The CHRISTIAN ANARCHIST CrOOKBOOK

Shawn McCraney

This book is dangerous. Not to you the reader, but to religious charlatans who despise its contents, to fearful parents who want their children to remain in the denomination they have chosen for them, to religionists who would rather have you follow the traditions of Man than the Spirit through a contextual understanding of the Bible. Don’t read this book if you want to please Mom and Dad. Put it down if you want to be religiously manipulated for the rest of your life. But if you want to be free from men and their religious imaginations, if you want truth no matter what the cost, if you really want to know what Christianity is all about from a biblical perspective, read on - and be free - because all you think you know about Christianity is probably wrong.

Copyright © 2017 by Shawn Aaron McCraney
Said Frederick Douglas in 1890

I love the pure, peaceable and impartial Christianity of Christ; I therefore hate the corrupt, slave-holding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land.

Said Waitstill Sharp in 1939

“The mind of God is known through the Christian liberties abiding in the heart of every individual believer.”

Said Leo Tolstoy in 1894

“The Christian churches and Christianity have nothing in common save the name: they are utterly hostile opposites. The churches are arrogance, violence, usurpation, rigidity, death. Christianity is humility, penitence, submissiveness, progress, life.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Christian Anarchist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Apostles Creed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born-Again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Fund Drives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvinism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denominationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Times (Eschatology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternal Punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Christian Anarchist

Christian Anarchist - (a) an individual who has no other "arche" (primary form, force or authority, Greek) than Jesus Christ; (b) someone who embraces Jesus Christ as their sole lawgiver and who, from the point of view of faith or religion, refuses to allow anyone or anything come between them and their direct relationship with God through Jesus by the Holy Spirit; c) someone who as a Christian is an anarchist – believing they can govern themselves through their Christian life without the interventions of organized religions or institutional rules or demands; (d) someone who has experienced the ultimate liberation through a complete emancipation from every form of religious bondage.¹

Crookbook

Crookbook - a bound set of sheets or pages that contains the “bent,” “hooked” ways of religiously crooked people. Specifically, crooked or bent souls abiding in the realm of the Christian tradition.

The Christian Anarchist Crookbook

A bound volume of insights aimed at helping Christian Anarchists readily identify religious crooks (and their crooked ways) in the face of what should otherwise be a liberating, kind, free, love-based faith.

¹ A Christian Anarchist is not a secular anarchist nor would they be considered antinomian (without law) as the laws of Christ are to love God and Man. In relation to temporal and secular laws of the land, a Christian Anarchist would be wholly and humbly compliant to them according to the edicts of Romans 13:1-10, all in honor and allegiance to their only true King.
Preface

I began life in an active LDS family (Mormon) and learned the ways of that religious organization over the first forty years of my life. When it became evident what it was all about from a doctrinal and historical perspective I abandoned Mormonism for Evangelical Christianity and pretty much all that it entailed. What I mean by this is that at face value I bought into most everything that was presented to me as truth by well-meaning believers and learned to support and defend these beliefs through my use of the Bible as a proof text.

As with Mormonism, in time my eyes began to open to the fact that many Evangelical claims, doctrines, and practices were only not biblically supported but were, in fact, the product of regurgitated traditions echoed by the believing masses who myopically used the Bible "to see what they wanted to see." I soon realized that believers or seekers of truth have to work arduously to avoid falling into the trap of what psychologist’s call, “self-motivated perception” aka, “seeing what they want to see.”

Admittedly, I have chosen to believe that the Bible is the Word of God and that it is reliable in its ability to teach and wash the human soul clean with its content. Perhaps, this being the case, I continue to “see what I want to see” in my practice of appealing to the book at all but at least I am open to admitting that when it comes to my personal discoveries about God I choose to appeal the contents of the book self-motivated perceptions present or not.

Additionally, I come to the table of Christianity in a state that some have considered disabled or faulty as I wasn’t indoctrinated (as a child or teen) in the Evangelical traditions nor have I ever been actively involved in attending any Christian organization or church at any time.

Even when I attended a Calvary Chapel School of Ministry for two years full time I only attended its church services on three occasions, spending the rest of my time completing mandatory service hours outside of services in order to graduate from the program.

So my of Christian doctrine and practice by way of active participation in organized Christianity has been almost non-existent. What has been maximized in my life, however, has been
time reading the Bible without the aid of commentary and then teaching its contents in a verse by verse studies held twice weekly for over a decade.

Through these things, I have come to understand the Word of God in a very "non-religious" sense. As a result, when indoctrinated believers speak of traditions or traditional views which are NOT supported by a contextual and reasonable analysis of the Bible, an internal alarm sounds causing me to dig in and discover for myself if the stated tradition or practice actually holds water through a contextual analysis of the Word.

I have discovered first hand that most of them don't. The important thing to remember is I have not set out to have my desires met by the content of the Bible or through what some call, "proof-texting." In other words, I have not read the Bible to "see what I want to see," but instead have read it in an effort to discover what it actually has to say. If I wanted to cater to my own pet doctrinal and practical desires I would still be an active Mormon or perhaps an active and ardent Evangelical traditionalist. Because evangelical traditions were never forged into my soul by exposure to its teachings and practices I have a built-in advantage of being able to understand biblical truth over religious traditions better than those brought up in the faith.

Interestingly, most of the views in this book are not unique to me and my personal observations. What has happened is I have studied, discovered a view I have never before heard of, searched, and then typically discover that the view in question has been considered and/or believed by some people over the course of Christian history. What is unique to me and my walk is most people only hold to a few unique or esoteric views while I tend to hold to most of them. In other words, what I typically find is where someone in the faith will have their eyes opened in one area, they are often resistant to having their eyes opened to the others. Because of my lack of being “churched” I happen to embrace most (if not all of the beliefs - often called “heresies” by strident Evangelicals) that are typically and singularly held by individual Christians or sects.

Understand, I have not compiled this book to form another denomination. That’s the last thing this world needs. Quite the contrary, in my estimation, in order for the faith to thrive as it was intended, sectarianism and denominationalism must die and be replaced by true Christian Anarchy - where faith in
Christ means that He and He alone has the right and responsibility to rule over the lives of every individual who calls Him Lord and Savior - and nobody (or nothing) else can get in the way.

There are some supports in place that are associated with the contents of this book. First, there is a website, www.christianarchytoday.com On the site there is an opportunity to participate in helping the world understand the faith from an unadulterated biblical sense - not from or through religion or religious people. Associated with ChristiAnarchytoday! is a weekly online streaming show, two books, and all the typical social media outlets used to connect with the world.

I would fail in possessing a heartfelt Christian gratitude for others if I neglected to mention the following individuals for their contributions to the cause. Some have gone on to God while others remain in the earthly trenches - but all are part of His kingdom of faith and love and have in some manner contributed both to me and the cause of Christian Anarchy:
**Influences and Gratitude**

God

Jesus

Paul

True Anabaptist Martyrs
Soren Kierkegaard
Francis of Assisi
Leo Tolstoy

Dorothy Day
Jacques Ellul
Vernard Eller
Petr Chelčický
Ammon Hennacy
Nicolas Berdyaev
Adin Ballou
Henry David Thoreau
Ivan Illich
Michael C. Elliot
Ciaron O’Reilly
Alex Christoyannopoulos

**Family and Ministry Support**

Mary McCraney
Mallory McCraney Ludqvist
Cassidy McCraney Bublitz
Delaney McCraney
Niklas, Matt, Lazer, and Samson

Derrick and Denita
Kathy Maggie
Linda Cassity
Seth Moder
Wendy Jensen
Danny Larson
Larry Norris
Steve Utley
Niall Sheridan
Michael Anderson

And to all true and courageous Christian Anarchists the world over who suffer to keep the faith out of the hands of those who abuse others with it.
Introduction

The Christian Anarchist Crookbook was written to help seekers of the unadulterated Christian faith to identify false traditions and teachings and those who use them to rob, plunder and steal time, freedom and resources from unsuspecting believers. It was also written to offer a clear yet rarely heard biblical summation of Christian truths which have been almost lost altogether in this age of Christian modernity.

Before the content of the book can be understood fully there are seven lenses (if you will) through which I believe must be in place before the Bible can be properly exegeted or understood by seekers of God in spirit and truth. These “lenses” are validated as authentic by a contextual understanding of the Word itself but are often overlooked or refused by the churched of our modern age.

It only makes sense that we would explain the seven lenses through which we might see scripture before articulating the way our list of subjects is manipulated by religious crooks of our age.

Put another way, these seven over-arching themes color my understanding of each of the subjects addressed herein. Perhaps the best way to test the contents of the book is to first test and vet the themes or lenses through which I see the Word and then once convinced of their veracity moving on to consider the individual subjects presented herein.

To aid you in your challenge of the themes I have included a summary online and printed material resources to assist you in first accepting the seven general themes, lenses, views before you choose to allow them to color the way you will see the specific topics addressed herein.
The Seven Lenses

First: That Jesus Christ has had the victory over all things. All things heavenly, earthly, or beneath the earth. There is nothing that He did not conquer through His life lived, His death, resurrection, ascension, and return. He is Lord over all . . . and all means all.

Two: The Bible is a limited record of God bringing about Christ’s total victory to the world. It is a record of that day and age and therefore all biblical references to physical or material approaches to the faith are complete. There are no passages in the New Testament narrative where Jesus or the apostles suggest that their words were written to believers outside of the context of that day and age. This fact must be taken into account when people read the content of the New Testament – materially the application is over, spiritually the applications remain.

Three: There has been a spiritual body of believers on earth since the material fulfillment of all things biblical and this necessitates that we approach and operate in His kingdom through spiritual means and not through tired old attempts at “playing church.” Brick and mortar approaches to God post 70 AD (or the end of the biblical age) are merely men and women attempting to recreate material religion in a place where the faith is entirely spiritual.

FOUR: The Bible then becomes more of a spiritual map for every individual believer, full of spiritually-derived principles rather than a manual of written laws or directives on how to play church or be Christian. This is proven by the fact that its contents were not available, readable, or agreed upon entirely for nearly 1500 years.

FIVE: Because the Bible is a spiritual map for every individual Christian reader, the faith must be an entirely subjective experience with few (if any) objective demands remaining. What we like to call Church today is a misnomer as the Body of Christ is composed of believers who are and have been dispersed throughout the attempts of brick and mortar edifices run by Man.
SIX: Because Christ has had the total absolute victory over all things for all people, every individual – believer and not – are placed in a position of personal responsibility to seek and/or choose Christ (or not). Sin has been expiated. Again, the price paid and salvation won by Christ in total. This is all because “God so loved the world and gave us His only begotten (only human) Son.” Believers are not in a position to condemn anyone. The message is simply one of grace and love to all who will hear and has nothing to do with “the stopping of sin.” We share Jesus to help people realize what has been done on their behalf, not to condemn, manipulate, control or save them from the waiting pits of a fiery hell. He has had the victory over all such things. The Christian message to the world of unbelieving souls is one of hope and love and blessing.

SEVEN: There is a certain biblical-fact threaded throughout the scripture – all people will reap what they have sown in their lives. Where Christ has had the victory over all things the fact remains that God is just and He will reward all people accordingly. There are two commands in the New Testament that have not disappeared when material religion was eliminated from the earth in 70 AD – that of faith toward God through Christ and love for God and Man. Faith in Christ reconciles all people to God. Love is the fruit of the presence of such faith.

