Hebrews 9:14 |
| | He is omnipresent. | Psalm 139:7 |
| | He is omniscient. | John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10 |

## 2. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE WORLD

The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the world includes:

1. in creation;
2. in preservation; and
3. in the affairs of non-believers.

### 2.1 In Creation

It is interesting that creation is ascribed to all three persons of the trinity:

1. the Father (Revelation 4:11);
2. the Son (John 1:3); and
3. the Holy Spirit.

Genesis 1:2 demonstrates the active involvement of the Spirit at creation. Elihu tells Job, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4), and Job responds to Bildad, "By His breath [Spirit] the heavens are cleared" (Job 26:13). The Psalmist suggests the work of the Spirit in creation, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath [Spirit] of His mouth all their host" (Psalm 33:6).

### 2.2 In Preservation

The Spirit is not only involved in creation but also in preservation. Both are mentioned in Psalm 104:30, "Thou dost send forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou dost renew the face of the ground." Isaiah 40:7 suggests the active involvement of the Spirit, "The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath [Spirit] of the Lord blows upon it." In discussing the whole matter of the greatness of God's creative and providential activities, Isaiah asks, "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or

as His counselor has informed Him?" (Isaiah 40:13).

It seems, evident that expressions such as His Spirit (breath), Spirit (breath) of His mouth, Spirit (breath) of the Lord, Spirit of His Son, and Spirit of Jesus, all have reference to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity (Job 26:13; Psalm 33:6; Isaiah 40:7; Galatians 4:6; Acts 16:7, respectively).

**2.3 In the Affairs of Non-Believers**

In addition to His providential governance in creation, the Spirit is active in the non-believing world. He actively works through individuals to accomplish His purposes, for examples:

1. God anointed Cyrus, the pagan king of Persia, with the Holy Spirit to accomplish His service, though Cyrus did not know God (Isaiah 44:28-45:6).

2. Concerning King Saul, there is no reason to consider Saul one of God's elect. After his anointing the Holy Spirit comes upon him, abides with him, and works upon him as long as he remains the Lord's chosen king over His people. But as soon as by wilful disobedience he forfeits that favor, the Holy Spirit departs from him and an evil spirit from the Lord troubles him.

3. It is no wonder that David, having sinned and knowing well what had happened to Saul, requested of the Lord, "Do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11).

This work of the Spirit upon Cyrus and Saul is something completely distinct from regeneration. We must also recognize that the Spirit came upon Old Testament believers in such fashion as this for special ministry (cf. Bezalel, Exodus 31:2f.; Othniel, Judges 3:9f.; Jephthah, Judges 11:29).

**2.4 Restrains Evil**

It is common knowledge that conscience, daylight, and government among other things serve as restraints for evil. The presence of godly people also confines and represses evil. The restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 seems to have reference to the Holy Spirit. During the Great Tribulation period, the Spirit's ministry of restraining evil and hindering the revelation of the man of lawlessness will be withdrawn. Evil will be allowed to run rampant.

**3. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO SCRIPTURE**

The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Scripture includes:

1. author; and
2. interpreter.

**3.1 Author**

According to the Bible, the Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture:

1. Peter indicates, "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21).

2. At the close of each of the seven letters to the churches in the Revelation, Jesus said, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 2:7, 11).

3. "It was the Spirit who was to guide the apostles into all the truth, and show them things to come (John 16:13)."

4. Such statements as "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers" (Acts 28:25) and "The Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas" (Acts 1:16), clearly reveal the apostles' commitment to the Spirit's authorship of Scripture (cf. also Hebrews 3:7; 10:15).

5. It was He who revealed to the New Testament apostles and prophets matters undiscoverable through human philosophy and the natural reasoning processes of the human mind (Ephesians 3:5).

**3.2 Interpreter**

According to the Bible, the Holy Spirit is also the interpreter:

1. Paul prayed that God might give to the Ephesian believers "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Ephesians 1:17; cf. Isaiah 11:2).

2. Paul also writes that God has given to us "the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:12).

3. The Spirit takes Christ's words and discloses them to believers (John 16:14).

4. He teaches us, "combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:13).

5. John reminds his readers that they all had "an anointing from the Holy One" (1 John 2:20), and he further writes, "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for any one to teach you; but ... His anointing teaches you about all things" (v. 27). Thus the same Spirit who wrote Scripture, interprets it.

**4. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO CHRIST**

The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ includes:

1. in the earthly ministry of Christ; and
2. in the power of Christ.

**4.1 In the Earthly Ministry of Christ**

Several things can be noted which relate to the earthly ministry of Christ:

1. Our Lord was conceived of the Spirit (Luke 1:35).

2. He was anointed by the Spirit at his baptism (Matthew 3:16; cf. Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18). The Spirit, given without measure (John 3:34), equipped Him for His messianic ministry, and it was at this point that Jesus "began His ministry" (Luke 3:23).

3. Immediately after the baptism, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, while tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:lf.; cf. Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:12).

4. Further, the Spirit was active in His crucifixion and His resurrection (Hebrews 9:14; Romans 1:4; 8:11).

5. When Jesus ascended, He requested of the Father that He would send the Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26). The Spirit

was to be Jesus' replacement so that the disciples would not be left as orphans (John 14:18; 16:7-15). Before Jesus left, He prepared the disciples to receive the Spirit (Luke 24:49; John 20:22; Acts 1:8).

6. Peter informed Cornelius "how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). It was through the Spirit that Jesus performed His miracles (Matthew 12:28).

**4.2 In the Power of Christ**

The work of the Holy Spirit in the power of Christ included:

1. performed His work in the conception of our Lord;
2. attended the unfolding of His human nature;
3. brought into activity every gift and power in Him;
4. consecrated Him to His office as the Messiah;
5. qualified Him for every conflict and temptation;
6. enabled Him to cast out devils;
7. supported Him in His humiliation, passion, and bitter death;
8. performed His work in His resurrection, so that Jesus was justified in the Spirit (1 Timothy 3:16); and
9. dwells now in the glorified human nature of the Redeemer in the heavenly Jerusalem.

**5. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO PRE-EVANGELISM**

We have all been unwilling victims of men who usurp the role of the Holy Spirit in their preaching; they have condemned, and even terrified audiences in an attempt to bring about conviction and guilt. However sincere in their motives, what they fail to understand is that it is the Holy Spirit's role to bring about conviction in the heart of man. It is not the responsibility of a preacher, or an evangelist, or any believer for that matter!

The work of the Holy Spirit in evangelism falls into two categories:

1. pre-evangelism; and
2. evangelism proper.

By "pre-evangelism" we mean whatever truth and consciousness of need is necessary to enable a person to be prepared to understand the gospel message. Pre-evangelism is what the Holy Spirit does in the hearts and minds of sinners to enable them to comprehend the gospel message. If we define "gospel" as the good news that Jesus Christ died for sin and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and we explain who Jesus is and that man's response should be repentance and faith, then whatever else is necessary for a person to understand the gospel is **pre-evangelism**.

In other words, the "gospel" of 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 is meaningless to a person who does not know **why** Jesus died for sin; and one cannot understand **sin** unless he understands that God is holy and just. Such things as who God is, what sin is, and man's need for righteousness would be part of pre-evangelism.

Based on this, we perceive two activities of the Holy Spirit in pre-evangelism by which He communicates truths about God, sin, and righteousness. We call them:

1. conviction; and
2. attraction.

### 5.1 Convicting

> *"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged" (John 16:8-11).*

Jesus summarized the Holy Spirit's work of conviction beautifully in John 16:8-11:

1. The essence of sin, this passage reveals, is unbelief ("because they believe not in Me"), which is an expression of man's rebellion.

2. Jesus Christ Himself is the essence of righteousness ("because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me"), the one of whom the Holy Spirit testifies (John 16:14).

3. And it is the judgment of Satan ("the prince of this world is judged") which makes it certain that all men are liable to judgment.

To summarize, only the Holy Spirit can make men aware that they are rebellious sinners, without a righteousness of their own, under the judgment of God. It is His work to bring about a sense of remorse in the sinner's heart. This we consider to be the negative element of pre-evangelism.

### 5.2 Attracting

The Holy Spirit draws people to Jesus the Savior as the remedy for sin. This work is the positive element of pre-evangelism. The following Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit's work of attraction in the unbeliever's heart to cause him to turn to the Lord:

1. Peter and the apostles said, "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5:32).

2. Jesus explains to His disciples that the Spirit "will bear witness of Me" (John 15:26), and "He shall glorify Me" (John 16:14).

3. The enlightening of John 1:9 and the drawing of John 6:44 and 12:32 have reference to the work which the Father and the Son do through the Spirit.

It may be difficult to distinguish "attraction by the Holy Spirit" from "evangelism by a preacher." Let me give you an example to illustrate it:

> *"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" (Acts 10:38).*

In Acts 10:38 Cornelius the Centurion already knew certain facts about Jesus Christ (attraction). This knowledge provided a basis for Peter's preaching of the gospel to him.

### 5.3 Conclusion

It is the Holy Spirit's role to bring about conviction in the heart of man. It is much less than generally practiced today Evangelists are always tempted to "make it happen" by using dramatic, spectacular methods, tear-jerking sermons, hard-sell techniques, and entertainment of some kind in order to produce converts.

## 6. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO EVANGELISM

If it is the Holy Spirit's role to bring about conviction in the heart of man, then what is the believer's function in evangelism? In this section, we will deal with what the Holy Spirit does through us and for us in evangelism.

Once a person has a sense of need or guilt and sufficient knowledge of God, he is a candidate for evangelism. By "evangelism" we mean the presentation of the gospel by a preacher so that the listener is able to make a knowledgeable decision about Jesus Christ. As the good news of Christ and His provision is preached, the Spirit:

1. empowers the message; and
2. illuminates the truth.

### 6.1 Empowering the Message

Acts 1:8 is the key to the whole book, declares that when the Holy Spirit has come the disciples would receive "power" to witness about Christ. An examination of the rest of the book shows us the results of the power granted by the Holy Spirit to those witnessing so they were able to speak clearly courageously, and convincingly (Acts 4:13, 33; 6:8-10; 9:22; 13:43-49; 14:1-3; 16:14; 19:8). At the same time, the Holy Spirit brings the convicted listener to a willingness to "obey" the gospel, a removal of his natural instinct to resist.

### 6.2 Illuminating the Truth

Man is blinded by Satan to spiritual truth (2 Corinthians 4:4) and unable to "receive the things of the Spirit of God" in his "natural" state (1 Corinthians 2:14). Since the "spiritual" man is able to "judge all things," it is safe to infer that the difference is the Holy Spirit who gives to all believers this spiritual capacity. He illuminates the gospel message, and thereafter the words of Scripture to the believer.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The believer's function is to present the gospel clearly, simply, and compassionately with a sense of dependence upon the Holy Spirit (note the simplicity and lack of "gimmicks" in the sermons in the book of Acts). His personal life and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ are far more important than his eloquence and experience (see Acts 4:13, and also 1 Corinthians 2:1-4).

The work of the Holy Spirit is summarized in the following table:

| Category | Description / Definition | Scripture Reference |
|---|---|---|
| **Works** | He was active in creation. | Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30 |
| | He inspired the Bible writers. | 2 Peter 1:21 |
| | He empowered the conception of Christ. | Luke 1:35 |
| | He convicts of sin. | John 16:8; cf. Genesis 6:3 |
| | He counsels. | John 14:16-17; 16:7, 12-14 |
| | He brings assurance of salvation. | Romans 8:15 |
| | He teaches or enlightens. | John 16:12-14; 1 Corinthians 2:13 |
| | He aids in prayer by intercession. | Romans 8:26-27 |
| | He resurrected Christ. | Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18 |
| | He calls to service. | Acts 13:4 |
| | He works in the church. | 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 |

## 7. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO CONVERSION

In this section, we will deal with what the impact the Holy Spirit has on our lives through:

1. regeneration;
2. spirit-baptism; and
3. sealing.