Because God is just all human beings will reap what they sow – believers and not. True followers of the King in faith “sow” (plant) spiritual things to their person. Such things will last into the eternities. Those who sow or in their flesh will reap where such things have been planted – here and only here.

Sowing to the spirit means to sow in agape selfless love as Jesus did when He walked the earth. Sowing to the flesh means to sow to this world and all that it is about – which is typically NOT selfless agape love. Because Christ has had the victory over sin and death for all, what remains is God rewarding all according to where they have chosen to sow in their lives. Those who have chosen to sow to the spirit (heavenly things in selfless love) will reap heavenly rewards. Those who have chosen to sow to the flesh (to earthly things based in the self) will reap of those things here. And only here.
This is what the afterlife is based upon for all souls - believers and not - reaping what we have sown in their lives upon earth.

Again, that which is sown to the flesh and earth is rewarded on earth and that which is sown to the spirit is rewarded in the place where only the spirit reigns - the afterlife.

These seven lenses all play a significant role in the way the subjects of this book are interpreted and addressed. If and when any of the lenses are removed or ignored the faith can become subject to manipulation, and once manipulation is made available, the religious crooks will engage in their depredations - as they have for nearly twenty centuries.

Finally, something to consider:

If there was ever an operative word or term in Christianity (which is in my opinion best described by the term Christian Anarchy) it would have to be freedom - the freedom to be, think, live, opine, believe, and worship in whatever fashion or form an individual may desire. So, while the seven lenses are the way that sees and understand scripture, it is incumbent upon all promoters of freedom to give total liberty to others to pursue Christ in whatever way they choose. This means allowing others to be under the sway of religious crooks to whatever extent they are willing.

We do not war against flesh and blood. Only against dark principalities in high places. So, while there are charlatans and robbers run-amok in Christ’s name, all donning the cloak of religiosity and piety, the true character of His disciple is to love and allow all men the total, unfettered ability to pursue Him as they wish, and to leave all judgement in the hands of Him who is worthy to assess the hearts of Man.
A note about misspelling, typos and sentence clarity: They exist and this author is not concerned about them. The gist of each thought is present and can be reasonably comprehended. If you are a stickler for perfect punctuation, spelling, and grammar I doubt very much that you are the type of person who will appreciate the contents of this book anyway. We'll keep revising and improving but until then, just relax.
Apostles

The Apostles Creed
Authority

Apostles

• The general term apostle means “one sent.” (Greek: apostolos)

• Anyone “sent” can be considered an apostle.

• Jesus chose twelve original, special and unique apostles who He would send out into the land to preach His message of salvation “first to his brethren the Jews and later to the non-Jews (also called Gentiles).

• Jesus personally trained these twelve men by teaching them first hand over the course of His three-year ministry.

• A great deal of the teachings and words of Jesus in the four Gospels was directed at them and not to the masses or to those of us who read His words today. They were given to the apostles in their training to go out and teach His message.

• Parts of these messages are applicable to all believers in terms of spiritual principles but other parts have no application to anyone but to the twelve apostles He chose to train and prepare.

• Jesus told these twelve apostles that they would
  - Do miracles in His name as a witness to the veracity of His message.
  - Suffer greatly – even death – for their witness to that generation.
• He also told them NOT to go out to anyone but to the House of Israel.

• Finally, Jesus told His specially chosen apostles that when they are persecuted in one city they should flee to another because they would not get to all the cities in Israel before He comes back.

• The apostles of Jesus were unique in that they:
  - Were with Him from the beginning.
  - Were taught by Him directly while on this earth.
  - Witnessed all the miracles He did.
  - Were all witnesses of His literal resurrection.
  - Saw Him ascend into heaven
  - Performed miracles like He performed as a witness
  - And then gave their lives for this witness.
  - In order for someone to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, they too would have to have received and experienced these things.

• The church Jesus established, the one that said, the gates of hell would not prevail against, was apostolically established, lead, and governed.

• What they said and established on earth then was established in heaven (or given heavenly approbation).

• As these specially trained and chosen apostles were killed for their witness they were replaced only by other men who could meet the requirements for being an apostle of Jesus Christ.

• Mathias was the first chosen to replace Judas who killed himself.

• In time there were no men qualified for the apostolic position and as the original apostles died they were not replaced.

• The last apostle, Paul, was called by Christ Himself and trained for three years in the Sinai desert. His duty was to take the message of Jesus out to non-Jews before He
return to bring judgment upon Israel and to save His church.

- As the apostles were led to write letters by the Holy Spirit to different churches that they had established, all of them openly wrote that Jesus was coming back. Sometimes they said He was coming back after some time would pass, and in later letters, they would say His return was coming soon, even very soon, and even that the time of His return "was at the door."

Summary Apostles

The church that the gates of hell would not prevail against was apostolically led and governed. As these special witnesses of Jesus life, death, resurrection, and ascension were put to death they were not replaced and John was the only apostle living before Jesus came back for His Church. And He did come back to His church as He promised He would, as His apostles said He would, and as the historical record supports that He had.

Therefore, believers ever since have never been asked to play church, but to simply be part of the Body of Christ by the Spirit.

Religious Crooks

Whenever anyone claims to bear or carry the same office or power as the original apostles remember the qualifications of being a chosen apostle of Jesus Christ: they were all chosen by Him, they were all taught by Him, they were all witnesses to His death and resurrection, they did wondrous miracles in His name and they all openly, without any hesitation, and even to the detriment of their own lives, taught that He lives because they have seen Him.
Instead of seeing the material church for what it was – apostolically led (by true witnesses who had all met the qualifications of being such) Christian believers, after the promised return of Jesus (which occurred in 70AD with the destruction of Jerusalem – see End Times below) embarked on nearly 2000 years of trying to play church (instead of realizing that the Church was taken and that all believers are now part of a spiritual body.

Early on in the historical saga of playing church (which includes all manner of attempts at objectifying the faith into creeds, and codes, and doctrinal and practical mandates), religious men started codifying the faith through creeds, the first of which is called, the Apostles Creed (as seen below). It appears to have been composed somewhere around 125 to 250 AD. It says:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.
From the above recitation, we notice several things:

- That God, in harmony with scripture, is called the Father.
- That Jesus is called “God’s only Son,” and “our Lord.”
- A professed belief in the Holy Spirit.
- These things admit to the biblical view of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit without the interventional input of men.
- But we also note that there is an insertion of “believing in the “holy Catholic Church” (the holy universal church), “the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.”
- We are beginning to see elements of church playing here as men have begun, post-Jesus Christ and post the apostolic age, to try and establish the faith through a creed.

**Summary of the Apostles Creed**

The apostle's creed was not written by an apostle and its existence serves to do several things for us both positive and negative in our assessment of the faith. First, it reveals a healthy scriptural assessment of God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Through it, we can see that thus far (in church history) we have no Trinitarian manipulation in the creedal expressions. Unfortunately, we also see church playing creeping into the creeds of man this early in the faith. This is only the beginning.

**Religious Crooks**

Whether they are aware of it and even if they act with the best of intentions, whenever any human being or group of human beings attempt to codify the faith in creedal summaries they are practicing Christian Crookery. How? They are stealing the individual’s freedom and right to decide for themselves through their own study by the Spirit on how to see and believe things. Additionally, they are stealing from the very word of God that tells all who consider its contents how to think and believe. Systematizing and codifying scriptural contents as a means to facilitate learning is one thing, but to make such assessments mandatory is thievery and nothing more than an attempt to play God and to play church.
Authority

- In the Old Covenant and under the Law of Moses authority to act in God’s name – in this case in His temple to offer up the sacrifices for sin – came by way of the priesthood given only to the descendants of the tribe of Aaron.

- When Jesus came and fulfilled the Law and the Prophets He became our one and only High Priest.

- He gave authority to His twelve apostles to speak, act and perform miracles in His name and for His purposes as a means to bring His church through great tribulation.

- At His death the veil of the temple was torn in two, illustrating a couple of things:
  - That God was no longer working through temples made with hands but through His Son.
  - That there was to be a total end of all special priesthood authorities to operate behind sacred veils, and
  - That Jesus was our new and only high priest.

- From that time forward believers are composed of a royal priesthood or a priesthood of believers with Jesus serving as our high priest.

- In the early apostolic church the living apostles called and set certain mature believers apart (chose them out from the rest) to feed the church that Jesus was going to come back and rescue from certain destruction. These men (and women) were given apostolic authority to oversee His church as a means to protect it from ravening wolves and enemies that would pop up from within.

- When Jesus returned, as He had promised and as all of His apostles' believed He would do, He brought destruction upon the wicked and reward to the believing, and "doing material church" was over.

- So was the authority of men over men.

- Missing this clear and obvious fact in the New Testament narrative, religious men and women have continually tried
to replicate the “New Testament church” through materially means, creating and recreating elders boards, deacons, pastors, priests, and reverends who claim to possess religious or spiritual authority over others.

• With this assumed “authority” these men have then established doctrinal demands of those who follow them, and then practical demands they claim are mandated by God Himself.

• Since the destruction of Jerusalem, there have literally been hundreds of thousands of attempts by men and women to recreate Christ's material Church with almost every one of them, appealing to the same manual, differing with the others in some way or another.

• And almost all of them assume an authority from God that in the end is justified by nothing more than imagination.

• Looking back to authority in the New Testament – whether as a deacon or an elder – it was bestowed by living actual apostles who were called and trained by Jesus Himself.

• Since the church that they oversaw through great tribulation was taken and rescued from destruction (so that the gates of hell could not prevail against it – and this barely happened) believers are part of a world-wide body not overseen by Man and organized religions but are guided internally by the Holy Spirit working on each and every individual believer.

Summary of Authority

Christ is the authority of every believer by and through the governance of the Holy Spirit. Human intervention is wholly unnecessary and just Man attempting to play church. No pastor will stand with their congregate to mediate them into heaven. We all stand alone before God.

Religious Crooks

Ask a Catholic where they get their authority (which they make a big deal about). They will tell you that it was passed down from Peter through some archaic line of priesthood bestowal.
Then ask yourselves: Has their authority protected Christ's church from the gates of hell? Just look at the history of Catholic Church atrocities and you can see that their claim on authority did not protect the church from the gates of hell. Then we come to the Protestant faiths and the mass of men and women who claim to have authority over others in the faith. Where did their authority come from? They responded with all sorts of things and will say that it comes from, "the word of God?" Huh? Or they will say they receive the right to oversee the church through someone in their church electing them to the position. Who gave that church elder the authority then? They may try to go back, all the way to the founding of their particular denomination, but in the end, all Protestant authority to oversee flocks originates with Man. Finally, there are Restorationist groups (like the Mormons) who try and solve the authority game by claiming that angels (who were once men) have come back to earth and bestowed the authority to act in God’s name to their founders. But a close analysis of these claims only reveals fiction and mythmaking all as a means to imprison people under the auspices of actually possessing some authority or another.

The Greek word for the primary source in scripture is “arche.” A believer’s primary source of all things – including authority – is Jesus Christ – and nothing more ever.