### 7.1 The Holy Spirit Regenerates the Believer

**Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary** defines "regenerate" as "formed or created again." Though this is not a theological definition, it accurately describes what happens to the believer.

#### *7.1.1 How can a man be born when he is old?*

It is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that a person is born again (John 3:3-8), for it is the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63). Paul speaks of the "renewing by the Holy Spirit" and it refers to the "washing of regeneration" which many interpreters see as inner cleansing rather than water baptism (Titus 3:5).

This regeneration, being "born again," is accomplished in the believer by the Holy Spirit who imparts the divine life and nature to the believer so that he becomes a child of God, desiring to obey God. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17 the believer becomes a "new creation" in which he looks at life in a radically different way; "the old things passed away, behold new things have come." He receives a new perspective on every thing, and a new desire to please God.

#### *7.1.2 The correct interpretation of the meaning of "water" in John 3:3-8*

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3-8 that he must be "born again," for "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (v. 5)." Interpretations of the meaning of "water" in John 3:3-8 are several:

1. it teaches that baptism by church leaders is necessary to be regenerated;
2. it is symbolic of the Word of God;
3. it is a reference to human biological birth, the water that surrounds the fetus;
4. both "water" and "wind" are symbols of the Holy Spirit; and
5. it refers to the baptizing work of John the Baptist (i.e. repentance).

#### *7.1.2.1 Baptism by church leaders is necessary to be regenerated*

Some take it literally to mean water baptism and often include the idea that baptism by church leaders is necessary in some way to be regenerated. However, the problems of this view are as follows:

1. There are about 150 passages in the New Testament which teach that salvation is by faith alone, and these cannot be contradicted by a few verses which seem to teach that church baptism is necessary for salvation.

2. The thief on the Cross was not baptized, yet he was assured of being in Paradise with Christ (Luke 23:39-43).

3. The Gentiles, Cornelius and his relatives, who were saved in Caesarea (Acts 10:44-48) received the Holy Spirit when they believed. This means that they then belonged to Christ (Romans 8:9). After receiving the Holy Spirit, that is, after

being saved, they were baptized (Acts 10:47-48). They were saved first, then baptized. Therefore, baptism was not necessary for their salvation.

4. It is unreasonable to assume that Nicodemus would have known anything about baptism by church leaders when he discussed this matter with the Lord Jesus Christ at that time.

According to the above reasons, this view is obviously wrong.

#### *7.1.2.2 It is symbolic of the Word of God*

Others believe it is symbolic of the Word of God, which certainly is involved in the event of conversion. In Ephesians 5:25-26, water is closely associated with the Word of God. Also, in 1 Peter 1:23, the new birth is said to take place through the Word of God. It is quite possible, therefore, that water in this verse does refer to the Bible. There can be no salvation apart from the Scripture. The message contained in the Word of God must be appropriated by the sinner before there can be the new birth.

The weakness of this view is that it repudiates the literal interpretation of the word "water." It is doubtful that symoblic interpretation should be applied here.

#### *7.1.2.3 It is a reference to human biological birth*

Another view is that it is a reference to human biological birth, the water that surrounds the fetus. This is quite plausible in this context, since Nicodemus refers to entering the mother's womb again; but it suffers from a lack of evidence that contemporaries of Jesus would have spoken that way.

#### *7.1.2.4 Both "water" and "wind" are symbols of the Holy Spirit*

Yet another view is that both "water" and "wind" (the actual word translated "Spirit" in the verse) are symbols of the Holy Spirit, since they appear this way in some Old Testament texts and in John's Gospel. Although Nicodemus professed bewilderment, there is indication that he could, and probably should, have known this basic truth from his acquaintance with the Old Testament (John 3:10). Possibly the central passage which the Lord Jesus had in mind was from Ezekiel:

> *"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:25-27).*

In John 7:38-39 the Lord Jesus spoke of rivers of living water, and we are distinctly told that when He used the word "water" He was speaking of the Holy Spirit. If water means the Spirit in chapter 7, why can it not have the same meaning in chapter 3? The word translated "and" could just as correctly have been translated "even." Thus, the verse might read, "Except a man be born of water, even the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

The weakness of this view is that if water is taken to mean the Spirit, then it would appear on the surface that the Spirit is mentioned twice in this verse and it is doubtful that the word "and" should be translated as "even."

#### *7.1.2.5 It refers to the baptizing work of John the Baptist (i.e. repentance)*

I believe it refers to the baptizing work of John the Baptist (i.e. repentance), something that Nicodemus would have been very familiar with. This would have related directly to repentance or faith, since John's baptism was commonly described as a "baptism of repentance" (Acts 19:4). Thus, repentance and the Holy Spirit brought about regeneration. Unless a man is

willing to repent, he will not think that he needs to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. Therefore, repentance is a pre-condition to salvation.

Nicodemus is a Jew, a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin (the highest legal, legislative and judicial body of the Jews), and a highly respected teacher of the Old Testament Scriptures. Nicodemus thinks that his birth alone (as a Jew) assures him of seeing the kingdom of God (see Matthew 3:9; John 8:39; Romans 9:6). But even beyond this, Nicodemus must feel as though he holds the keys to the kingdom. Pharisaism viewed itself as the "gate keeper" of the kingdom, governing it by the rules and regulations it had added to the law through oral tradition (see Matthew 23:13-15). However, the Scripture told us that Pharisees were actually sinners and hypocrites (Matthew 23:1-31), therefore they were not qualified to enter the kingdom of God by keeping the Law of Moses.

John's baptism was described as a "baptism of repentance," in preparation for Messiah's coming. By being baptized, one testified that he was renouncing Judaism (law keeping) as the means of their salvation. This is precisely why unrepentant Pharisees refused baptism:

> *"Now all the people who heard this, even the tax collectors, acknowledged God's justice, because they had been baptized with John's baptism. However, the Pharisees and the experts in religious law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John" (Luke 7:29-30).*

Jesus shocks Nicodemus by indicating to him that apart from being reborn from above, neither he nor anyone else will see the kingdom of God. In other words, Jesus teaches us that the correct procedure for regeneration is as follows:

1. repentance and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith (i.e. born of "water"); and then
2. the Holy Spirit brought about regeneration (i.e. born of the "Spirit").

**7.2 The Holy Spirit Baptizes the Believer**

"Spirit-baptism" is the work of Jesus Christ whereby He gives believers the Holy Spirit, thereby:

1. incorporating them into the body of Christ;
2. indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and
3. identifying them with His death and resurrection.

***7.2.1 Spirit-baptism grants us union with other believers***

Paul writes, "for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Both John the Baptist and Jesus (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16) promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit which initially took place at Pentecost.

Since 1 Corinthians states that **all** believers **were** baptized in the Spirit, either Pentecost served as a once-for-all baptism for all believers (as the death of Christ applies to all believers, Romans 6:1-11), or the first of a series of baptisms that would occur at the time of each believer's conversion. That is to say, this baptism takes place at the moment of salvation. Hence Paul could say of all believers "we **were** baptized"; Spirit-baptism wasn't something that had not yet happened to some of them.

This Spirit-baptism brings believers into a new relationship with one another called "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3), and "fellowship" (1 John 1:3). Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:13, employs the metaphor "one body" to illustrate believers functioning in mutual dependence on one another for spiritual growth. Later, Paul uses this unity as an appeal for living in harmony with one another for the sake of the gospel (Philippians 4:2-3). Finally, Jesus commands us to demonstrate our unity to the world as a testimony of our unity with Him (John 13:34-35).

The rite of water baptism symbolizes Spirit baptism (Romans 6:3f.; cf. also Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12).

Pentecostal, or charismatic believers generally teach that in addition to the baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 which unites believers into a body, there is a second baptism subsequent to conversion which endows the believer with power. This baptism is associated with the "filling of the Spirit" which took place at Pentecost (Acts 2:4), and which they teach does not necessarily occur automatically at conversion; it is a kind of "second blessing." This baptism they call the "baptism **in** the Spirit" which Jesus bestows (Matthew 3:11). They explain 1 Corinthians 12:13 as a baptism **by** the Spirit into the body which the **Spirit** bestows at conversion. However, the problems with this view are:

1. it is a distinction between Matthew 3:11 (also Acts 1:5) and 1 Corinthians 12:13 based on what they perceive as differences in circumstances and descriptions rather than actual wording (the same Greek words, *en pneumati*, meaning *in* or *by* the Spirit, occur in all of the manuscripts); and

2. they equate "baptism in the Spirit" with "filling" of the Spirit, an identification that cannot be borne out by careful comparison (See *Dale Bruner's* thorough study of this whole issue in **A Theology of the Holy Spirit**, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970).

### *7.2.2 Spirit-baptism includes the reception and indwelling of the Holy Spirit*

Closely related to the regenerating ministry of the Spirit is His indwelling. Concerning the coming of the Comforter, Christ said,

> *"And 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 it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you" (John 14:16-17).*

This Jesus promised to His disciples just before He went to the cross: that each believer would receive God's gift of the indwelling the Holy Spirit. Through Spirit-baptism each believer actually receives the Holy Spirit into his own body, making his body a "temple" (1 Corinthians 6:19). So important is the indwelling of the Spirit that if a person does not have him, he does not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9). To the scandal-torn Corinthian church Paul said, "The Spirit of God dwells in you" (1 Corinthians 3:16; cf. 6:19). The indwelling of the Spirit guarantees the resurrection (Romans 8:11).

This indwelling of the Spirit acts as a down-payment, a pledge, toward our eventual full inheritance in Christ (see Section 7.3 of this chapter), and with this indwelling come all the ministries of the Holy Spirit to be described in the next Chapter 27.

### *7.2.3 Spirit-baptism identifies us with Christ's death and resurrection*

> *"All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death ... For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:3-5).*

Although this passage in Romans makes no reference to the Holy Spirit, it is probable that the "baptism into Christ" spoken of here is the baptism of the Spirit spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12:13 (for isn't it the Spirit who unifies us with other believers the one who unifies us with Christ?). Further, identification or union is inherent in the word "baptism" because the word originally meant to dip material into dye.

## 7.3 The Holy Spirit Seals the Believer

> *"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" (Ephesians 1:13-14).*

God seals the believer with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). This metaphor "seal" is taken from the practice of sealing secret documents with wax to insure that they were not tampered with or read by anyone but the addressee (in which case the seal would arrive broken). Thus, sealing speaks of several things:

1. security;
2. ownership; and
3. a guarantee.

The effect of this figure is to declare that the believer is confirmed as "God's own possession."

Paul writes that God "sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge" (2 Corinthians 1:22). The gift of the Spirit is also a "pledge" or "down-payment" of our future inheritance which, according to Ephesians 4:30, will be received on the "day of redemption." This becomes a source of assurance to the believer.

The Spirit is the spirit of adoption and He "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16; cf. Galatians 4:6).

**7.4 Conclusion**

These three works of the Holy Spirit occur simultaneously and at the moment of believing faith:

1. regeneration;
2. spirit-baptism; and
3. sealing.

The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to conversion is summarized in the following table and picture:

| Activity | Description of the Activity | Scripture Reference |
|---|---|---|
| Regeneration | Through the ministry of the Spirit a person is born again, receives eternal life, and is renewed. | John 3:3-8; 6:63; Titus 3:5 |
| Baptizing | Believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit by Christ, uniting them all into one body. The Spirit abides in the believer. | Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 14:17; Romans 8:9, 11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 12:13 |
| Sealing | God seals believers with the Holy Spirit, providing a statement of ownership and guarantee of final redemption. | 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; cf. Romans 8:16 |

**8. WHY BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE SPIRIT IS THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?**

> *"Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven" (Matthew 12:12-32; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10).*

**8.1 What is the Unpardonable Sin?**

The Lord Jesus explained to the disciples that there is a difference between criticism of Him and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Those who speak against Christ can be forgiven if they repent and believe. But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin. This is the sin of which the Pharisees were guilty (Matthew 12:12-32; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10).