In this way, true followers of Christ are 'an" (without) "arche" (primary source) OTHER than Christ Himself. This is the true definition of a Christian Anarchist – they have nothing at all ever between themselves and the Lord. No religion, no creed, no King, Queen, no pastor, no teacher. Just our primary and only arche, Christ Jesus.

All authority to govern all believers lies in the hands of the believer themselves who are responsible before God through Christ, their high priest, by the Spirit. We are the royal priesthood and are individually and fully emancipated from the supposed authority of all men who have tried to create their own authority that is just not there.
Baptism

• Many Christian brick and mortars denominations have taken water baptism and stripped it of its meaning and purpose – that water baptism is merely an outward expression of an inward faith in the life, death, burial, and resurrection of their Lord, Jesus Christ.

• Adding to this religious people over the ages have suggested that water baptism
  - Is necessary for salvation.
  - Must be done by a male.
  - Must be done by a male member of their denomination.
  - Must be done by them to be a member of their denomination.
  - Must be done in running water.
  - Must not be done before a certain age.
  - Must be done by
    a) Sprinkling
    b) Full Immersion
    c) Washing over
    d) Splashing
    e) Partial immersion
f) In any way one wishes
g) In Jesus name alone
h) In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and Holy Spirit.

• The existence of all of these differences over one simple biblical expression like water baptism gives us insight into a number of things

- That is in the broad history of the faith, few honest loving believers can really agree on anything.

- That there is either one way to materially/physically do everything “right” before God (like water baptism) OR it is the condition of the heart of the participant that God considers and allows for a multiplicity of approaches to them to be practiced.

• Looking at the practice or rite of water baptism and using as an example we can see that the faith can never be systematized and made completely objective and therefore God, in this age, has allowed the faith to be entirely subjective, allowing all people to (be baptized, for instance) in whatever manner they feel right and comfortable about; that there is no right or singularly acceptable way, and that all believers are free to practice everything in the faith according to how they are lead.

**Summation of Water Baptism**

Water baptism was done in the early church as a means of identification. When a Jew openly received water baptism it identified him or her as a follower of Christ – something that almost ensured certain persecution. Water baptism has several expressions and varying circumstances in scripture but in all of them, it seems that it was done as a result of a person possessing saving faith, not as a means to save. The thief on the cross, who was told that he would be with Jesus in paradise received no such rite. All believers have the right to participate in water baptism, anyone can perform it anywhere and in any fashion and it is not a rite or ritual connected to church membership, no matter how hard the churches attempt to show that it is.
Religious Crooks

Using all they can to gather unto themselves a paying audience whom they can ultimately control in all areas of life, many religions have taken the free and open act of water baptism and codified it, assigned additional meanings to it then made it their own proprietary product, similar to the way States make each resident possess one of their driver's licenses. Some go so far as to make baptismal records (as if God isn't aware of who, from their heart, was publicly identified with Jesus) and others won't accept the validity of a water baptism that originated from another denomination. Again, these are all forms of religious crookery where an unauthorized brick and mortar makes people believe it, through its members, are the only ones authorized to perform the heartfelt ritual for others.

The Bible

The subject of the Bible is enormous and requires a tremendous amount of research, discussion and often the breaking down of pre-conceived beliefs inculcated into the mind of believers by religious zealots. Topics like historicity, authenticity, original languages, manuscript evidence, inspirational issues, consistency, translations, transmissions, support texts, error and infallibility, contextual understanding (and much more) play a key role in how the Bible content will be understood and ultimately received by each reader.

The body of believers might be divided into several camps relative to the Bible:

- Those who believe that in its original manuscripts the text was perfect.
- Those who believe that certain translations today are perfect and without any error.
- Those who believe that the present translations contain some error (very little) but because these are readily
identified and understood they have little effect on reliability.

• Those who believe the book is corrupted and unreliable.

• Those who believe it is the product of men and full of myth.

These views are not exhaustive by any means. And while the above issues are worthy of time and attention for any seeker of truth, the following are factors relative to the Bible that speak directly to the Christian Anarchist point of view:

• The Bible was first only the Old Testament, or what the Jews referred to as the “Tanakh,” which is an acronym for Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim, meaning Law, Prophets, and Writings, respectively. These three groups in total include all the books of the Hebrew Bible which in most Christian Old Testaments covers Genesis through Malachi.

• When Jesus speaks of the Word of God or scripture, He was speaking of the Tanakh.

• When his apostles spoke of scripture they almost always were speaking of the Tanakh.

• In other words, there was no New Testament for the early apostolic church.

• The only writings that the early Christian believers had outside of the Tanakh were letters that were written by Jesus’ apostles to specific Saints in specific churches that were in specific parts of Israel and Asia minor.

• The Gospels were histories of Jesus ministry and were for all believers to read as they became available to them.

• There were no printing presses in that day so all manuscripts of either the gospels or the epistles had to be copied by hand if they were to be shared or passed along to other believers in other lands.

• In addition to the truly inspired, apostolically authorized writings, there were numerous counterfeits among the believers in the first century.

• Knowing which manuscripts were authentic and which were pseudo-scripture took some time – a great deal of time.
Add in the fact that the distance between where the Gospels and the Epistles were originally written was enormous, that authentication the writings were at times difficult, and that all copying was done by hand, the Bible, as we know it today, was never available to believers for the first 250 years after Christ ascended into heaven.

Two hundred and fifty years is a long time – that’s more than six biblical generations.

And then, even after the contents were somewhat agreed upon by the third Century scholars, the Bible was translated into a language few could read or write (Latin). This meant only the educated and (and due to the unavailability of manuscripts) only the established churches with resources (Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy) had direct open access to the collection of New Testament writings.

This would be the general situation for the next 1250 years!

In and around what we call the Protestant Reformation the Bible was taken and retranslated by men like Wycliffe, Tyndale, Erasmus and others provided full translations of the Bible into English.

The advent of the Gutenberg printing press in 1440 allowed for the wide distribution of the written word and the era of everyman having and reading the Bible was underway.

While the book is perhaps the greatest material gift in the life of a believer in Christ it was not available, sometimes in part and rarely as a whole, to the followers of Jesus for 1550 years!

It was certainly not available to believers in the first 250 years.

So the question is, “What did the early believers do without a New Testament?”

What did the people who believed Paul's words in, say, in Rhodes, have to guide them once he left them after visiting them seven days? No (apparent) epistles. No direct apostolic leadership? The had the Tanahk but that book is almost altogether ignored by many Christians today?
• What they had was the Spirit, which is called the Spirit of Christ in scripture that was abiding by them, living in them, and directing them.

• Absent a complete printed and agreed-upon New Testament this is what most Christians had for the first 1500 years of Christian history.

• It was only when the scripture as a whole became available to the masses that the Bible – under Martin Luther’s direction – took the place of the Spirit leading believers.

• And what has his stance on what he called, Sola Scriptura given the world of Christianity?

• Instant denominations. Instant infighting. Instant wars.

• Sola scriptura has never produced unity of the faith but has actually produced the opposite – disunity in the faith, even hatred! – over such small things as water baptism! (see baptism above).

• In the face of all of this division, which is a direct by-product of looking to the New Testament as our Law (written on paper) we have lost what God gave believers in the first 1500 years of the faith – His Spirit – and the fruits of His spirit which is love.

• Love is the new commandment of the King. Not laws and doctrines printed on paper. They will be forever disputed and debated but true love for God and His Son (and therefore each other) would never let disputes over doctrine and practice divide a people who claim to follow Jesus as King.

• There was a good reason God did not have a New Testament complete and printed for the believers of His early church. He wanted them to abide in love and unity. He wanted them to be lovers, not lawyers. "Any fool can make a rule." Any person on earth with a religious agenda can take the Bible and concoct another denomination.

• God wants unity. He wants all divisions over Him to stop and wants His radical followers to radically follow Him in being peace-makers and not to allow differences on disputable matters to reign in His true body.
Summary of the Bible

The Bible, as we have it today, is a wonderful, inspired, infallible in its ability to lead and teach all seekers what God wants them to know, history of His reconciling the world to Himself. It ought to be seen and used as a personal map for the individual believer in their efforts to understand God by the Spirit and not a manual of musts, rules or laws. This sacred compilation was not available as a whole to believers for the first 250 years of Christian history and then once it became available it has been used as a tool to divide and even destroy the lives of individuals seeking to know God and His Son by the Spirit of its words.

Religious Crooks

Perhaps the single greatest tool religious crooks have at their disposal is their errant, controlling, even forceful use of the Word of God upon others. Citing chapter and verse ad nauseam they convict and control the masses through a misappropriation of its contents by refusing to allow the book to be understood by individual believers by and through the spirit and their own conscience. Understanding that there is a natural desire in good people who seek God to have spiritual certainties they use the scripture to provide such absolutes all the while ignoring context and the spirit of liberty that abides in the faith.

Born-Again

• Jesus made it clear that in order for a person to even see the kingdom of heaven they needed to be born-again or born from above.

• There has been a major focus on the event of spiritual rebirth that started in the early 19th Century revivals of
what was known as the burned-over district located in the western and central regions of New York.

- As an example of the emphasis placed on experiential religion a man named Charles Finney, called the Father of Modern Revivalism, would invite people to sit during his revivals on what was called the anxious bench before being allowed to come forward and receive Christ before others.

- The anticipation caused many to really experience an outpouring of the holy spirit which was often associated with people being born from above or again.

- In time the Pentecostal movement took hold, followed by public displays of receiving the holy spirit through events like the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, CA in 1906.

- Following that the born-again movement continued on in the Southern California 1970's with a number of hippies converting to the faith through wild experiential conversions which publicly evidenced an individual's spiritual regeneration.

- Since that time it has become normative within Christian culture to ask if a person has been born again.

- This question is used by believers who have experienced something metaphysical in their lives on other said believers as a means to vet them and their said faith.

- From the 1970’s to the present there has been a vernacular established among born-again believers and includes phrases and questions like:
  - “Has he/she been born-again?”
  - “When did it happen?”
  - “Can you describe how it happened?”
  - “What proceeded the event? (Sinners prayer, etc.)

- While the event of spiritual rebirth can be overpowering for some to the point that even the date and time of the event can be recalled on demand, many people do not experience a revolutionary metaphysical experience from above but are born from above in very subtle, even unnoticeable, ways.
• The emphasis on experiential rebirth often causes those who have not had the experience to question their faith, their hearts for God and even His love for them.

• Additionally, many Christians who have experienced rebirth in an obvious manifestation question (even challenge) the claims to faith those who have not had the experience claim.

Summary of being Born-Again

Jesus clearly taught that the Spirit (which is the operating force in the rebirth of an individual) moves about where it wants. The rebirth of a person is entirely "in the hands of the Spirit" and cannot be manipulated to move upon a person through experiential religious exercises or merely saying a special prayer with special words. God knows who is ready from the heart to receive new life and acts accordingly. Additionally, because one person experiences radical new life the moment God moves in them, others experience a fall more gradual revelation and are not able to cite the day and time of their regeneration. In the end, and according to scripture the way human beings can tell if another human being has been born-again, that they have the spirit of God in them, is by and through the presence of the agape love they have for others. And while not all people who love others more than themselves are born from above, it is safe to say that all who have been born from above will love others.

The rebirth experience is highly individualistic and cannot be summarized or described in any rote fashion. God works in very mysterious ways and means among us and how, when and where He chooses to move into others is a wholly subjective experience.

Religious Crooks

As a means to corral people into conformity, some religious crooks will use terms like “born-again” to filter, thin and/or manipulate the herd (their congregations). This is accomplished by establishing a culture that operates by what might be considered regenerated behaviors, opinions, and beliefs. "A born-again believer does this, a born-again believer would never think that," type of thing. Along these lines, a religious
crook might suggest that believers who do not conform to their views, ideas or doctrines about God or the faith are not "born-again," automatically causing social ostracization of the person and simultaneous control by fear of those who remain.

Building Fund Drives

We recall –

- That the Son of Man had no place to rest His head.
- That Jesus said that “His Kingdom was not of this world.”
- That John the beloved said, “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are not of the Father but are of this world.”
- We are also told that the while “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”
- And that God Himself is invisible.
- Amidst all of these Christian ideals and principles, religious men and women continue to try and erect material kingdoms around themselves to honor God and impress men.
- We note that Jesus did not have a grand building fall out of the sky upon His arrival but instead said “that the Kingdom of God is within you” and that God “dwells not in temples made with hands.”
- Instead of taking a cue from the Master, men and women have continued to try and build "material empires" to "house the people of God."
- They often do this by holding building drives in the churches where the pastor, having his own vision of grandeur, imposes the drive upon congregates to obtain finances to build his dreamscape.
• He does this sometimes in the name of God, telling his or her flock that the empire (great or small) will be “an honor to Him.”

• He influences people to “commit” to the dream, signing papers on the wall and agreeing to produce a certain amount of money by a certain time.

• This kingdom is of this world – something few understand. It has zero relation to the Kingdom of God within those who are His.

• Of course, these empires draw people to see, visit and even join them. This is the justification: “if we build it people will come. And if they come we are pleasing to God.”

• Again, Jesus Himself said that we “cannot serve God and Money. We will love the one and hate the other.”

• And yet over and over again – from the Rome to Temple Square in Salt Lake City, to megachurches around the world, building funds, created to build religious empires large and small, are antithetical to the core ideals of the Christian faith.

• Imagine if all the church empires of the world sold off most of their real property, used it to improve the living conditions of the masses, but retained just enough to reach out to others with the Good News and to hold weekly services in deconstructed facilities as a means to teach the word to seekers and believers? Imagine what could be done if religious men and women turned from their material imaginations and allowed the spiritual to reign?

Summary of Building Drives

Christ’s true Kingdom thrives in the hearts of believers living all over the world. We are the temple of God. Material religion and all of its appeals died with the Old Covenant, being nailed to His cross. All appeals and relations to God in this world are spiritual and the focus of Christianity is upon such in every way possible. Certainly, human beings need physical facilities to gather. But to make such gathering places a focus on the lives of the Saints is anathema to His
thriving spiritual kingdom abiding in the hearts and minds of believers.

**Religious Crooks**

Perhaps some of the greatest robberies of the people of God are perpetrated by religious men and women and their visions of building material kingdoms here on earth. The sway and justifications, the pressure and allusions to wealth being a sign of God’s love appear endlessly on the landscape of religious materialism. It’s time for all thinking Christians to flat out refuse such pleas and appeals and to begin to send these religious charlatans to lives of material poverty, the place where Jesus lived during his life here on earth – never to forget this was by choice.

**Burdens**

- Generally speaking, when the World fell (due to Adam’s sin) all of us thereafter were born into a realm burdened by having to live with pain and discomfort.

- These pains and discomforts extended out from “the unknown,” (and the angst, anxiety, and depression associated with it) and then from living with physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual pain (caused by guilt, shame, and fear).

- All of this was part and parcel of being born into a fallen world. And all of it could be considered a burden.

- As a temporary means to ameliorate the effects of such things from the Nation that would provide the world a Savior, God through Moses, gave the Law, which, while granting some certainties to the children of Israel, also kept them in chains and under a burden.

- But from the beginning – even the foundation of the world – God promised Man – first through the Jews, then the world – a Savior.

- With this savior came the promise of liberation – from the effects of the fall, from the effects of the Law, from the pain
of sin, from the fear of death and the uncertainties we all face as human beings.

- Job 39:5 reads, “Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?”
- Psalms 51:12 says, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.”
- The prophet Isaiah says, (58:6) “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”

When God's only Human Son walked the earth, He entered a synagogue and standing before the congregation opened the scripture and quoted Isaiah 61:1 which says:

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

He then told them there, “today this scripture is fulfilled in your ears.”

Yahwey (God) anointed Jesus to “preach GOOD tidings to the meek, to bind up (heal) the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound!”

- The result of Jesus coming to earth was to give all people:
  - Freedom!
  - Liberty!
  - Death to the Law!
  - Death to Sin!
  - Opened prison doors!

- As a result, all mankind is free!
- Death (spiritual eternal death) has been overcome!
- Hell is cast away!
- Satan is in the Lake of Fire!
- We are no longer are we under the burden of Sin! Jesus has paid for it all nearly 2000 years ago!
- No longer are we under the burden of the Law - we are dead to it!
- No longer are we to fear death - He has overcome it and has given afterlife resurrection to all!
Quite frankly, in the face of sound New Testament understanding and proper eschatological exegesis (see End Times below), there is no fear of Satan and Hell or an unsettling and rapturous second coming!

All of it has been done.

And all people are left with freedom – to believe in Him or not – and to reap to ourselves a harvest to the spirit or a harvest to the flesh (see Reaping and Sowing below)

Summary of Burdens

A clear simple reading of the New Testament makes it perfectly plain that Jesus accomplished (past tense) all of these things on behalf of humankind. The total and complete victory have been had by Him. Period. Done. Over. As a result, all people are free and able to take the cares of this material life to Him and find grace, joy, help, and comfort. He is calling to all to come to Him and find rest. “Come to me all you who labor and are heavy burdened and I will give you rest,” is the promise. And remember His added words when He said, “My yoke is easy, my burden is light.”

Religious Crooks

Perhaps one of the biggest tells of a criminal faith or a robbery carried on in the realms of religion, is when religious crooks say or do anything to add any sort of burden to the lives of believers or followers of Christ. This is robbing the freedom Christ gave to them freely! These crooks might rob others by suggesting that a believer needs to:

- Attend or participate more in their church
- Obey “this or that” rule, law or code to be acceptable
- Adopt a dress or dietary code
- Look, act, speak or think in certain ways
- To avoid certain entertainments
- Be of (or avoid) a specific political party
- Pay tithes or other donations
- Serve or volunteer under pressure

Additionally, the spiritual and emotional burdens of guilt, shame, fear, and unworthiness before God are tremendous forces religious crooks use on unsuspecting souls. In the end, anytime anyone takes the Good News of Jesus Christ and turns its gift of liberty in Him to a burden such should be rejected out of hand.
Authors note The length of the section on Calvinism, and references to it throughout the book, clearly indicate my deep resentment for Reformed Theology. Admittedly, there are sound elements to the theory but in my estimation, it creates a worldview that is so antithetical to the notions of a loving God that I find the whole of it utterly repulsive and perhaps one of the most reprehensible ideas about the faith on earth. That being said, I welcome and love any person who chooses to embrace Calvinism, though have yet to meet a truly loving person who is sold out to its twisted principles.

**Calvinism**

Any and all “isms” (including any ist’s – as in Christian Anarchist) run the immediate danger of creating division in the Body of Christ. Where Catholicism says “this,” and Methodism say something else, disputes erupt, followed by divisions, and before we know it the Body of Christ is violently avulsed – in no different manner than if a whole and healthy man has something come along and lop off one of his legs and then expects both the severed leg and the rest of his body to thrive.

Denominations make divisions, simple as that. (see Subjective Christianity below).

But in this writer's mind, there are few "isms" more sinister, and less about the love of a good God and His good Son, than Calvinism, also known as Reformed theology or five-point Calvinism. Understand, Calvinist Christians have as much right in the body as the rest of us, but since we are addressing thieves, robbers and crooks abiding in the finished and victorious work of Christ, Calvinism (and its criminal effects on the faith) must be addressed all the while reiterating that criticism of a systems of beliefs cannot ever translate to criticism of the people who embrace them.
• All people have a choice to make when it comes to the doctrine and theology they will embrace.
• Some people will argue that they ONLY accept what "God has said" - but in the end, or when challenged, this stance has often proven a failure.
• What they are really claiming is to believe only what “they believe or want” God to say. This is more often the case than the exception.
• The import of a sound contextual understanding of scripture is vital to preventing private interpretations run amok.
• Along the same lines there are people who will say, “I’ve gotta see that in the Bible before I’m gonna believe it” – but again, we often find that we only see what we want to see in the Bible – and refuse to explore other possibilities and potentialities that are also present therein through a new interpretation.
• In essence, people will firmly build a theological camp on a foundation of religious tradition and when actually shown what the Bible actually supports other traditions (as well) they will refuse to pull up stakes but instead point a crooked finger and shout! “Heresy!”
• Add in to the mix the fact that the Bible, like the parables of Jesus, can, in fact, be understood in a variety of different ways with all of them being right (depending on the maturity and intellect and Holy Spirit working on the believer) we can see that most things in the Body are not hills to die upon. Water baptism is a great example of this (see Baptism above).
• Relative to biblical topics most positions and doctrines found in modern Christianity truly have supported for being "right."
• God has allowed for such diversity of thought and expression because there are so many factors involved when fallen man is seeking to reach and understand Holy God.
• We all arrive in the Body of Christ with different temperaments, intellects, passions, and spiritual gifts.
• The body of believers is a highly diverse collection of individual parts orbiting around in a vast array of unique situations, experiences, and backgrounds.
• Humankind has a tendency to try and bring order and certainty to these mass bodies of diversity and when it comes to religion this is frequently accomplished through dogma and religious demands that when placed before the scope of the Bible as a whole fail.
• But humankind allows systems and systematic theologies to exist (and even thrive) because they help make things work,
because nature abhors a vacuum and because systems give us control.

• These systems also effectively bring masses of diverse thinking people under the confines of one theological or religious roof.

• So where God has allowed for a vast array of divergent thought to exist in and through the conscientious study of His Word, men step in and say: "This is how this is" - "believe it," "do it," "accept it" or be cast out.

• In such cases, God's means of bringing up "babes in Christ with the mature," and Christian artists up with Christian scientists, and Christian liberals up with the Christian conservations, is lost - because a static system has been received and believed.

• This being said, there are some essential core issues to biblical Christianity on which we cannot give an inch. To some extent or another these may include:
  - Monotheism (or the belief that there is only one true and living God).
  - The Deity of Jesus Christ (meaning He is God incarnate).
  - The Gospel (or Good News) which is articulated in scripture as:
    a. Jesus died for sin
    b. He was buried
    c. He overcame the death and rose on the third day.
    d. That He is the author and finisher of our faith.
    e. That human-kind is saved by grace through faith in Him, and
    f. That there is no other way to receive a forgiveness of sin or to be reconciled to God.

• There might be other issues people would add to my list but when it comes to core Christian tenets, let’s leave it here.