What is this sin? It is the sin of attributing the miracles of the Lord Jesus to the devil. It is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit because Jesus performed all His miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it was in effect saying that the Holy Spirit of God is the devil. There is no forgiveness for this sin in this age or in the age to come. All kinds of sin can be forgiven, but this particular sin has no forgiveness. It is an eternal sin.

**8.2 Why Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit Is the Unpardonable Sin?**

As I have mentioned in Section 4 of this Chapter, it is the Holy Spirit's role to bring about conviction in the heart of man. To resist the Spirit is a dreadful sin (Acts 7:51; cf. also Acts 6:10). Willful sin against the knowledge the truth is to insult the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29).

The one sin that is unforgivable is unbelief or rejection of Christ. Note in the passage quoted below that the convicting work of the Spirit is related to giving demonstrable proof that it is the sin of rejection that is the issue:

> *"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged" (John 16:8-11).*

To reject Christ and claim His works were from Satan was a clear evidence of both unbelief and an unrepentant heart. This demonstrated a heart that had become so hard that it precluded repentance because Christ's words and works were a clear evidence of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Him as the Anointed One, the Messiah of the Old Testament. By regarding the Lord Jesus as a demon-possessed imposter, one cuts himself off from all hope of salvation. In repudiating the great Forgiver, he seals his own doom making forgiveness impossible. That's why it was considered unpardonable.

### 8.3 Can People Commit this Particular Sin Today?

If a man wilfully resists the Holy Spirit's role to bring about conviction in his own heart (i.e. he hardens himself), then he seals his own doom making forgiveness impossible. If he dies in unbelief, he can no longer be forgiven. His sin then, in fact, becomes unpardonable.

### 8.4 Can True Believers Commit this Particular Sin Today?

The sin cannot be committed by true believers, though some are tortured by fears that they have committed it by backsliding. Backsliding is not the unpardonable sin; any backslider can be restored to fellowship with the Lord (see 1 John 1:9). True believers who worry that they have committed the unpardonable sin have not done so. The very fact that they are concerned indicates that they are not guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

## 9. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


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# Chapter Twenty Seven - The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Having considered the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to evangelism and conversion, we move to His active ministry in the life of believers. This chapter is divided into three major divisions:

1. We will examine the active ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers;
2. We will examine the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and
3. We will discuss whether all of the gifts which were operative in the New Testament church are permanent ministries for the church age.

## 1. THE ACTIVE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF BELIEVERS

After conversion, the Spirit continues to have an active ministry in the life of believers. Here, we will investigate how the Holy Spirit empowers the believer in his battle with the "flesh," using some New Testament expressions and texts that give us specific information on how this takes place:

1. The Holy Spirit "sets His desire against the flesh" (Galatians 5:16-17);
2. The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to obey God (Romans 8:4-11; Galatians 5:16);
3. The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual truth and wisdom to the believer (1 Corinthians 2:15; 1 John 2:20); and
4. The Holy Spirit produces Christ-like character in the believer (Galatians 5:22-23).

### 1.1 The Holy Spirit "Sets His Desire Against the Flesh" (Galatians 5:16-17)

The Biblical expression, "sets His desire," describes a phase of the Holy Spirit's work within the believer. The word "desire" is the New American Standard Bible's translation of the Greek *epithumia.* It means "strong desire," whether good or evil. When used of the Holy Spirit it refers to good desire, and it follows that this is the desire for the will of God to be accomplished. Notice the tension or struggle this creates:

> *"... 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 [sets His desire] against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (Galatians 5:16-17).*

To summarize, this phase of the Spirit's work is to **create a resistance** to the desires of the flesh (tendencies to sin remaining from our unregenerate state). Part of His "strong desire" against the flesh is convicting or convincing the believer that a given desire of the flesh is indeed sin (John 16:8). As the flesh resists, this produces a kind of stalemate. In effect, the flesh's desire prevents you (the believer) from doing "the things that you please," as a new creation in Christ. Were it not for the Holy Spirit resisting the evil in me, I would find myself in precisely the condition Paul describes in Romans 7:14-24: wanting desperately to do good, but not being able to do it.

### 1.2 The Holy Spirit Empowers the Believer to Obey God (Romans 8:4-11; Galatians 5:16)

The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to obey God, including:

1. walking in the Spirit;
2. being filled with the Spirit;

3. empowering by the Spirit;
4. setting the mind on the Spirit;
5. being led by the Spirit; and
6. interceding by the Spirit.

### *1.2.1 Walking in the Spirit*

The believer is commanded to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). The "stalemate" between the Spirit and the flesh can be broken by "walking in the Spirit," that is, depending consciously on the Holy Spirit to energize my resolve and actions. Thus, I will defy the "lusts of the flesh," and "fulfill the requirement of the law" (do God's will). The metaphor "walk" is Paul's term for living; thus walking by the Spirit is living in conscious reliance on Him to enable me as I choose to do what is right.

### *1.2.2 Being filled with the Spirit*

The Bible commands believers to be "filled with (controlled or influenced by) the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). Ephesians 5:18-21 implies that the filling of the Spirit is a way of life, not a single, mystical experience. Men, like the seven administrators of the early Jerusalem church (Acts 6:3) and Barnabas (Acts 11:24), were full of the Spirit.

At conversion the believer is indwelt (i.e. baptized) by the Spirit; during his life he needs to be controlled by the same Spirit. At Pentecost, the disciples were "filled" in connection with being baptized (Acts 2:4; cf. the experience of Paul, Acts 9:17). Though the "filling" by the Spirit is commanded, baptism is not; that is, baptism is to be a single once-for-all experience event in the life of a believer, while filling is to be his way of life under the control of the Spirit.

The filling ministry of the Spirit can be divided into two categories:

1. the general filling ministry; and
2. the special filling ministry.

The **general filling ministry**, which relates to control and spiritual growth and maturation, and into the **special fillings**, which relate to special movings of the Spirit. Peter was filled with the Spirit when he spoke (Acts 4:8; cf. 4:31), but surely he was already full of the Spirit before he spoke. We can assume that he was living a Spirit-filled life when in critical times he was filled in a unique and special way with the Spirit.

### *1.2.3 Empowering by the Spirit*

The believer is engaged in a battle: the flesh against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. It takes the indwelling Spirit of God to provide the victory (Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:16-17). The Spirit is the secret to victory. This was true in Old Testament times as well, for Zechariah 4:6 reads, "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts." It is the Spirit who produces in us the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22f.; cf. Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11).

### *1.2.4 Setting the mind on the Spirit*

Another phrase related to this empowering of the Holy Spirit is a "mind set on the Spirit" (Romans 8:5-6). This is the believer's determination to let the Holy Spirit do His work.

### *1.2.5 Being led by the Spirit*

Being "led by the Spirit" (Romans 8:14), according to the context, involves "putting to death the deeds of the body." That is, saying "no" to sin, and "yes" to the Holy Spirit's guidance. The early church enjoyed the leadership of the Spirit; the Spirit:

1. disciplined (Acts 5:9);
2. directed (Acts 8:29);
3. appointed (Acts 13:2);
4. made decisions (Acts 15:28); and
5. prohibited (Acts 16:6f).

***1.2.6 Interceding by the Spirit***

He also intercedes for believers before the Father (Romans 8:26). The Spirit of God does a blessed work in the life of each believer, and believers are cautioned not to:

1. grieve the Spirit through careless sinning (Ephesians 4:30);
2. tempt the Spirit by lying (Acts 5:9);
3. quench the Spirit by restraining His ministries (1 Thessalonians 5:19);
4. insult the Spirit by minimizing the atoning work of the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:29); and
5. resist the Spirit by refusing to obey His directives (Acts 7:51).

**1.3 The Holy Spirit Imparts Spiritual Truth and Wisdom to the Believer (1 Corinthians 2:15; 1 John 2:20)**

Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit to guide them into truth (John 14:26; 16:13). The Holy Spirit teaches the believer from the Word of God by illuminating, or making plain, the Scriptures to him.

All believers will know the truth when they hear it because they "have an anointing from the Holy One" (1 John 2:20). They have the Spirit and, therefore, they do not need some additional special revelation or mystical insight (1 John 2:27).

In 1 Corinthians 2:6-13 the Holy Spirit "reveals" the things of God, and enables the believer (called "he who is spiritual") to "appraise all things" (1 Corinthians 2:15). The result is that we are able to know the truth or will of God that centers in the Scriptures.

Some add to the Holy Spirit's ministry guidance in human decision making. However, there appears to be no Biblical evidence of that kind of guidance apart from this work in revealing and making plain the Word of God. This raises the question of whether feelings and impulses come from the Holy Spirit independent of His use of the Word of God. We find no such clear Biblical evidence for this. The exception is Acts 16:6-10 where the Holy Spirit intervenes directly in the travel plans of the apostle Paul. But even this event falls during the apostolic period (before the Scriptures were complete), and cannot be given as the sole support for the normal or regular way in which the Holy Spirit ministers to believers today.

**1.4 The Holy Spirit Produces Christ-Like Character in the Believer (Galatians 5:22-23)**

This familiar passage on the "fruit of the Spirit" directly follows the passage on walking by the Spirit in Galatians 5:16-21. Previously we said that walking by the Spirit is the way the believer obeys God instead of the desires of his flesh. It appears here that the results of this walk are:

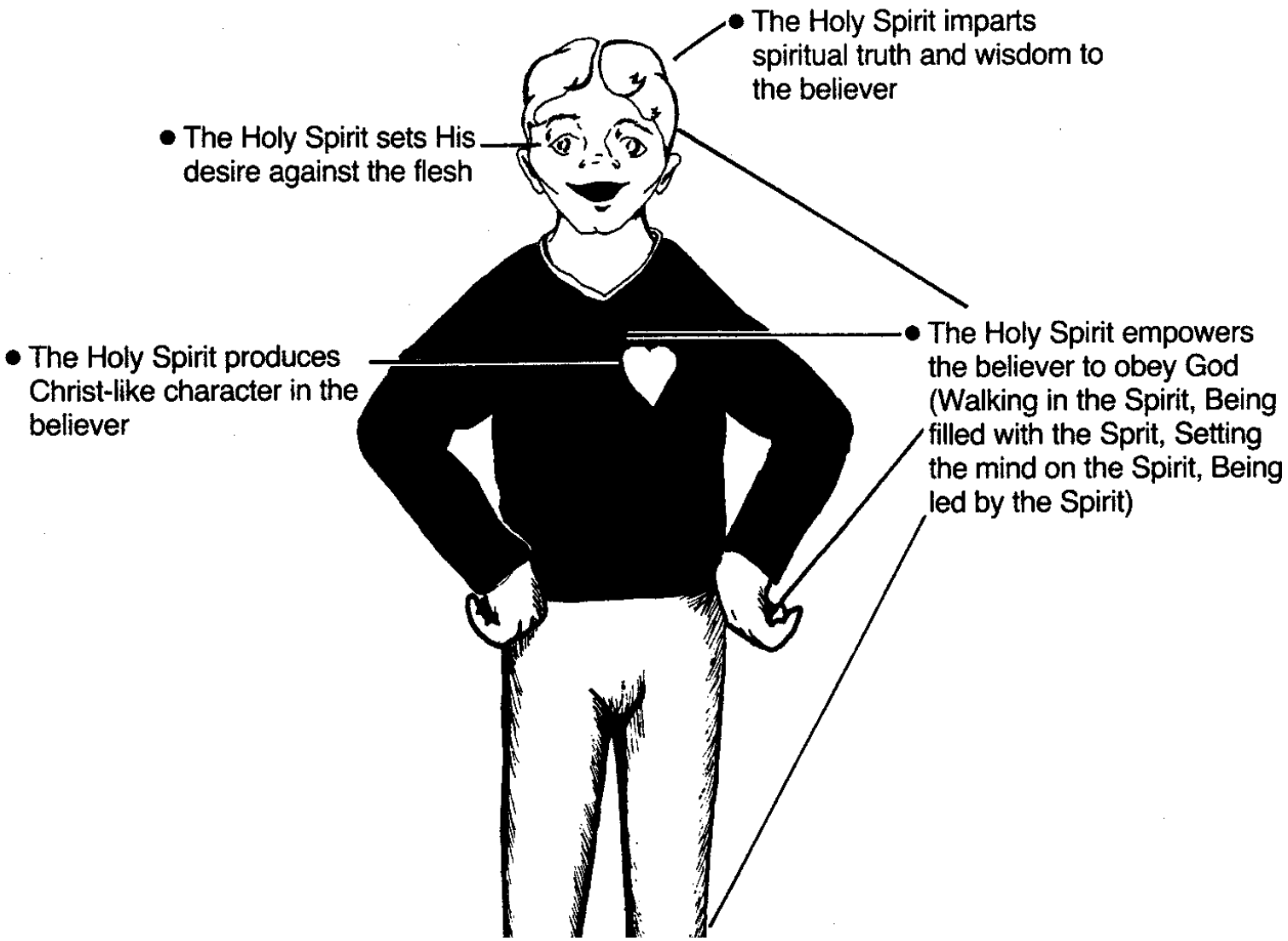
1. love;
2. joy;
3. peace;
4. patience;
5. kindness;
6. goodness;
7. faithfulness;
8. gentleness; and
9. self-control.