• In addition to these six core essentials, there are thousands of other points of doctrine that can (and do) serve to get in the way of Christian love (as defined by 1st Corinthians 13).

• They have split churches, even broken up marriages, and divided those who embrace all the essentials.

• Part of the blame lies in the nature of religious men and women which often seems to include the need to be right about everything.

• The blame is equally shared with the clergy who have used non-essentials to divide, conquer and control congregates for centuries.
Does it not amaze us today that believers in Christ have actually been put to death by believers in Christ because they possessed opinions differing from religious tradition on non-essential doctrine and theology! (Not to suggest that death over the essentials is ever justified either)

Few things are more terrifying to see in another human being than a zealous, fanatical stance on a faith that is all about faith and love.

Now, hang in there.

Non-essentials should certainly be discussed and discerned - even debated peaceably - but in my opinion, they ought to be allowed to exist within the hearts and minds of all who trust Christ - allowing God by His Spirit to rearrange ideas and beliefs.

For this reason, we give a constant pass to all five point Calvinists, Preterists, pre-tribulationists, Arminianists, hyper-Calvinists and every other "ist" and "ism."

Since Christ has had the victory over sin and death for all the world we would do well to give a pass to all people of all opinions and spend our time sharing the truth of Jesus with all through faith and love rather than dividing - even over the essentials. God will have His way.

But again, if the core doctrines are sound, we would especially give a tremendous amount of leeway to believers who see, believe and live Christianity differently.

So why even address Reformed theology or Calvinism?
- It is this writer’s opinion that the scourge of Calvinism (not Calvinists but Calvinism) is an actual threat to the reality of Anarchistic Christianity.
- That it threatens the freedom, love, and liberty Jesus won.
- Because it is the central theological premise taught in most Christian universities it is growing in power across the world.
- Therefore, the Crooks of Calvinism are beginning to overpower the hearts and minds of otherwise good people.
- These Crooks are zealous in their relentless challenges to anyone who challenges them, bearing the same spirit that their founder bore against critics to his views.

Let’s go back in time.

Early reformers, like John Hus (1395), Martin Luther (1510), got in the face of Catholicism’s priestly control over the masses amidst the reformation and emphasized “sola
fide” (faith alone) and “sola scriptura” (which we might interpret as meaning anyone can read the Bible and not only come to saving faith but to learn all God would want them to know.

• Unfortunately, Luther, for whatever reason, could not entirely cut the cord with his Catholic parent, and so Lutheranism continued to maintain a number of vestiges of Catholicism proper.

• In any case, the ideas of sola fide and sola scriptura angered the Catholic superstructure (of popes, and priests, and bishops) because according to the “Protestants,” their institution wasn’t really needed anymore.

• Imagine the thought! Men and women could get to God without the intervention of others! How novel!

• Early reformers (including Jean Calvin) agreed with this stance.

• John Calvin was a French theologian who broke from the Catholic church in 1530.

• Due to the persecution, he fled to Switzerland and began to publish and to reform the church in Geneva.

• Because of his writings, which included letters, sermons, books, and treatises) we can see that his system and views on theology are heavily influenced by Augustine of Hippo (354-430AD)

• Being that Augustine, way back to the third and fourth centuries, had some very Protestant views on grace and salvation many Protestants, especially Calvinists, consider him to be one of the early theological fathers of the Protestant Reformation.

Here’s the deal.

• Jean Calvin died in 1564, but as noted, he left behind an awful lot of written work that firmly established his views. He was very smart and was able to produce an almost impenetrable system of his own making out of scripture.

• A man rose up named Jacobus Arminius who did not appreciate the teachings and insights of Calvin. Those who agreed with him became known as “Remonstrants,” which basically means a “strong protest” against the ideas of the man Calvin.

• So what we had was Protestant followers of Arminius protesting against the teachings and followers of Calvin.

• One year after Arminius died (in 1610) a theological statement that is known as the Remonstrance was drawn up and forty-five ministers signed the thing.
This was the beginning of what is called Dutch Arminianism.
Well, a group of very worried men got together and a trial (of sorts) was held in 1618 to test Arminianism's claims.
What they used to test his claims were the claims of Calvin.
This trial was held in a Dutch city called Dordrecht, and today the results are known as the Canons of Dort (which were formally titled The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in the Netherlands).
Today, the results of this trial (again called the Canons of Dort) serve as part of the doctrinal foundation for Reformed churches (Calvinist) churches that are now found all over the world.
When the followers of Arminius, after his death, set forth the articles of their faith in 1610 they presented five of them.
These were in opposition to Calvinism.
In the end the trial found Calvin and Calvinism the victor and the Canons established are the judgment of the Synod against the Remonstrance.
What many people do not realize is at the Synod or Council of Dort only thirteen Arminian representatives were present - and they were not allowed to vote!
As a result, Calvin’s system became a major part of orthodox Christianity’s statement of faith and eventually was incorporated in 1646 into the very significant Church of England document known as the Westminster Confession of Faith.
In the end, Arminianism suggested these five points:
- the existence of freedom of the will,
- that there was a conditional election,
- that Christ’s atonement was universal (for all people),
- that God’s grace is resistible, and
- that a believer can fall from the grace God has given him.
Calvinism was summarized later as saying that
- Man is totally depraved
- Believers are unconditionally elected by God
- That the Jesus atonement was not universal
- That God grace (once extended) is not resistible, and
- that all who God elects will persevere.
Total Depravity, which is typically misunderstood – even by many professing five-point Calvinists.
The reason that it gets so confusing is the two words - "total" and "depravity" - make it sound like Calvinists believe that all human beings are wholly, abjectly, grossly
depraved, like the most heinous serial child torturers on earth. Not the meaning.

- Total Depravity does not mean that men and women are “as bad as they can possibly be,” which the term “total depravity” intimates. Nor does Calvinism teach that it is virtually impossible for unsaved people to do good things.
- Total Depravity merely says that every facet of the human personality is corrupt and at odds with the purposes of Deity.
- Therefore, “total depravity” is not absolute depravity.
- If absolute depravity was the case then we would all be acting absolutely and completely depraved in everything we do. This is neither the reality nor the Reformed position.
- “Total depravity” means that from God’s perspective human good cannot truly be seen as Godly good” unless it comes from the hands of someone doing His will from a regenerated heart.
- In this view even if an unsaved man is helping a little old lady across the street, the act, while not totally depraved, is of no virtue because it is being done by “tainted hands,” so to speak.
- The Heidelberg Catechism (which is a document created in Heidelberg Germany which serves to instruct people who embrace Reformed theology on what it means) makes it clear that good works are “only those which are done from true faith, according to the law of God, and to His glory.”
- We might interpret this to mean that non-Christians can do “relative good works” (meaning they are good relative to this fallen world and how it operates and runs) but they are not capable of doing anything of merit when it comes to pleasing or impressing God.
- So this is the view – unsaved human beings are incapable of doing “good” without the influences of God first drawing them.
- Of all the Five Points total depravity seems to have the greatest contextual support from scripture.
- As a result of this teaching, however (which as mentioned has been greatly misunderstood over the centuries by pastor and believer alike) there have been some really heinous approaches to reaching "the lost."
- We still see it today when zealous and fervent believers hold signs on street corners that tell the world they are depraved sinners headed for hell.
- We might strongly suggest that this type of approach is at odds with the New Testament overall description of the Good News.
• So yes, all human kind is born spiritually dead, and yes, there is not one person on earth who would ever choose God over their own desires, and yes, the only reason anyone would ever seek God at all is because He calls.

• But the Calvinist position says God’s call is not to all but is only to some, and that it is this specific call to a limited few is what makes a fallen individual a Christian.

• The Apostle Paul clearly explained that “all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”

• With this being the case none of us deserve salvation as we have all chosen darkness over light – to some extent or another.

• This state hearkens back to the first premise of Five Point Calvinism – Total Depravity.

• With human beings being incapable of choosing God on their own, the whole of us, says Calvin, are totally depraved, meaning we will choose our will over his. And in this state of depravity, we all have sinned.

• Calvin himself, however, paradoxically taught that God “loves all of his creations” and desires that all “might be saved,” (he had to teach this – it’s biblical) but for some reason in Calvin’s mind, this God of love determined that most would not be redeemed.

• However, in order to “save some” (and again, according to scripture, that number would be few) God, being sovereign, elected “a group” of us reprobates to salvation, by His own good will and pleasure and well before any of us were even physical realities.

• In electing some, God also chose, of His own good will and pleasure, to place the remainder in hell (and/or the lake of fire) where they will burn forever and ever and ever.

• In the event that those who have been elected by God start to think they were elected to salvation because they somehow earned it, the Westminster Confession clearly explains that the elect is chosen, not for any "act or goodness" present in themselves but solely because it was God's will.

• Calvin suggests that God saving some is a tremendous example of His mercy – since we all deserved hell-fire, to begin with.

• If we sort of work it backward, not one of us deserves God’s love and mercy (which I agree is true) but to show His great mercy and love, He decided to save some of us reprobates while leaving the rest of us to become eternal kindling for the fires of hell.
This perspective teaches that the unsaved reprobates are unconditionally damned to hell for eternity while the "unconditionally elected" (our second point of five-point Calvinism) has been the "elect" from the beginning due to God's election and not their own merits.

Another way this point is presented is that the elect has been predestined to salvation while the damned have been predestined to destruction.

Now the basis for this perspective – in fact, the basis for all five points of Calvinism – lie securely planted in the fact that God is "sovereign." Sovereignty is an ENORMOUS word assigned to God by Calvinists.

If you want to understand Calvinism it is vital to first come to term with His Sovereignty – or the teaching that His will is always done to the exclusion of anything men and woman do or say or think or believe.

In the doctrine of predestination, Five Point Calvinism affirms God's Sovereignty and states that it is His perfect will (unaffected or moved by any deeds of humankind) which decides that He will save some and that the rest will burn eternally in insufferable pain and agony.

The fact that God predestines some to eternal life and others to eternal death is known in theological circles as "Double Predestination."

With double predestination souring the palate of many thinking Five Point Calvinists today there tends to be a massaging of this stance which has allowed another less heinous view to come into play which says something to the effect that all of Man’s choices are God-driven. But the depraved choose not to accept these directives from on high and therefore prove (or demonstrate) why they merit hell. That’s getting a little better. Nevertheless . . .

In his explanation of Unconditional Election, RC Sproul, a modern five point Calvinist scholar said the following:

"Our final destination, heaven or hell, is decided by God, not only before we get here, but before we are even born. It teaches that our ultimate destiny is in the hands of God. Another way of saying it is this: From all eternity, before we ever live, God decided to save some members of the human race and to let the rest of the human race perish. God made a choice—he chose some individuals to be saved unto everlasting blessedness in heaven and others he chose to pass over, to allow them to follow the consequences of their sins into eternal torment in hell." (R. C. Sproul, Chosen by God: Know God’s Perfect

- In response to this teaching, it is obvious that the people who love and adopt it are never the ones who are on the eternal burning end of the doctrine but always on the elect side.

- In light of the command to love, I cannot for the life of me understand anyone who is comfortable with the notion that while they have been chosen as part of the elect that trillions of other people are going to suffer eternally, burning alive in the flames of the second death, by no choice of their own.