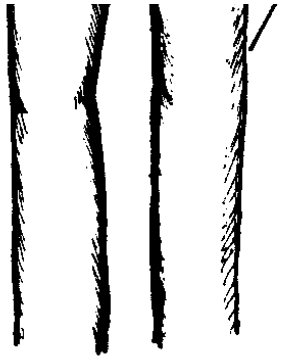
This dependence on the Spirit is the means by which the "fruit" is cultivated and brought to maturity in the believer. When we "walk by the Spirit" we allow the Spirit to change our character traits and mold us into the image of Christ.

**1.5 Summary**

The active ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers is summarized in the following table and picture:

| Activity | Description of the Activity | Scripture Reference |
|---|---|---|
| Filling | Believers are commanded to be "filled with the Spirit." The filling ministry of the Spirit can be divided into the general filling relating to spiritual growth and maturation and to special capacities given by the Spirit for special tasks for God. | Ephesians 5:18; cf. Acts 4:8; 4:31; 6:3; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9 |
| Guiding | Believers are commanded to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. The Spirit keeps the believer from enslavement to legalism and also provides discipline and direction for the Christian life. | Galatians 5:16, 25; cf. Acts 8:29; 13:2; 15:7-9; 16:6; Romans 8:14 |
| Empowering | The indwelling Spirit provides victory in the Christian life, development of Christian fruit, and the ability to win against the works of Satan. | Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:17-18, 22-23 |
| Teaching | Jesus promised that when the Spirit came he would lead believers into truth. The Spirit illuminates the mind of the believer to the revelation of God's will through his Word. | John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 2:20, 27; 1 Corinthians 2:15 |





## 2. THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit sovereignly gives spiritual gifts to believers for the edification of the church, and for the benefit of all believers (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7-11; cf. Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10f.). Whether or not some of these gifts are still in use today is a source of disagreement among Christians.

The charismatic movement began at the turn of the twentieth century among people who called themselves "pentecostalists," and it continues today among an even broader group known generally as the "charismatics." It is characterized by the belief that **all**, or at least **most**, of the spiritual gifts listed by Paul in the New Testament are still given today. Only unbelief and spiritual coldness prevent them from being manifested among all believers. {Note: "Charismatic" comes from the Greek term for "gift" in the New Testament, *charisma* (1 Corinthians 12:4). Another term is *pneumatikos*, translated "spiritual gift" in 1 Corinthians 12:1. The narrow use of this Biblical term today (used only to label a certain segment of believers) is unfortunate, because, in its true sense, charismatic is descriptive of all Christians who recognize and practice their spiritual gifts.}

On the other hand, certain evangelicals believe that some of the New Testament gifts (typically tongues, miracles, healing) were temporary, and functioned only during the earliest years of the church. Their purpose was to authenticate the ministry of the apostles while the church still lacked the completed Scriptures.

What is true is that the Holy Spirit gives each believer a gift or gifts, and that every gift is for the church's overall benefit. We will give a brief survey and description of some of the representative gifts.

### 2.1 A Brief Survey of Some of the Spiritual Gifts

A brief survey of some of the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament is provided in the following table:

| Gift | Description | Result | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Prophecy** (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians14:29-32) | Speaking truth directly revealed from God. | Understanding mystery (1 Corinthians 13:2) | Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14), Daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8-9) |
| **Service, Helping** (Romans 12:7) | Aiding others to do God's work. Giving practical assistance to member of the church. | Serving the church and the needy (Acts 6:1) | Onesiphorus (2 Timothy 1:16) |
| **Teaching** (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11) | Communicating the truth and applications of the Scripture. | Understanding the Word of God (Acts 18:26) | Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26), Apollos (Acts 18:27-28), Paul (Acts 18:11) |
| **Encouraging** (Romans 12:8) | Urging one to pursue proper conduct or to console. | Encouragement (Acts 9:27) | Barnabas (Acts 4:36) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Giving** (Romans 12:8) | Liberally and cheerfully imparting substance to God's work. | Meeting physical needs (Acts 9:36) | Dorcas (Acts 9:36) |
| **Leadership** (Romans 12:8) | Organizing and administering the work of the ministry. | Order (Titus 1:5) | Titus (Titus 1:5) |
| **Showing Mercy** (Romans 12:8) | Giving undeserved aid to others. | Sympathy, compassion toward undeserving | Barnabas (Acts 9:27) |
| **Apostleship** (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11) | Being an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ and speaking authoritatively about faith and practice. | Sets forth God's precepts for the church (1 Corinthians 14:37) | Paul (Galatians 1:1), Peter (1 Peter 1:1) |
| **Evangelism** (Ephesians 4:11) | Presenting the gospel with clarity and with a burden for the unsaved. | Understanding the Gospel | Philip (Acts 21:8) |
| **Pastor / Teacher** (Romans 12:7; Ephesians 4:11) | Shepherding and teaching the church. | Care and godly instruction (Acts 20:28-31) | Paul (1 Thessalonians 2:7-12) |
| **The Message of Wisdom** (1 Corinthians 12:8) | Perceiving and presenting the truth of God.<br>Applying God's Word or wisdom to specific situations. | The ability to grasp and apply the revelation given | John (1 John 1:1-3) |
| **The Message of Knowledge** (1 Corinthians 12:8) | Understanding and exhibiting wisdom from God. Revelation from God about people, circumstances, or Biblical truth. | Truth understood in its spiritual sense (1 Corinthians 2:6-12) | Paul (Colossians 2:2-3) |
| **Faith** (1 Corinthians 12:9) | Trusting God implicitly to perform unusual deeds. | Accomplishment of great tasks | Stephen (Acts 6:5) |
| **Healing** (1 Corinthians 12:9) | Being able to cure diseases. | Complete cures (Acts 3:6-7) | Peter and John (Acts 3:6-7), Paul (Acts 20:9-12) |
| **Miracles** (1 Corinthians 12:10) | Being able to perform works of power. | People fear God (Acts 5:9-11) | Paul (Acts 13:8-11) |
| **Discernment** (1 Corinthians 12:10) | Distinguishing the power by which a teacher or prophet speaks. | Exposure of false prophets (1 John 4:1) | Believers at Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14:29) |
| **Tongues** (1 Corinthians 12:10) | Speaking in a language not understood by the speaker. | Praise to God which is understood by those persons knowing the language spoken (Acts 2:1-12). Thanksgiving to God which may be understood if someone interprets the language spoken (1 Corinthians 14:5,16, 27-28). | The disciples |
| **Interpretation** (1 Corinthians 12:10) | Making "tongues" understandable. | Confirmation of the foreign language (1 Corinthians 14:27-28) | |

### 2.2 Categories of Gifts

Spiritual gifts may be divided into three categories:

1. office gifts;
2. functional gifts; and
3. validation gifts.

#### *2.2.1 Office gifts*

Ephesians 4:11 lists:

1. apostles;
2. prophets;
3. evangelists;
4. pastors; and
5. teachers.

This list involves people who function in a certain capacity or office. We may find more than one of these gifts in an individual. For instance, Paul himself worked miracles (Acts 13:11), performed physical healing (Acts 28:8), prophesied (2 Corinthians 12:1), spoke in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:18), evangelized (Acts 13:16-43), and taught (Acts 15:35), all of which are manifestations of spiritual gifts.

### *2.2.2 Functional gifts*

Because they pertain to a specific ministry we term the following "functional" gifts:

1. teaching;
2. evangelism;
3. administration;
4. exhortation;
5. helping; and
6. mercy.

### *2.2.3 Validation gifts*

Some of the more spectacular gifts seem to serve the purpose of confirming the message of the apostolic church. Hebrews 2:3-4 says that God "confirmed" to the second generation of believers (those that were not original eye-witnesses of Jesus Christ) the message of salvation through "signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit." Believers disagree whether this sort of validation is necessary today, or whether it was a process brought to completion in the apostolic age. That may be implied by the passage in Hebrews 2 just cited. The gift of miracles and the gift of healing fall into this category.

## 3. THE ISSUE OF THE PERMANENCE OF SOME GIFTS

The question of whether all of the gifts which were operative in the New Testament church are permanent ministries for the church age has been greatly debated, especially in recent years with the upsurge of the so-called charismatic movement.

Modern "non-charismatics" believe that the following gifts functioned only in the early days of the church and are no longer in use:

1. tongues and their interpretation;
2. prophecy;
3. word of knowledge;
4. word of wisdom;
5. miracles;
6. healing;
7. apostles; and
8. prophets.

Some, of course, allow for an occasional extraordinary manifestation of one of these gifts as part of God's will today but believe that they are not to be expected in the ordinary functioning of the church.

Most charismatics believe that **all** of these gifts are still in use, although they define some of the gifts differently than those who view them as obsolete (like the gift of "prophecy" and "tongues" especially).

### 3.1 Different Viewpoints of "Speaking in Tongues"

The different viewpoints of "speaking in tongues" are given in the following table for your information:

| Category | Traditional Orthodox | Pentecostal | Charismatic |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Nature of Tongues** | Tongues in Acts are human languages whereas tongues in 1 Corinthians are either human languages, heavenly or angelic languages, or ecstatic utterances. | Tongues in Acts are human languages whereas tongues in 1 Corinthians are heavenly or angelic languages. | Tongues in Acts are human languages whereas tongues in 1 Corinthians are heavenly or angelic languages. |
| **Content of Tongues** | Glossolalia is praying to God in a language that one has not studied. Some believe that New Testament accounts of "tongues" ties it in with a knowable or known language which is addressed to God in thanksgiving and praise. Never is it intended that tongues be equivalent to prophecy in being addressed to people. | Tongues may be prayer to God or they may be God's means of speaking to the people of God, equivalent to prophecy, if interpreted, | Tongues may be prayer to God or they may be God's means of speaking to the people of God, equivalent to prophecy, if interpreted. |
| **Need of Tongues** | Dispensationalists believe that tongues had a limited value in the early church to demonstrate God's change from Israel to the church. Most are in agreement that they were also used to build up the church when accompanied by the gift of interpretation of tongues. They are not needed today. | Tongues not only to signify the Spirit's presence and power but also to provide the ability to speak to God through the Spirit about concerns that the mind is not able to express. The gift of tongues is also given to some Christians to give the will of God. | Not all Christians will speak in tongues, and the Spirit is present in every Christian, but special power comes to the Christian by means of releasing the Spirit's power by tongues, given to some Christians to give the will of God to the church for its edification. |
| **Purpose of Tongues** | The primary purpose of tongues was to demonstrate the change from the nation of Israel to the nations of all the world. They are not a normative indication that someone has received the Spirit of God or a second baptism of (or in) the Spirit. | Tongues are the initial, necessary evidence that one has received the Spirit or the empowering from the Spirit by means of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Further, they are used by the Spirit-filled believer in praying more effectively. Pentecostals differ as to whether one receives the Spirit of God at the moment of conversion or only at the baptism of the Spirit. | Tongues are an indicator (but not the only one) that one has the fullness of the Spirit of God. All Christians have the Spirit from conversion, but the fullness comes through one's letting God take control of one's life. This is not a second blessing but a recognition of God's power. Tongues help one to pray in the Spirit. |
| **Duration of Tongues** | Tongues ceased after the completion of the New Testament. There is no reliable evidence today of the miraculous gift of speaking foreign languages. | Tongues have continued throughout the ages, arising again in various periods of the church's history when greater desire for spirituality has occurred. | Tongues have continued throughout the ages, arising again in various periods of the church's history when greater desire for spirituality occurred. |

### 3.2 Comparison of the Charismatic and Non-Charismatic Views

I would like to provide the reasons for both the charismatic and non-charismatic views in the following table. The readers are recommended to read them carefully and decide which view is correct by themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

| Charismatic | Non-Charismatic | My Opinion |
|---|---|---|
| *Carl* states, "There is the **total absence of any definite declaration** by the Lord of His intention to cause tongues and other powers to cease shortly after the establishing of the church" (*Carl Brumback*, **What Meaneth This?**). | 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 says that prophecy and knowledge would "be done away" by "that which is perfect" (a possible reference to the complete New Testament), and that tongues would "cease" (a verb meaning "stop functioning"). | Trying to identify what "perfect" refers to presents a problem. The connection between "perfect" and the complete New Testament is only implied. Also, there are no specifics provided regarding **when** tongues would cease. God may allow for an occasional extraordinary manifestation of one of these gifts. |
| **Speaking in tongues** is a sign of spirituality (Acts 2:3-4; 10:44-46). Through speaking in tongues, we can have better communication and relationship with God. If most disciples in the first century were able to speak in tongues, then it is reasonable for us do so now. | According to the New Testament, speaking in tongues is the ability to speak in a language previously unknown by the one speaking it. Tongues are not ecstatic utterances which many people today are seeking (read Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 13-14). The New Testament does not encourage us to seek to speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 13-14). It plainly states that not all speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28-30). Further, tongues are listed last signifying they are least in importance of all the gifts listed. Rather, we are strongly challenged to seek the better gifts, those that edify (1 Corinthians 12:31). Furthermore, we are never told to seek this gift - one used especially for the Jewish nation which had been dispersed among the nations of the world where they had to learn a different language (Acts 2:3-8). Instead, we are to seek to edify others through those gifts that minister God's truth in such a way that everyone can understand (see 1 Corinthians 14:1f). In all of the rest of the epistles that deal with true spirituality and our walk with God, tongues are not once mentioned. In addition, the same kind of ecstatic phenomenon occurs among the unsaved all over the world. The suggestion of 1 Corinthians 12:1-3 strongly warns the Corinthians that they were trying to use the legitimate gift of tongues in the same way they had experienced ecstatic phenomenon before they were saved and caught up in paganism. That in itself should serve as a warning about seeking such an experience. | In our century, tongues and healing have both suffered great abuse. They have been emphasized to the exclusion of other gifts by some, and used as criteria for genuine salvation. I agree that God do not encourage us to seek to speak in tongues. We should seek the better gifts, those that edify. The main purpose of using spiritual gifts is to edify other people and minister God's truth in such a way that everyone can understand. In most cases, those people who are speaking in tongues, is unconscious. If no one can understand the ecstatic utterances (including the one who are speaking in tongues), then it loses the main purpose of edifying others. It is worth noting that if tongues in the New Testament were merely foreign languages that the speaker had not had opportunity to learn by normal means (see Acts 2), then the typical utterances in today's charismatic churches are counterfeit. Missionaries and experts in Demonology reported that most people who are speaking in tongues, are actually demon-possessed by a evil spirit of tongues (*C. Fred Dickason*, **Demon Possession & the Christian**). This should make us suspect of any group that promote this gift for a personal experience (a self-centered purpose contrary to the design and use of gifts) or as a sign of spirituality. Therefore, I recommend all believers should not seek to speak in tongues unless for the purpose of foreign missionaries that the speaker has no opportunity to learn the language by normal means. |
| Romans 11:29 says that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." | The context of Romans 11:29 shows that God's covenant promises are irrevocable because of His own faithfulness and this in no way overlooks the fact that individual Jews are either in or out of right relationship to God on the basis of their faith, nor does it mean that they are not accountable in judgment before God. Therefore, Romans 11:29 says nothing about the permanence of spiritual gifts. | I agree that Romans 11:29 is misquoted (out of the context) by the charismatics and it is irrelevant to their argument. |

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| Hebrews 2:3-4 says that God "confirmed" to the second generation of believers (those that were not original eye-witnesses of Jesus Christ) the message of salvation through "signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit." The promise of Christ in the ending of Mark 16:17-20 states that miraculous "signs shall follow them that believe." Therefore, we should continue to seek for the gifts of **divine healing and miracles**. | Hebrews 2:3-4 implies that miraculous signs had **already** confirmed the message of Jesus and His apostles, thus the gift of miracles no longer has a function. The miraculous sign gifts are linked with the unique foundational ministry. Hebrews 2:3-4 identifies that salvation as that "which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will." In this statement three different relations to the message are specified: (1) the Lord began to speak it, then there were (2) those ("them") who confirmed it to (3) the people ("us") of the early church. The signs and miracles are specifically related to the second group, the immediate circle around the Lord who confirmed His message, as God's authentication of their ministry. This special use of these gifts is confirmed by the apostle Paul's references to working "signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" as "signs of an apostle" (2 Corinthians 12:12), and to bringing the Gentiles to Christ through preaching the gospel accompanied by "mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God" (Romans 15:18-19). The sign gifts were for this early apostolic era, during which the final word of God concerning the fulfillment of the promised salvation in Christ was not complete and its messengers still needed authentication. Our Lord warned us about seeking after signs rather than simply resting in the truth of God's Word. To the religious leaders who asked Him for a sign, an attesting miracle, He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! (Matthew 12:39). | The interpretation of "miraculous signs had **already** confirmed the message of Jesus and His apostles" is only implied. In the New Testament, there are no specifics provided regarding **when** miraculous signs and healing would cease. It is possible that God may allow for an occasional extraordinary manifestation of one of these gifts (e.g. performing miracles and healing) for the authentication of the ministry of foreign missionaries who are preaching the gospel message in remote areas and undeveloped countries. On the other hand, divine healing and miracles have both suffered great abuse in nowadays churches. They have been emphasized to the exclusion of other gifts by some, and used as criteria for genuine salvation. In addition, the sign use of many of these miraculous gifts by the early church is in sharp contradiction to the use made of them by many contemporary advocates. For example, the Apostle Paul healed many as authentication to his ministry (see Acts 19:11ff) but did not - as evidenced in the cases of Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23) and Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20), who both suffered illness - suggest this gift for the health of the saints; but it is often advertised for such today through healing ministries. Furthermore, the unsaved all over the world can also perform miracles and healing by the power of evil spirits. Does all this mean that God does not perform miraculous things today? Of course not. He is a powerful God and occasionally heals miraculously, etc., but miraculous activity and gifts, as they are being promoted today, have always been the exception and not the general rule. Historically, these signs and wonders as seen in the early church just simply ceased. There were occasional occurrences, but this was not the norm. |
| It is argued that the needs of the church for the full ministries of the Spirit make all the gifts just as necessary today as at the beginning of the church. Therefore, it is clear that the **gift of prophecy, apostles and prophets** are still exist in this century for further and better development of the church. | There is evidence which suggests that not all gifts were intended for the permanent life of the church. In the first instance, the ministries of apostles and prophets, ranked by the apostle Paul as first and second in one of the lists of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28; cf. Ephesians 4:11), are declared to be foundational to the church (Ephesians 2:20). Men with the authority of the apostles are not found in the church today. Rather the church is called to obey the doctrine of those unique ministers of the church, who laid the foundation in their inspired witness to Christ. Similarly, prophets, to the extent that they received direct revelation of God for the needs of the church during its infancy, are no longer with us. The validation of the uniqueness of a foundation ministry is seen in the church's later closing of the canon, which specifically identified and distinguished that which was revealed normative doctrine from that which was built upon it. In the apostles and at least to some extent in the prophets, the principle of the temporary nature of some spiritual gifts is established; and the possibility of other first-century gifts being temporary is open to examination. | The church is built upon the "foundation" (Ephesians 2:20) of apostles and prophets. Since the first century none have been generally recognized by the church. This implies that their function ceased once the church was established. The gift of prophecy was essential in the first century for the communication of New Testament truth through the apostles in the early church because there was no completed canon of Scripture at that time. There are many today who believe the gift of prophecy still exists, but I do not believe this is correct. Now that we have the completed canon of Scripture, Old and New Testaments, the gift of prophecy is no longer needed. Since the early church did not have a completed canon, the gift of prophecy was also temporarily active in churches. Included here was the gift of discernment (1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21) to verify the accuracy of the message in others who had this gift. Once God had finished giving the New Testament, the gift of prophecy ceased. Furthermore, the unsaved all over the world can speak in prophecies (e.g. fortune-tellers) by the power of evil spirits. In this connection, I recommend all believers should not seek the gift of prophecy. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Any absence of them, it is concluded, is not due to God's withdrawal of provision but to the **"lukewarmness and unbelief"** of God's people (*Donald Gee*, **The Pentecostal Movement**). | The general cessation of miracles in the history of the church following the apostolic era substantiates the fact that not all the gifts were to be continued in the same way. The rejection of this conclusion, by insisting that the unspiritual nature of the church caused the diminishing of these ministries and that the need of the church for them remained constant, is negated by God's use of miracles in Biblical history. Instead of a record of continual miracle working among God's people, the Scriptures show that miracles were prominent in three main periods: the time of Moses, that of Elijah and Elisha, and the New Testament era of Christ and the apostles. Men such as Abraham, David, and John the Baptist performed no miracles, according to our knowledge. Apparently, miraculous signs were used by God for authentication during certain epochs more than others. | There is a peculiar absence of these gifts in the record of church history. Their absence cannot be attributed to lack of spirituality, for the church has gone through many revivals since the first century. Great spiritual leaders such as: Martin Luther, John Wesley, John Calvin, D.L. Moody, etc, did not perform any miracles. The conclusion is that some spiritual gifts have not been in use since the apostolic age. |

### 3.3 Conclusion

On the basis of both the Biblical and historical evidence, it seems most reasonable to conclude that certain of the spiritual gifts active in the early church are no longer given to God's people. This is not to circumscribe the Spirit's activity and certainly not to deny divine miracles. God can and has worked miraculously throughout the history of the church, but these miracles are not necessarily the manifestation of these early gifts. For the most part, the practice and theology today associated with the sign gifts bear little resemblance to the New Testament pattern. I conclude that God occasionally heals miraculously, etc., but miraculous activity and gifts have always been the exception and not the general rule.

## 4. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


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Go to Chapter Twenty Eight

# Chapter Twenty Eight - The Nature of the Church

The Bible presents several metaphors for the church, each making a contribution to our understanding of its nature. The two concepts dealt with and alluded to more than any other, are the metaphor of the "body of Christ" and the concept of organization.