- What seems to truly comfort those who maintain the Five Point mindset is the fact that since God has elected them, their ability to muck up His election is virtually impossible — which ends up gives them this sort of smug ability to completely rest in Him.

- From a biblical point of view, we might understand part of this attitude as we ought to, as believers trust in God's ability to see us through to the end. But what comes attached to it in the eyes of the Calvinist is frankly unconscionable.

- See, there is no free will in Five Point Calvinism. God not only manages everything and has managed everything from the beginning, He also micro-manages every last detail in the scope of the great all.

- Being Sovereign, He is a master of puppets, pulling all the strings and forcing His will upon a human race of choiceless drones.

- To the Calvinist His management is by and through cut and dry, black and white decisions that, again, wind up placing most human beings in the lake of fire.

- Why our Good God, if He is Sovereign and loving and good, does not choose to save us all goes unanswered by the Calvinist devotee.

- The result of all this (so far) is that all of us, (before we ever drew a single breath) are either saved or damned - there is no in-between and there is nothing anyone can do about it.

- Arminians downplay the Sovereignty of God (to some extent) and make free will a major factor in the salvation of Man — and therefore, their choice to present their own works of righteousness.

- Theologians call the Arminianist view of salvation “synergistic” — meaning it is a work of God working with the free will of Man to bring about salvation.
Calvinism would, therefore, be seen as monergistic, meaning all decisions are from a single direction – from God to Man, and that man has no say or play in the results.

In the face of Calvin’s Five Points and Arminianist Free Will, is there a common ground of biblical reason to be had? Is it possible, using only the Bible, to prove that God is wholly and completely sovereign, that Jesus is the only way, that God does elect some to life and others to death while allowing the free will of humans to exist in the company of His unending and undying love?

Is it possible for a loving God to allow for a hell of darkness and pain, for a lake of fire of endless suffering to exist?

Is it possible for wholly depraved humankind to be unconditionally elected (by holy) God to life?

Yes, it is – to all of it. And it all only happens in and through His Son and His total victory over all things.

Moving on . . .

It is really important to know that the Five Point Calvinists worldview does not hold water if any of the Five Points is proven faulty. In other words, there is truly no such thing as a four or three or two or a one-point Calvinist.

Calvin had a steely, legal mind and in the face of Luther's reformation, he believed that "salvation by grace" truly needed some detailed, methodical parameters for the masses.

He produced this enormous volume of a “seamless” theology compiled into one book called, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

In Calvin’s “Reformed perspective” that since God only elects some then Jesus only atoned for sins of some (meaning it is a limited atonement).

To Calvin, since no one deserves to be saved, and since only God elect’s only a certain group to be saved, it wouldn’t make any sense for Jesus to then suffer and die for everyone. So Five Point Calvinists, carrying their insane doctrines out to further extremes, now go on and say the Jesus only suffered for the sins of those God elected before the foundation of the world – and the rest He has left to their face their own pre-determined destination – eternal burning hell.
Some Calvinists today claim Jean Calvin did not really teach limited atonement. But take note that is was Calvin who said:

"The whole world does not belong to its Creator except that grace rescues from God’s curse and wrath and eternal death a limited number who would otherwise perish. But the world itself is left to its own destruction, to which it has been destined. Meanwhile, although Christ interposes himself as the mediator, he claims for himself, in common with the Father, the right to choose. "I am not speaking," he says, "of all; I know whom I have chosen" (John 13:18).

He continues, saying:

“This we must believe: when he declares that he knows whom he has chosen, he denotes in the human genus a particular species, distinguished not by the quality of its virtues but by heavenly decree.”

He also said (listen closely) that "the doctrine of salvation, which is said to be reserved solely and individually for the sons of the church, is falsely debased when presented as effectually profitable to all."

Bottom line, most Calvinists (who admit to embracing limited atonement) would argue that Jesus precious blood would never be spilled or wasted atoning for the sins of those who God has always known were destined for hell. Therefore the atonement of Christ was limited in scope.

Biblically speaking, there is just too much evidence to support the fact that Jesus suffered, bled and died for the sins of the world.

Consider the biblical evidence, and ask yourself, does this sound like Jesus only died for a few “selected elected?”

- John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.
- 1st John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.
- Romans 5:18 Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.
- Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.
- 2nd Corinthians 5:15 “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”
- 1st Corinthians 15:21-22 “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”
- 1st Timothy 2:3-4 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.
- 1st Timothy 4:10 “For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.”

• To sort of summarize the spectrum of stances generally taken relative to the atonement of Jesus Christ lets begin with Calvin who essentially said:
  - “Jesus only paid for the sin of those God has elected to salvation.”
  - Then we have Arminians who say:
  - “Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world but His gift must be accepted, in faith and in this life, to be effectual.”
• Do you accept Calvin’s idea which says Jesus atonement is limited only to those God has elected? Or do you accept the Arminianist idea that says Jesus suffered for the whole world but for His work to be efficacious, people must choose to believe or it was wasted?
• Or . . . or . . . is there another biblically based option you may not have considered that trumps them all – a response that truly proves God is love, He is just, He endorses the free-will of human beings, and implements afterlife punishment to achieve His purposes which will be done? Keep reading.
• But for now let’s continue forward with the remainder of the Five Points of Calvinism, namely, “Irresistible Grace.”
• Like the other points, Irresistible grace is tied directly to the other points before and after it.
• In other words if a Sovereign God unconditionally elects certain depraved souls to life eternal, and Jesus atones for their sins alone (and not those of the rest of the world) then the grace He extends to His chosen elect (being sovereign) will always be received.
• In other words, to the Calvinist God is all-powerful, and his intentions will be realized so, therefore, nothing happens that He has not decreed.
• In light of this, Calvinists say that the elect will be elected, they will not refuse election, and in the end,
they will remain faithful to the election – because God has determined this to be so from the foundation of the world due to His own good will and pleasure. Calvinist E. Palmer wrote something interesting, saying:

• "Do not misunderstand the word irresistible. To some, it may give the meaning of causing someone to do what he does not want to do . . . . All that irresistible grace means is that God sends his Holy Spirit to work in the lives of people so that they will definitely and certainly be changed from evil to good people. It means that the Holy Spirit will certainly—without any and's, if's and but's—cause everyone whom God has chosen from eternity and for whom Christ died to believe in Jesus."

• The statement is troubling because it opens with saying we are not to misunderstand "irresistible" to mean that "the Holy Spirit causes someone to do what they don’t want to do," but then says, it just means that the Holy Spirit, "... without any and’s, if’s and but’s—causes everyone whom God has chosen from eternity and for whom Christ died to believe in Jesus."

• Nevertheless, another Calvinist named Timothy George says something that rings far more true, saying:

• (Irresistible Grace . . . ) "means simply that God is able to accomplish what He has determined to do in the salvation of lost men and women. Arminians are right to protest the notions of mechanical necessity and impersonal determinism suggested (and sadly sometimes taught) under the banner of irresistible grace. God created human beings with free moral agency, and He does not violate this even in the supernatural work of regeneration. Christ does not rudely bludgeon His way into the human heart. He does not abrogate his creaturely freedom. No, He beckons and woos. He pleads and pursues, He waits and wins."

• This seems to be in harmony with the other three points already discussed. And it appears that the picture of irresistible grace that the Calvinist presents is one of the Good Shepherd going after the lost sheep and pursuing them until they have been collected (or redeemed).

• Bottom line, God will bring/entice/lead his elect to salvation, an agreeable summation if the individual desires His help.

• The final letter in the T.U.L.I.P. stands for Perseverance of the Saints.

• It is a very logical conclusion to the other four points and we might reword it as saying: “Once saved, always saved.”
Calvinist Charlie Hodge says it this way:

"The perseverance of the saints is to be attributed not to the strength of their love of God, nor to anything else in themselves, but solely to the free and infinite love of God."

In other words, as another Christian commentator says:

"You cannot lose your salvation. Because the Father has elected, the Son has redeemed, and the Holy Spirit has applied salvation, those thus saved are eternally secure. They are eternally secure in Christ."

This view – whether a person is a Reformed believer (Calvinist) or not – is quite popular in the Body of Christ today. There are a few reasons for this.

First, if salvation is NOT based on our righteousness, and is bestowed by grace through faith, most Christians ask, “how could salvation be lost?” It’s a reasonable question. And because of it most Christians who are fairly well read in the Bible agree with “once saved always saved,” or eternal security.

But if salvation (meaning living with God after this life) is something that is NOT bestowed freely then it only makes sense that salvation/exaltation can be lost by and through the poor choices of the individual.

Now, there are a number of passages in scripture that intimate strongly that this final point of eternal security is true. Let’s work through some of the stronger ones.

- John 10:27-28 where Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."
- Philippians 1:6 “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”
- John 6:47 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”
- Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”
- Romans 8:38-39 “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Does the Bible say God elects some to certain things? Of course it does. Is His will always accomplished? Absolutely. Will He elect (which I would equate to calling
or choosing) some nations and people to perform certain things as a means to bring about His overall loving sovereign will? Obviously.

• Can God possibly elect and choose some for certain things while honoring the free-will He has given all people?

• Yes. But because He is a good God, and not a despot, not a fascist; because that He honors freedom, and does not crush or control it, but because He is all about life and not death, He can and does.

• Now, philosophically we would say this is an impossibility - either God makes things happen (and gets His way) OR He lets things happen and doesn't. But we are not talking about philosophy, we are talking about God and His eternal perspective of things.

• And without going into every nuance (and I know there are a lot of them) we might strongly suggest that God is able to bring about His LOVING, GOOD (even sovereign) will while somehow honoring man’s ability to choose. How?

• By His Foreknowledge.

• Yes, he created all with certain attributes - like autonomous chess pieces.

• And yes, He allows them to move and act freely across the panoply of human existence.

• But by and through His foreknowledge, He will have His will accomplished. And His will is LOVING, REDEMPTIVE, and NEVER FAILS. Remember . . .

- 1st Timothy 2:3 “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

- 2nd Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

• So, where the Arminianist says, “it’s up to the individual,” and the Calvinist says, “God controls it all, “the Christian Anarchist says that God takes both into account and that by and through His foreknowledge of all things His will is always done in the end.

Summary of Calvinism

Like all "isms," Calvinism ends up putting well intentioned, God-fearing people into bondage rather than setting them free. Instead of allowing their Sovereign God to be willing (and able) to elect all to salvation, the Calvinist makes Him a God who is
only willing to capriciously save a few while simultaneously being willing to have the rest burn for an eternity of hellish punishment — all from a view of gaining glory to Himself for this approach instead of one of omnipotent love where He victoriously reconciles all back to Himself. If or since Godly love never fails, and is longsuffering, we would do well to believe that God Himself authors and exists by such love, never losing and never giving up on the recalcitrant or rebellious soul but instead doing all things possible to bring such a being to their senses — and then to Him.

Religious Crooks

As one of the most heinous examples of Christian crookery, Five Point Calvinism remains a constant. For millions, Jean Calvin (who by all historical evidences, actually had dissenters to his views tortured, punished and even put to death — as in the case of Michael Servetus) masterminded a system of religion that makes God a monster, stripping people made in His image of the freedom to choose and causing those who accept his views as biblical to become mired in a pit of cold hardening clay. The thievery that occurs in the hands of the crooked Calvinist is they steal notions of a kind, loving, merciful God from the minds of men and leave them with a vengeful, cold, indifferent God who finds glory in the eternal suffering of most of His creations.