Some recent writers in theology, like *Lawrence Richards* and *Clyde Hoeldtke*, believe that the primary concept of the church is that it is an **organism** or body, and that **organization**, the ordinary concept, is antithetical to that of organism (*Lawrence Richards* and *Clyde Hoeldtke*, **A Theology of Church Leadership**, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980). The fact is that the New Testament sets forth a structure of leadership, which implies organization of some sort, although this organization may indeed function quite differently from that of a goal-oriented organization like a small business or large corporation.

## 1. THE CHURCH AS AN ORGANISM

The primary Biblical text for this concept is 1 Corinthians 12, though the word **body** as a reference to the church is found several other places. The church as a living organism suggests the following important ideas:

### 1.1 Unity in Diversity

> *"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).*

Unity is taught by the reference to one body, which elsewhere in the chapter is seen to be composed of many diverse parts (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 14-20), all working harmoniously toward mutual benefit.

Diversity is further illustrated by the ethnic reference to Jew and Greek. This is the closest Scripture comes to a relationship that might correspond to racial issues. (Note: Other limited references are Acts 8:27 where Philip is sent to preach the gospel to a "Cushite," or Ethiopian, and Titus 1:12 where a people called Cretans are cast as being always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.")
Class distinctions are to be overlooked also, according to the words, "slaves or free."

In summary, the church is composed of a great variety of people of different ethnic backgrounds and classes, all working together to promote each other's spiritual growth and world evangelism through a diversity of gifts given by the Holy Spirit.

### 1.2 Interdependence and Indispensability

> *"If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body" it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body... the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you" (1 Corinthians 12:15, 30).*

Each member needs the other (interdependence), and we cannot really "get along" without each other (indispensability), for each has his unique contribution to make. Though a dismembered body can compensate and function in a limited way, it is nevertheless handicapped.

### 1.3 The Prominence of Certain Members

> *"And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles...." (1 Corinthians 12:28).*

Such verses as 1 Corinthians 12:19 seem to say that no one is more important than another in God's sight. Therefore, I prefer the words "more prominent" to describe the function of members like those listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28. This list is augmented by the offices of evangelist and pastor in Ephesians 4:11, and the activity they all have in common is **speaking**. They are leaders, and their leadership is exercised by speaking the Word of God to the rest of the body They are prominent because most of their speaking is to larger groups of people; they are in the "limelight" so to speak.

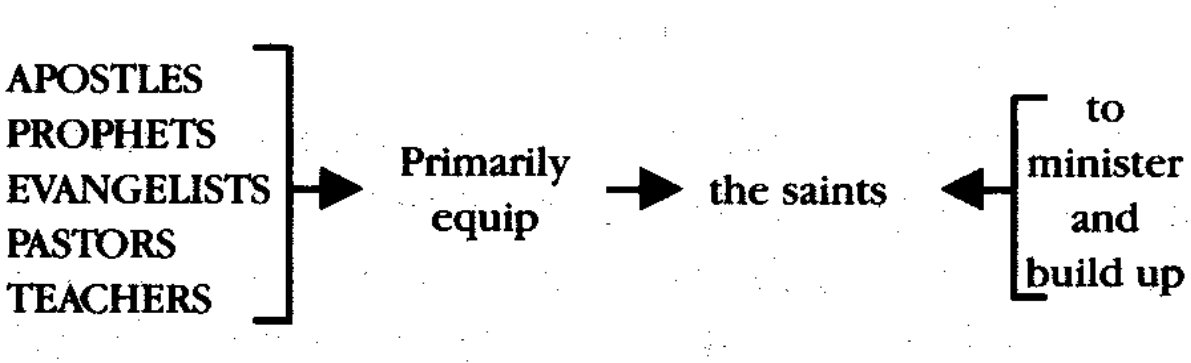
### 1.4 The Training Function of the Prominent Members

Another reason the prominent members of the body are in the limelight is suggested in Ephesians 4:12, where the speaking members are given to the church "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."

This is a striking and fundamental concept. Traditionally, for example, men we call "pastors" are regarded as those who do the work of service (ministry) and build up the body of Christ. Here, however, they train the saints (the rest of the congregation) to minister and build up. In other words, they are to be more like coaches and recruiters!

This concept of "equipping the saints" is confirmed by the fact that one of the primary functions of the church is to "disciple." Jesus and Paul spent far more time discipling than evangelizing. This is a much more effective approach to evangelism, because you are producing more and more evangelists who multiply in the process.

Ephesians 4:11-12 could be visualized as follows (*Ray C. Stedman*, **Body Life**, Revised Edition, Discovery House Publishers, RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995):




In conclusion, the church as an "organism" teaches us the following things: we are vitally related to each other in a process of growth that involves those already present in the body in edification and the addition of new members through evangelism.

## 2. THE CHURCH AS AN ORGANIZATION

### 2.1 The Meaning of "Organization" as Applied to the Church

The word **organization** as applied to the church means that God has designed a structure of authority intended to establish responsibilities for the welfare of the church. Jesus taught that leadership in the church was to differ fundamentally from leadership in the world (Matthew 20:25-28). In other words, the management techniques of the business world are not the same as those employed in the church.

### 2.2 Leaders

Organization in the church provides for the exercise of authority (Hebrews 13:17), the assignment of responsibility (John 21:15), and orderly functioning (1 Corinthians 14:40). Toward this goal, Jesus Christ has appointed certain offices of leadership, which in the New Testament are called "elders" and "deacons" for the local church, and "apostles" for the church at large (I regard the authority of the apostles to have been limited to one generation and non-successive. However, their authority functions today through Scripture, which they left behind.).

### 2.3 Headship

The final aspect of church organization is the headship of Christ. Ephesians 1:20-23 says that God the Father:

> *"... raised [Jesus Christ] 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 every name that is named.., and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body the fulness*

*of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23).*

This headship is communicated to the rest of the church through two extremes: (1) through the leaders to the members and (2) directly to the members, with the leaders as encouragers and trainers exclusively. I believe Jesus Christ, the Head, utilizes **both** of these means, so that they are not mutually exclusive or an "either-or" situation. The church is wise, then, to be sensitive to this headship, so that what the body does is precisely what Jesus Christ, the Head, wants it to do.

I believe the primary agency of this headship is Scripture, and that individual ideas about how the general commands of Scripture are to be implemented is a matter of corporate consensus and agreement. These ideas can come from leaders **and** "laymen," but the two must be united in every task they undertake.

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Go to Chapter Twenty Nine

# Chapter Twenty Nine - The Function of the Church

## 1. THE MANDATES TO THE CHURCH

The mandates for the function of the church are in the gospel passages containing:

1. the "Great Commission" (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21); and
2. in the charge of Acts 1:8.

### 1.1 The Commission of Matthew 28:18-20

The most complete form of the Great Commission is found in Matthew 28:18-20:

> *"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, lam with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).*

This mandate contains the following elements:

1. believers obey through the "authority" Christ gives them, ensuring their success if they act in dependence on the Holy Spirit;
2. believers have one major command - "make disciples"; and
3. believers accomplish this primary command in three ways - "going," "baptizing," and "teaching."

The Greek verb translated "going" is actually in a different tense than the other two verbs, as the following possible translation demonstrates: "after you have gone, make disciples of all nations, by baptizing.., and teaching ...."."Go" is therefore not the focus of the mandate, and it need not be limited to going to a foreign country. It simply pertains to the activities of life that place the believer in contact with unbelievers.

Thus, "baptizing" and "teaching" are the primary means of "making disciples," implying also that we have not fully obeyed until the people we reach with the gospel have become bona fide, consistent followers of Jesus Christ. I believe this is initiated by "baptizing," a term used by Jesus Christ and the early church to encompass all we mean by evangelism. That is, baptism was the culmination of the evangelistic process when the convert confessed with his mouth, "Jesus is Lord" (Romans 10:9). Immediately the baptized disciple is taught the things of Christ to make him a productive disciple. This becomes a life-long process.

### 1.2 The Charge of Acts 1:8

Just before He ascended into heaven, Jesus is reported by Luke to have expressed the Great Commission in terms of witnessing:

> *"But you shall 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" (Acts 1:8).*

The major elements of this command are:

1. witnessing is to be done in the power of the Holy Spirit (note the phrase "all authority" in Matthew 28);

2. witnessing is simply an accurate report of what one has seen and heard. In regard to the gospel, it pertains primarily to the resurrection in the book of Acts. For believers today who are not eyewitnesses, it is a witness to what the risen Christ has done for us; and

3. the strategy of world evangelism is implied in the words, "in Jerusalem (one's neighborhood and city), and in all Judea and Samaria (one's nation), and even to the remotest part of the earth" (foreign mission).

## 2. THE THREEFOLD FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

There are three basic functions in the church's mandate to "make disciples":

1. evangelism ("baptizing");
2. edification ("teaching"); and
3. exaltation or worship.

Evangelism promotes growth by adding disciples to the body of Christ, while edification trains those members to be productive disciples. Worship is putting God first as the ultimate value.

### 2.1 Evangelism

Evangelism includes three essential elements:

1. strategy;
2. method; and

3. content of the message.

### *2.1.1 Strategy*

Matthew 28:19 stated that making disciples is accomplished by "going." This mandate established a radical departure from the manner of witnessing done in the Old Testament. The nation of Israel, its way of life and its unique worship, drew people from all over the world to receive a "witness." The easiest way to compare the Old Testament method of witnessing with that of the New Testament is to describe the Old Testament witness with the word "come," for Israel was never commanded to carry a message to anyone. The mandate to the church is "go." This implies a more aggressive strategy, with no emphasis on a building.

### *2.1.2 Method*

Good evangelism must be done in an environment of influential involvement with people. The believer's oral message must be affirmed by his quality of life in order to be effective. In essence, people want to know if our beliefs make any difference in our lives.

Acts 2:47 very interestingly sets forth the only reference to evangelism in this section, which describes the activities of the early church. The early believers were "praising God, and having favor with all the people."

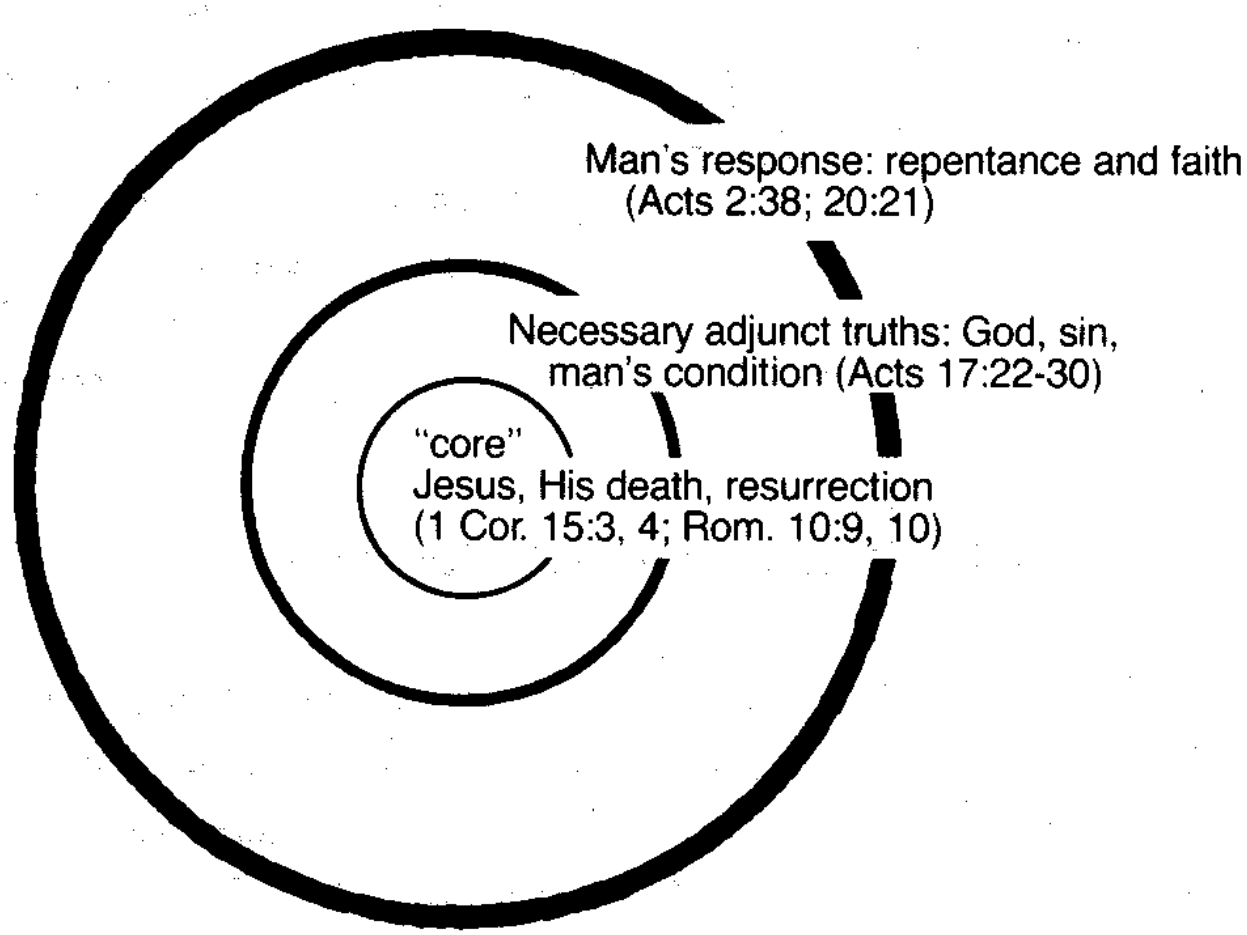
Furthermore, good evangelism allows God to do His work, as we have already seen. He, not the believer, is the one who adds to the church those being saved (Acts 2:47b).

### *2.1.3 Content of the message*

The actual message must be no more or less than what God has prescribed. I fear that today's evangelism is often insufficient to produce genuine converts. A summary of the apostolic message as found throughout the book of Acts and clarified in the epistles is in order.

The apostolic message contained a "core" truth about Jesus: His death and His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 10:9-10). A survey of the evangelistic messages of Acts reveals other important elements related to the knowledge of the various audiences. Jewish listeners knew the Old Testament truths about God, sin, and the meaning of sacrifice. Gentiles, however, needed to know more about the nature of God and sin. All audiences were told to respond either with repentance or faith.

Let's visualize the evangelistic message in the following picture:




From the picture, we can see that:

1. Sermons to Jews contained the "core" and "response" truths.
2. Sermons to Gentiles required the "necessary adjunct truths" due to their ignorance of the Old Testament.

Twentieth century people would fit this scheme also. Religious church-goers would correspond with the Jewish listener of the first century; the average pagan today would correspond roughly with the pagan Gentile of the first century. Thus, in order to be effective when we preach the gospel, we must be sensitive to our audience.

**2.2 Edification**

The distinction between evangelism and edification has been summarized by *Gene Getz* (*Gene Getz*, **Sharpening the Focus of the church**, Wheaton, III.: victor, 1984):

> "Evangelism is done principally when the church **scatters**, while edification takes place when the church **gathers**."

Edification means "building up," and it corresponds with "equipping the saints" or "discipling" (in the

narrow sense of bringing converts to maturity, not in the sense of Matthew 28:19-20).

According to Acts 2:42-46, edification consists of the following elements:

1. teaching;
2. fellowship;
3. the Lord's Supper;
4. prayers; and
5. discipline.

### *2.2.1 Teaching*

"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching." This for us today includes both the Old and New Testaments. Biblical teaching is the bedrock of edification.

### *2.2.2 Fellowship*

Fellowship is demonstrated by sharing, more than anything else, in verses 43-46. These believers shared their time and possessions so that no one suffered need. It is a mistake to assume communal life took place here, for they continued to meet "from house to house" (Acts 2:46). Also, the extensive pooling of material resources met a **temporary** need. The rest of the New Testament affirms and assumes the stewardship of personal property (see 1 Timothy 6:17-19). The point is, unselfish sharing is a part of healthy fellowship.

### *2.2.3 The Lord's Supper*

Luke defines this ordinance as the "breaking of bread," to be distinguished from merely "taking meals together." This would have been both a celebration of the believers' unity (1 Corinthians 10:17-18), which is an aspect of fellowship, and of the death of Christ, which is **an** act of worship.

### *2.2.4 Prayers*

When they gathered, the early believers prayed. The word translated "prayer" is actually plural, which might imply a widespread participation in prayer by all or most of the believers gathered in small groups "from house to house."

### *2.2.5 Discipline*

Though not mentioned in Acts 2:42-47, no less vital an element in the edification of the body of Christ is the discipline of its erring members. Acts 5:1-11 demonstrates the importance of discipline when two hypocritical members of the church are severely punished in a unique way for the sake of making them an example.

Discipline, as gleaned from numerous passages of the New Testament, has several phases before it reaches the stage where the whole church becomes involved. The purpose of discipline is:

1. to restore the erring member (Matthew 18:15; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:25); and
2. to maintain a public testimony (Romans 2:24; 1 Timothy 5:20; 1 Corinthians 5:6).

First of all, discipline **must** be done in a spirit of concern and humility (Galatians 6:1). There are three phases of discipline, and every believer should be involved in two of these phases:

1. **personal, private admonition**, in which each believer sooner or later must rebuke, admonish, encourage, or counsel some fellow-believer (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3-4; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14);

2. **the group admonition**, in which a believer who fails to respond to the private admonition is approached by several others (Matthew 18:16; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Thessalonians 3:6); and

3. **church exclusion**, in which the whole church willingly cooperates in refusing to fellowship with an offender who has resisted all other efforts to restore him. The majority of the congregation must participate in exclusion for it to be effective (2 Corinthians 2:5-8).

What sorts of offenses should constitute an occasion for some form of discipline? Generally speaking, it is conceivable that **any** kind of offense could. On the personal level, anything that constitutes an offense against another believer demands "rebuke" (Luke 17:3-4). In the New Testament the examples of public, corporate discipline usually entailed some socially crucial scandal like incest (1 Corinthians 5), but conceivably any offense - gossip, for example - could so disrupt the life of the church that exclusion from fellowship would be necessary for the talebearer.

In all cases, God promises that the church's efforts to discipline are backed by His authority (Matthew 18:18-20).

### 2.3 Exaltation or Worship

In the various activities such as devotion to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer, something else takes place called "worship." Though worship is edifying to the believer, it also is something which he renders to God, something which God Himself desires. Worship can take place, of course, outside the assembly of believers privately, but worship is also a corporate thing.

The word "worship" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "worthship" which means "attributing worth to God." The Greek word translated "worship" literally means "to bow down." In its broadest sense worship is putting God first as the ultimate value; thus materialism or covetousness is a form of idolatry.

In the Old Testament, worship involved formal acts of praise, singing, instrumental music, and recitations of praise in a formal manner as seen in the Psalms. Such forms of worship are not as obvious or explicit in the New Testament's description of the early believers' meetings, but it is certain that they used them. Thus, there have developed more ritualistic churches with elaborate liturgies, while others have avoided some of the more formal rituals.

Acts 2:42 mentions the worship of the early believers in the form of the "breaking of bread" or the Lord's Supper which is the clearest worship activity of the four listed. Acts 2:47 refers to the believers' praise of God which led to God's adding to the church. Acts 4:23-31 quotes a corporate prayer in which God is praised or worshiped. What did their worship consist of besides these things? Did they have a ritual or liturgy?

Few clues are available. One example of the role of music is found in Ephesians 5:19, clearly a reference to corporate worship ("one another"). Most ideas of liturgy come from tradition, but this fact must not necessarily be discounted, because early tradition may often reflect the apostolic age when little detail of apostolic liturgy is available.

## 3. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY


1. **Survey of Theology II**, Lesson 8, Moody Bible Institute, 1990, by William H. Baker.
2. **Lectures in Systematic Theology**, Chapters XXXVI and XXXVII, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992 Edition, by Henry C. Thiessen.
3. **The Church in God's Program**, Chapters 6-9, Moody Press, 1972, by Robert Saucy.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# Chapter Thirty - The Organization and Leadership of the Church

## 1. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

We have established the fact that the church is an organization. We are now ready to look more carefully at the way this organization works out in practice.

Through history, churches have organized themselves from the dual standpoints of expediency and interpretation of Scripture. I am convinced that the success of any church has less to do with organizational structure than with the quality of its leaders and their philosophy or style of leadership, particularly the latter.

The fact that sincere, godly believers in different denominations have arrived at such diverse conclusions on forms of church government illustrates what I believe to be the only logical conclusion about the subject: Scripture gives very brief requirements as to "form" of government, leaving a great deal of "freedom" to the local church to organize as it sees fit (The terms "form" and "freedom," and the conclusion here, are attributed to *Francis Schaeffer*, **The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century: The Church Before a Watching World**, 2d ed., Westchester, Ill.: Good News Publishers, 1985).

### 1.1 The Decision-Making Process in the Church

The crucial issue in both leadership and organization is the making and implementation of decisions, whether they pertain to how the local church will carry out its mandate or matters of church discipline. In the business world leaders are responsible for all planning and decisions with relatively few ideas coming from underlings. This also tends to be the way things are done in the average church.

There are several New Testament passages that have a bearing on decision-making in the local church:

1. Acts 6:1-6;
2. Acts 11:1-18;
3. Acts 13:1-3;
4. Acts 15:1-29; and
5. Acts 16:10.

#### *1.1.1 Acts 6:1-6*

The congregation as a whole selected administrators (probably the first deacons) for the ministration to the widows. However, note the fact that "the twelve" set forth the qualifications for the position of leadership and gave the final approval ("whom we may put in charge"). This seems to teach that **the congregation as a whole should have a part, possibly the major part, in choosing leaders**. Titus may have used this procedure as he appointed elders in every Cretan city (Titus 1:5).

### *1.1.2 Acts 11:1-18*

The salvation of some of the first Gentiles created a legalistic problem as far as some Jewish believers were concerned. This decision involved a theological issue, and the decision was reached by a systematic presentation of the issue by an apostle (v. 4) and the agreement of those raising the issue. No mention is made of a large number of people being involved, and it appears that the decision was made in a dialogue between those involved.

### *1.1.3 Acts 13:1-3*

The first missionary journey was inspired by the Holy Spirit in a situation where Scripture seems to connect "prophets and teach ers" with the Spirit's work. The words of the Holy Spirit are quoted directly, perhaps implying that a prophet is quoting the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament manner. Unless prophets are functioning today in this same manner, it appears that Scripture now parallels that work of the Holy Spirit, and the impulse to commission workers would originate within its pages. **The congregation as a whole, or the prophets and teachers, are the ones commissioning the new missionaries**.

### *1.1.4 Acts 15:1-29*

The first "conference" involving "the church and the apostles and the elders" also involved a theological issue. A lengthy report by two apostles takes place, and what appears to be the consensus of opinion of the whole congregation (v. 22) is expressed by James. **Thus, the decision could be regarded as congregational**.

### *1.1.5 Acts 16:10*

Paul's missionary group, having been prevented by the Holy Spirit from going to two places they had intended, now faced the question of the meaning of Paul's dream. **The word** concluding **is plural and means that the decision was made as a group**.