Church Discipline

Taking a cue from certain passages in the New Testament, many organized religious groups and their leaders believe it necessary (and Godly) to discipline individuals in their congregations for all manner of apparent sins, failures, and evils. These disciplinary counsels are justified as necessary to protect the flock and to help the sinner/lost/or rebellious come to their senses, to repent, and to then receive the right
hand of fellowship from their church family once proper contrition has been evidenced.

There are several major failures with this approach to the Body today that need some consideration:

- First, if Jesus has had the victory over all things, and has paid for all sin past, present and future, why is sin and failure being punished?

- Secondly, who on earth could feel themselves worthy to punish another when they themselves also have “sin” in their lives? Is hypocrisy ever taken into account when one sinful person or group chooses to discipline another?

- Third, scripture teaches that it is “the goodness of God (His love and longsuffering) that leads people to repentance.” Wouldn’t this same goodness exhibited from believers to believers do more to lead wayward people to repentance than discipline? (Romans 2:4)

- Fourth, if we are still in an age and place where Jesus is coming back to collect His church and save it from imminent destruction then perhaps there is a basis for continued church discipline as Paul and Peter describe in some of their epistles – after all, we want a pure and undefiled church to exist for Jesus to come back and save, right?

- But if (or since – see End Times below) we know that Jesus has already come back and taken His church as promised by Him and all of His apostles (who wrote epistles) then we are not living in an age of material church playing and therefore the need to monitor the flock and protect it from failing men and women is over.

**Summary of Church Discipline**

What was once a church under direct apostolic authority that "the gates of hell would not prevail against" has now become a body of believers who are completely governed and under the direction of the Spirit. Church discipline is as needed in our day and age among free Christians as leeches are needed to drain
the blood from our sick. Christ, through the Spirit of gentle love disciplines all who are His and no human being has the right to insert themselves into a process that is entirely God's to manage.

Religious Crooks

By taking the discipline of others upon themselves, religious crooks assume a number of things:

• That they are in possession of some sort of religious authority over others (see Authority above)

• That they are morally capable to discipline others.

• Therefore, that God Himself has made them judge and jury over others.

Assuming such things, the Religious Crook is able to preside over the lives of those who are willing to accept these self-imposed rights of religious superiority over people who have as close of a connection to God as any and all others (by and through faith!) If a church or its leaders believe they are in a position to discipline anyone for any infraction – run.

Church Government

• Central to the idea of “playing church” is the installment of several varying (but biblically supported) models of church Governance.

• Depending on the denomination, brick and mortar churches typically operate under one of four types of church government models (also known as “ecclesiastical polity”).

• For simplicities sake, these are generally understood to be a bishop lead (episcopal polity), elder lead (presbyter polity), congregational (where the group leads itself
through votes) and connectional (which is an amalgam of bishop/elder congregational.

• All have in one way or another been modeled after what each congregation believes is supported in the New Testament.

• None of them are necessary and are merely in place to give the appearance of a brick and mortar church being biblical and approved of by God.

Summary of Church Government

It is worth pointing out that first, among people who love God and want to follow Him according to His word and Spirit, there are four (count them) four models on how to govern church. His church. If God has a model for governing then three of these four are incorrect and God must not be pleased. And yet these four have continued to thrive in various denominations full of honest believers and followers of Christ for hundreds and hundreds of years. Since Jesus came and took His church in 70AD as promised, His church (which was apostolically lead and protected (see Apostles above) so much so that the gates of hell would not prevail against it) (ask yourselves, have the gates of hell prevailed against every other attempt to do church for the past 2000 years? Yes! Every one of them have proven themselves to be corrupt!) But since Jesus has taken His church and has left a Body of Believers governed by the Spirit to remain, then we would do well to drop all these attempts to replicate the New Testament model and just gather as a body, self-governed by the Spirit of Christian love.

Religious Crooks

Unlike the common criminal who tends to kick against laws, authority, and regimentation, religious crooks thrive in the established religious order of things because in the established order the crookedness of religiosity thrives. Recall the established religious order that was in place in Jesus day responded to Him and how He responded to it. Where genuine faith and love abide, where material religion has been replaced by spiritual faith, and where brick and mortar empires have been
deconstructed to a minimal footprint on the world, church governments will fade into oblivion. But as long as men and women seek to play church they will concoct – even out of thin air – reasons to super-stratify everything under the sun. It is in such stratifications that religious manipulations and crookedness are most powerful.

Creation

- Two key terms: “Creatio ex materia” and “Creatio ex nihilo.”
- The first means “creation out of material” and the second means “creation out of nothing.”
- The traditionally accepted Christian view is “Creatio ex nihilo,” that God created everything out of nothing. What are the historical origins of this Christian view?
- For starters, it was common in the ancient Near East to speak of creation as a result of “creatio ex materia.” In fact, many NON-HEBREW accounts of creation most frequently presuppose that matter was in existence when the creation of earth occurred.
- According to E. Lovely and H.J. Sorenson, who wrote for the New Catholic Encyclopedia,
  - “Few modern scholars hold that creation ‘out of nothing’ is taught in the Old Testament. The abstract notion of nothing does not seem to have been reached by the Israelite mind at that time.”
- Now listen – just because the Old Testament understanding of creation was “ex materia” (formed out of substance that already existed) does not in the least mean that this view was right or that matter has always existed (as the Age of Enlightenment thinkers taught).
- In other words, just because God used pre-existing material to create the universe does not mean that he couldn’t have created that material from nothing and had it laying around.
- To say God does not have the capacity to create things from nothing (therefore everything that is material has self-existed) places all of us in the hands of the materialist or atheist (which is often described in terms of a totally materialistic view void of metaphysical input or power).
- Bottom line, the Bible (and I would conclude, therefore that God Himself) doesn’t clearly address the origin of
matter. There are allusions (which I will get to) but there’s no reason to dogmatically take stands on things we are not entirely clear on.

• It wasn’t until when what we might call, "Hellenistic Judaism," came into being (when the Greek culture had an influence on Hebrew Tradition) that “creatio ex nihilo” got legs.

• In fact, in the apocryphal book of 2nd Maccabees, written about 100 BC, we read: "I implore you, my child, observe heaven and earth, consider all that is in them, and acknowledge that God made them out of what did not exist and that mankind comes into being in the same way."

• While being deemed an apocryphal book I am of the opinion that there is truth in them and can’t help but wonder if this is the case here.

• Leander Keck, professor of biblical theology at Yale Divinity School, says that by the time we enter the New Testament era: “the belief that God created out of nothing was common in Hellenistic Judaism.”

• Charles Harrell adds: “Scholars are doubtful, therefore, that New Testament writers would have held, or at least universally held, a belief in creatio ex materia (or that God created the universe out of something).

• Keck observes that there are several intimations in scripture that support the view of creation ex nihilo. These passages include:
  - John 1:3 “All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.”
  - Ephesians 3:9 “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”
  - Colossians 1:16-17 “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

• Of course, the biggie that is hard to refute, Paul in Romans 4:17
  - Romans 4:17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth into existence those things which be not as though they were.

• From the apostolic writings, the idea of creation ex nihilo, according to theological historian Alister McGrath,
moved into the minds of many and was well established in the early church fathers and continued on through the middle ages and into the Reformation.

- The 1647 Westminster Confession of Faith says: "It pleases God . . . in the beginning, to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein."
- And this view has more or less become the standard of all Evangelical Christianity today – one that, however, it came about, cannot be reasonably refuted without causing great damage to the idea of God and His reign.
- Nevertheless, thinks in the Enlightenment saw material as always having had to exist. In time, Christian thinkers began to embrace these views.
- In a Universalist publication of 1826, we read: "We are not bound to believe that all things were created out of nothing lest we should presuppose that all will return to nothing again in the final end, as we may safely believe that anything which has a beginning of existence . . . can never have eternity connected with it."
- Translated? If the material has a beginning then it has an end but if it has always existed it will always exist.
- Stepping away from apologetics and individual opinions, I think the stance taken on material creation is extremely important to the way a person chooses to see God.
- Either we see God as either the originator of all things or He is not and this view lends to how people will see God Himself.
- Either God is incapable of creating something out of nothing or He is fully capable of creating – even speaking, things into existence. . . . again, the way He is seen will decide the God that is worshipped.
- Either God must submit to the demands of material and is subject to the laws of physics that manipulate them or He is the physics and controls and manipulates them. Again, we choose.
- Either God is glorified by the stance that He reigns supreme, capable of doing all these things or He is less than supreme, is simply a glorified man, and is limited by the material universe over which neither he nor the God’s before Him could create.
- Based on the Biblical account, God is the God who created all things by speaking them into existence and He is a God who is not subject to matter but matter both originates from Him and is subject to Him.

So let’s move on to the actual creation of heaven and earth.
Before getting into the nuts and bolts of the Genesis account and all that it entails let’s discuss something many Christians have a hard time answering –

Why did God create the heavens, and the earth, and all that in them is? Why did He create animals, fish, birds, insects, and Man?

In the Old Testament, we aren't given too much insight as to why God created the heavens, the earth and all that in them is. Except for one passage, all the Old Testament seems to give us are declarative statements. For instance . . .

- Psalm 100:3 says: Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.
- In Isaiah 45:12 we read: “I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.”
- In Jeremiah 27:5 we read, “I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

But none of these passages tell us why He did all of these things.

However, in Isaiah 43:7 we get one slight insight:

“Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.”

From this (pretty much) single principle many Christians have decided that God created the heavens and earth for man and that man was created to glorify Him - that is the purpose of our existence - to glorify God.

We note, however, that in scripture, those that glorify Him are always described as those who are His. Did God also create human beings who are not His in this life to glorify Him too? In a way, but not in the same way.

From the Old Testament perspective, God created human beings that are His to glorify Himself but those who are not His He created them to evidence His power and might.

For example, in Exodus 9:12, God says to the rebellious Pharaoh who was not His): For THIS cause I have raised thee up, for to shew in thee MY power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.”

Later in the New Testament, especially in the Book of Romans, this idea is even more specifically articulated as
Paul describes God as creating both “vessels of wrath” and what he calls, “vessels of mercy.”

- This idea seems to be supported in the positive in an Old Testament passage in Isaiah 49:5 where Isaiah, speaking of the reason that the Lord created him, says: “And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant . . .”

- From these passages—pretty much these passages alone—Calvinists have stood on the idea that the reason God has created some is for eternal glory and most others for eternal torture.

- Again, to the Calvinist, this is the purpose and reason God created the human race— for some to glorify Him (because He has created them and elected them to do this very thing not of their own free will but because He created them to be and do this) and for the vast majority of others to evidence His might and power by creating them as vessels of wrath (or people who will be the recipients of His anger and wrath for eternity). (see Calvinism above)

- Admittedly, these few passages are present in Romans 9—this cannot be denied. He is the Potter and we are the clay. But the idea that God created most human beings to suffer eternally in the fires of hell to prove that He has the power to do so is inconsistent with God being love, God desiring to save all, Him not being willing that any should perish, and that human beings all have a will (as in, “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks BUT YOU WERE NOT WILLING.”)