### *1.1.6 Conclusion*

The evidence is not overwhelming, but it is clear that **on major issues the early church tended to involve the whole congregation**. One certainly does not get the impression that any autocratic decisions were made. Either small group or congregational decisions were the practice.

## 1.2 The Officers

There are several terms in the New Testament used in connection with leaders, but only two distinct offices can be discerned. One of the controversies among ecclesiologists today is whether the practice of one pastor or a "senior" pastor is justified by New Testament practice, or whether the local church should be led by a **group** of pastors of equal rank (as the Brethren), usually called "elders," most of whom would not have professional training. This issue is usually described as one elder versus a plurality of elders (Both this author and *Robert Saucy* agree on a plurality of elders. See *Saucy* Chapter 7, for a discussion of the issue).

### *1.2.1 Elders*

Several words are associated with this office that, as *Saucy* demonstrates, refer to the same function. The term **elder** (not entirely a reference to age) was inherited from the Old Testament through the Jewish synagogue, which might have served as a pattern for several things in the early Christian congregation. They were the recognized leaders in the synagogue during New Testament times. It appears to be the most frequent term for this office. Also used is the word **overseer** translated in the King James Version as "bishop." It conveys the idea of spiritual oversight. The last term is the word **pastor** or "shepherd," where care of the flock of God is implied, especially protection from enemies such as false teachers.

### *1.2.2 Deacons*

Very little is said about the duties of deacons in the New Testament. Only a few possible clues provide an idea of their function. First, the term **deacon** means "servant." Couple this with the fact that the seven men selected to administer the widows' food were "serving" (Acts 6) and may have been the first deacons. We now have a picture of a group of men doing temporal duties to enable the apostles to engage in "prayer, and ... the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). These factors have generally led to the conclusion that deacons are supportive in their duties, taking on the burden of the church's temporal obligations.

### *1.2.3 The Role of Women*

Were women ordained to be leaders or deacons? The burden of proof lies with those who believe women should be ordained, because of the passages by Paul that seem to forbid women teaching men (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:12), and the assumption that men are the candidates in the passages setting forth qualifications (e.g. 1 Timothy 3:2). In order to set these factors aside, feminists must assume that they are "culturally conditioned"; that is, that Paul's qualifications were the result of temporary historical conditions, which would be changed as the status and training of women improved. It is my view that Paul's reasoning (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:13-15) is timeless.

There is evidence, however, that women were ordained to be deacons (I retain the masculine form, because Phoebe is called a "deacon," masculine gender, in Romans 16:1). The deacon's role did not require the teaching of men (an inference from 1 Timothy 3:8-13), and women are mentioned in the

qualifications of deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, but not in connection with the elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

Regardless of the controversy over the ordination of women, it is clear that women had a major role in the early church, a fact attested to by such passages as Romans 16 and Philippians 4:3.

## 2. LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

Leadership is a crucial part of the function of the church, and deficiencies in leadership are a major source of weakness in the modern American evan gelical church. For this reason we need to look closely at Scripture to find how God wants us to choose leaders, and what He intends that their function be in the church.

Leadership in the church is different from lead ership in the world in two major ways: qualifica tions and style. Incidentally, leadership can be exercised by both office-holders and non-office holders. Even if women, for example, are excluded from the ordained eldership, there are many areas of service which require leadership where no conflict with Paul's prohibitions would occur, such as evan gelistic enterprises.

### 2.1 Qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)

I will not attempt to distinguish elders from deacons in this survey because 1 Timothy 3:8 implies that as far as qualifications are concerned, deacons are virtually the same with the possible exception that elders are to be "able to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2). My approach will be to list these qualifications by category in order to obtain a more analytical view of them. In the broad sense, there is **one** basic qualification with which all the rest are connected: being "above reproach" (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6).

From a practical standpoint, this means that, within a reasonable period of time, an individual should have conducted a life "above reproach." I say **within a reasonable period of time** because many qualified people have done things in the past for which they have truly repented, made whatever restitution was necessary, and have since proven themselves (1 Timothy 3:10). The qualifications are:

1. moral (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6);
2. good example in the home (1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 5; Titus 1:6);
3. mature (1 Timothy 3:2, 6; Titus 1:6-8);
4. a good teacher (1 Timothy 3:2);
5. spirituality (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7);
6. compassionate (1 Timothy 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8); and
7. good reputation (1 Timothy 3:7).

#### *2.1.1 Moral (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)*

He must be "husband of one wife" and this implies a pure life as far as sexuality is concerned.

### *2.1.2 Good example in the home (1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 5; Titus 1:6)*

This is another implication of being the "husband of one wife." It emphasizes **devotion** to one's mate, not merely legal monogamy. Many believe this also excludes divorced and remarried persons, though this inference cannot be pressed. I do believe, however, that it is inadvisable for a divorced and remarried man to be an elder, because it is so hard to determine if he is "above reproach" or has overcome the problems that may have led to his divorce.

A qualified leader "manages his own household well," and his children are "under control," according to 1 Timothy 3:4. Titus 1:6 further requires that he have "children who believe." In this latter instance, this must mean that his home is **conducive** to bringing children to faith in Christ, for newborns could not qualify, and some children do not become true believers until long after they leave home in spite of the godly efforts of their parents. With regard to the leader's children then, they at least must be respectful to their parents.

### *2.1.3 Mature (1 Timothy 3:2, 6; Titus 1:6-8)*

A leader must show qualities that are admired and encourage other believers to follow his example. This includes:

1. temperance;
2. prudence;
3. respectable;
4. not addicted to wine or pugnacious;
5. gentle;
6. uncontentious;
7. not a recent convert;
8. sensible;
9. just; and
10. self-controlled.

### *2.1.4 A good teacher (1 Timothy 3:2)*

The elders appear to be the primary teachers in the church. This is a necessary qualification if they are going to "shepherd the flock," because it involves imparting sound doctrine. Again, deacons apparently were not required to teach.

### *2.1.5 Spirituality (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)*

Spirituality involves putting the things of Christ at the top of one's priorities. This would include "free from the love of money," "holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience," "not fond of sordid gain." In other words, the godly leader is not a materialist.

### *2.1.6 Compassionate (1 Timothy 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8)*

The leader must be concerned about people. The word **hospitable** means literally, "lover of strangers." Other traits are "gentle," and "not pugnacious."

### *2.1.7 Good reputation (1 Timothy 3:7)*

The last qualification in 1 Timothy 3 pertains to the relationships a man has outside the church. This serves as a kind of indicator of the presence of all these character traits and might be called the "acid test," for outsiders are sometimes more perceptive of genuine character than believers.

## 2.2 The Exercise of Authority

Leaders in the church have authority. This is clear from such texts as Hebrews 13:17 where believers are commanded to obey their leaders. But the nature of their authority and the way it is to be exercised is radically different in the following ways:

1. Leaders are servants (Matthew 20:25-28; John 13:12-16; 1 Peter 5:1-4);
2. Leaders are example-setters (1 Timothy 4:6-16); and
3. Leaders have delegated authority (Hebrews 13:17; 2 Corinthians 13:2-4).

### *2.2.1 Leaders are servants (Matthew 20:25-28; John 13:12-16; 1 Peter 5:1-4)*

At no other point is the difference between this world's concept of leadership and the church's clearer than in the unique aspect of servant-leadership. Jesus made this quite clear in Matthew 20:25-28 where He described the world's leaders as those who **lord it over** their subjects. In contrast, leaders in the church **serve among** their congregations. To illustrate this, Jesus washed the disciples feet, an act usually designated to servants (John 13:12-16).

The difference can be described as one in which the world's leaders lead primarily to some temporal goal that their subjects may or may not be involved or interested in, because they are either slaves, soldiers, or employees. The church's leaders have as their first goal the welfare of the subjects (Hebrews 13:17), and stimulating them toward evangelism second. (Hebrews 10:24 puts the burden of stimulating to "good deeds" upon the congregation as a whole.)

Notice also that the world's "chain of command," or "hierarchy," is not prominent, if it exists at all, in the church. Matthew 20:25-27 used the preposition **over** for worldly leadership and **among** for church leadership. Rank is not significant in the church. Peter tells elders not to "lord it over" the flock (1 Peter

5:1-4). If any sort of hierarchy exists, it does so for the sake of designating responsibility, not giving orders.

### *2.2.2 Leaders are example-setters (1 Timothy 4:6-16)*

The best leadership, even in temporal organizations, is by those who inspire obedience by the quality of their character and example. Notice the evidences of Timothy's example in 1 Timothy 4:6-16. He was to:

1. point out sound doctrine by being himself "nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine;"
2. discipline himself "for the purpose of godliness;"
3. show himself to be an example of those who believe "in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity;"
4. cultivate his spiritual gift;
5. do all this so that his "progress [might] be evident to all;" and
6. "pay close attention" to himself in his teaching to ensure salvation ("salvation" in the sense of sanctification, not eternal destiny) of his hearers.

### *2.2.3 Leaders have delegated authority (Hebrews 13:17; 2 Corinthians 13:2-4)*

Whatever authority a leader has is given to him from the Lord, and to the Lord he is responsible (Hebrews 13:17). Second Corinthians 13:2-4 sets forth the details of this delegated authority. Paul warns the Corinthians that he would not hesitate to say what needed to be said ("not spare anyone"), no matter who they were. They questioned his authority ("you are seeking proof of the Christ who speaks in me"), but he warns them in this letter that they would get their proof, because Christ would work mightily in them as he served as the Lord's mouthpiece. The picture is this: a leader speaks in behalf of the Lord by uttering only what the Lord has given him, the Holy Scriptures so far as we are concerned, and then trusts the Lord to work **within the people** to bring about obedience.

This is quite a different style of leadership than what most of us are accustomed to. All too often a church leader will say what he wants to say and put various kinds of pressure upon people to get results. It requires great humility to allow God to work.

## 2.3 The Duties of Servant-Leaders

lf leaders, then, are not primarily formulators of goals and programs but servants and mouthpieces of the Lord, what specific duties correspond with such a leadership style? For one thing, a leader may certainly be **involved** in administration, for efforts in the church need direction, wisdom, and inspiration. But in the church, a good leader plans **with** his people and listens intently for the voice of Jesus, the head of the church, from every possible source: congregation, Scripture, and fellow-leaders.

Scripture describes the precise duties of the elder in the following terms:

1. instruction (2 Timothy 2:14-16);
2. exhortation (2 Timothy 4:2); and
3. oversight (1 Timothy 3:5; 5:17; Hebrews 13:17).

### *2.3.1 Instruction (2 Timothy 2:14-16)*

He is to teach by reminding and solemnly charging, being diligent in his study of the Word, avoiding controversies and trivialities.

### *2.3.2 Exhortation (2 Timothy 4:2)*

He is to be constantly alert to "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." Reproof is pointing out sin; rebuke is showing from Scripture why it is wrong; and exhortation is encouragement to do the right thing.

### *2.3.3 Oversight (1 Timothy 3:5; 5:17; Hebrews 13:17)*

The word for "overseer" (1 Timothy 3:1) means "one concerned" or "one who pays attention" to something. It contains the idea of responsibility for the proper function of the church as well as care for the welfare of its members. It has less of the traditional authoritarianism and is seen better in service to others. First Timothy 3:5 says the overseer must "take care" of the church of God. First Timothy 5:17 uses the word **rule**, but follows up by saying that one who rules well works hard at preaching and teaching. In Hebrews 13:17 leaders are to be "obeyed" because they "keep watch" over souls.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The leadership style which emerges from a careful look at Scripture is one in which a leader has as his primary concern the spiritual growth and training of people. Decisions tend to be made by congregational consensus and group consultation. Projects or enterprises seem to arise out of the congregation in concert with the leaders. The management techniques of business and industry cannot be transferred *en toto* to the church, for it is a unique entity that not only accomplishes the goal of world-evangelism, but "grows up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

## 3. REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

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