- Certainly, something has been lost in the Five-Point interpretation of this thought.

- Recognizing this, the Arminianist’s response (which stands in opposition to Five-Point Calvinist) decided that God created all human beings to have happiness.

- In a Methodist Magazine printed in 1831, we read that to the Calvinist . . . “God created all things for his own glory, that He had no other view in creating man . . . then His own interest” and the article goes on, and opposing this view, posits that “God created men for their own happiness.”

- Why we have polarized ourselves into these opposing, divergent views and have been unable to merge them both together remains a mystery.

- For instance, where the Bible is clear that God has created us and chosen us specifically to glorify Him, why can’t we agree that He has done this according to His foreknowledge, according to his purposes, and that whether we have been
created as “vessels of mercy” or “vessels of (His temporary) wrath, God is just and will us all of us to an expected good end?

• Why do we have to declare that the object of human existence is to have felicity and joy when our own experience clearly proves that it is through difficulty and trial (not happiness) that we truly learn to experience and appreciate fleeting moments of peace?

• Why do we make narrow statements that God has created us solely for His own glory when scripture clearly shows that man is to share in God’s light and to be part of His family through Christ, even Romans 8:17 says, “as Joint heirs with Christ, if we “suffer with Him.”

• Where some Christians insist on saying that God created us so “he could have fellowship with us,” and so that “He could receive all the glory,” (whether in electing us or damning us to eternal fires) why can’t we say God created us because . . .
  - This is His nature – to create.
  - That He created us (in His image) for the same reason those of us who have been created in His image have children – to create and extend elements of ourselves out to others.
  - That He created us because . . . God is love, and love is life-giving, not life taking. Love is death taking and seeks to remove pain and dross and difficulty, but love is not life-taking – unless something is in pain and is suffering.
  - So God, being love, is life-giving, and by giving us life it is an expression of His very nature and person.
  - Could it be that He created us because . . . He bestows good and light, and in giving us life He continues to bestow Himself, through life, and light, and love.
  - That, because He is good, and gives life, He knows that where there is real living there is real choice, and where there is real choice there is real freedom and where there is real freedom there is always failure, sin, loss and death.
  - That in the face of all of this, He has created us with the ability to “believe and receive,” that He has known who would believe and receive, and created them to become Joint Heirs with His Son.
  - Additionally, He has known who would of their own will reject and disrespect Him, and these He will ultimately reconcile to Himself, by His Son, through His ultimate will and ways?
• Why did God create the heaven and earth and all that in them is – knowing all that would happen and be before it occurred?
• Because God is love.
• And He so loved the world (that He created) that He sent his only Begotten Son to save us as His creations. Which He did.

So, to what is called, the Creation. We’ll begin with the debated discussion of how long it took God to create the heaven and the earth.

• Hovering around this question are other ancillary arguments like how old the earth is if the flood was world-wide if the ark held all animal species on earth (dinosaurs included) and things along these lines. We will cover the flood below (see the Flood)
• All the arguments and positions existing in the faith relative to these things are really between biblical literalists and what we might say are biblical liberals.
• Speaking specifically about the days of creation the arguments are polarized into two general camps – Old Earther’s and New Earther’s.
• Old Earthers believe that the earth is . . . old. These shy away from the "several thousand-year stances."
• Amidst all the debates between Old Earthers and Young, Earthers is a debate about whether God created the earth in six literal twenty-four-hour day-periods OR if those days explained in Genesis represent periods of some other amount of time.
• Young earth proponents might be best described, for the most part, as taking the Bible most literally, and therefore through mathematical computations, they derive from the text they deem the earth to be less than 10,000 years old. (it used to be 6,000 years old).
• The literalism they implore typically flows out and over to other areas of biblical interpretation but even they, on occasion, will admit that certain passages cannot be taken literally.
• One of the most popular new Earther's today is a brother named Ken Ham (out of Australia).
• His ministry called "Answers in Genesis" which operates a creation apologist's organization and includes things like replicating Noah's Ark (in the real-life dimensions (found in Genesis 6) and costing over one hundred million dollars.
On the other end of the spectrum we have a gaggle of believers who take the contents of the Bible more, shall we say, liberally.

Who's right?

Who cares who's right!

None of it - no matter the stance or opinion - changes or alters the Good News among men. Some Christians try to make it seem like everything is a matter of eternal life or death - but if God has allowed the information to remain vague and subject to interpretation we might want to back away from making mountains out of inconsequential molehills.

Believe how you are lead - and holding your tongue let all others do the same.

Young earth, Old earth, ark, flood, Big bang, whatever - just know that “God so loved the World He sent His only begotten Son to save us . . . and He did.” This is the good news.

Is this an oversimplification of important matters? Some say yes. But remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5 - “Blessed are the peacemakers - for they shall be called the Children of God.”

Peacemakers share Jesus, the Prince of Peace, with those who don’t know Him but later can become peacemakers too. As such we all refuse to divide over these disputable matters.

There is a higher plane hovering over the world and believers ought to see it as the goal to rise to and live. It is the higher plane of peace.

The problem is divisive polarized groups believe that their zealous opinions justify them to deride other views in Jesus name.

Typically speaking those who are liberal and read the biblical narrative liberally are quite dismissive of our conservative brethren and sisters and call them zealots, crazies, and the like.

On the other hand, the biblical literalists often demand that there is no other way for Christians to interpret biblical information, even to the point that some will call biblical liberals unsaved, not Christian, or even “going to hell” for maintaining their liberal views.

Let’s continue by appealing to the fact that there are plenty of renown Christian leaders who do not side with the New Earth stance on the creation and the length of time it took God to create the universe.
• R. C. Sproul, a noted five-point Calvinist and the founder of Ligonier Ministries (and the man who drafted the original Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy—that’s important because Sproul really pushes for the Bible to be the final authority on earth), once said, “When people ask me how old the earth is, I tell them I don’t know—because I don’t.”

• Contrary to what is often implied or claimed by young-earth creationists, the Bible nowhere directly teaches the age of the earth. Again, through Biblical deduction men have tried to answer the question but scripture does not tell us. Why do you suppose that is? Could it be God does not want us to know . . . or even care?

• The New Earth believers suggest that a “plain reading” of Scripture makes the age of the earth obvious and often say that believers never doubted its young age until men like Charles Darwin popped up.

• And listen, Christians are not at war with Darwin or those who teach Darwinism. We are not at war with evolutionists—evolution may play an important role in the way God engineered the universe. Darwin may have brought things to the table for Christians to learn about. Again, taking sides as a means to go to war is just another way to separate us from agreeing on Jesus as Lord and sharing Him with the world. See these battles for what they are!—Divisive tools to keep human beings from loving each other).

Anyway . . .

• The idea that no one doubted the age of the earth until after Darwin is simply NOT true. It may come as a surprise to some of our more literal brothers and sisters that some stalwarts of the faith were not convinced of the young earth interpretation.

- Augustine, writing in the early fifth century about the length of days in the creation account, said, “What kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible, to determine” (City of God 11.7).

- J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937), author of the 20th century’s best critique of theological liberalism (in other words Machen was extremely conservative), wrote, “It is certainly not necessary to think that the six days spoken of in that first chapter of the Bible are intended to be six days of twenty-four hours each.”
• Above, one of the most conservative Christian thinkers of the 20th century admits that six days do not necessarily need to be six twenty-four hour periods!

• Old Testament scholar and defender of biblical inerrancy, Edward J. Young said (regarding the length of the creation days), “That is a question which is difficult to answer. Indications are not lacking that they may have been longer than the days we now know, but the Scripture itself does not speak as clearly as one might like.”

• One of the most moving and vital theologians of the 20th Century and defender of scriptural authority said: “Faith in an inerrant Bible does not rest on the newness or antiquity of the earth. . . . The Bible does not require belief in six literal 24-hour creation days on the basis of Genesis 1-2. . . . it is gratuitous to insist that twenty-four hour days are involved or intended.”

• Old Testament scholar and Hebrew linguist Gleason Archer (1916-2004), another strong advocate for biblical inerrancy, wrote: “On the basis of internal evidence, it is this writer’s conviction that yôm in Genesis could not have been intended by the Hebrew author to mean a literal twenty-four hour day.”

• Can we find scholars who will say otherwise? Of course, we can. And they may be right. Or maybe the scholars I quoted are right.

• What again, what does all this PROVE?

• It proves that we ought to set these divergent opinions on the back burner when it comes to fellowship and ministerial outreach. It means we ought to let such divisions die a natural death so we can all share Jesus with those who have not received Him and so all followers of Christ can fellowship with each other in love.

• This will not happen until we willingly and unitedly step away from debating such things by stepping up to the new plane of Christian engagement.

So, to some scriptural insights:

• Genesis 1:1 tells us that "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

• This is not a title or a summary of the narrative that follows. Rather, it is a background statement that describes how the universe came to be.

• In Genesis 1:1, “created” is in the perfect tense, and when a perfect verb is used at the beginning of a unit in Hebrew narrative, it usually functions to describe an event that
precedes the main storyline (see Genesis 16:1, 22:1, 24:1 for comparison).

• Furthermore, the Hebrew conjunction at the beginning of Genesis 1:2 supports this reading. If Genesis 1:1 is merely a title or a summary, then Genesis does not teach creation out of nothing. But I think Genesis 1:1 is describing the actual act of God creating “heaven and earth” (a merism for the universe, indicating totality—like “high and low,” “east and west,” “near and far,” “rising up and sitting down,” “seen and unseen”).

• Genesis 1:1 describes the creation of everything “visible and invisible” (Col. 1:16), with Genesis 1:2 focusing upon the “visible.”

• After the act of creation in Genesis 1:1, the main point of the narrative (in Gen. 1:3-2:3) seems to be the making and preparation of the earth for its inhabitants, with a highly patterned structure of forming and filling.

• The Earth, Darkness, and Water Are Created Before “The First Day.” In Genesis 1:1, God creates the “heavens and the earth.” (In Joel 3:15-16 we see that “heavens” encompasses the sun, the moon, and the stars.) Then in Genesis 1:2 we are told that this earth that was created is without form and void, that darkness covers the waters, and that the Spirit is hovering over it.

• If Genesis 1:1 is not the act of creation, then where do the earth, the darkness, and the waters come from that are referred to in Genesis 1:2 before God’s first fiat? Further, if the sun is created in day four (Gen. 1:16), why do we have light already appearing in Genesis 1:3?

• It helps to remember that in Hebrew there are distinct words for create and make. When the Hebrew construction let there be is used in the phrase “Let your steadfast love . . . be upon us” (Ps. 33:22; cf. Ps. 90:17; Ps. 119:76), this obviously isn’t a request for God’s love to begin to exist, but rather to function in a certain way. Similarly, if the sun, moon, stars, and lights were created in Genesis 1:1, then they were made or appointed for a particular function in Genesis 1:13, 14, 16—namely, to mark the set time for worship on man’s calendar.

• The Seventh “Day” Is Not 24 Hours Long.

• In Genesis 2:2-3 where we are told that “on the seventh day [yom] God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day [yom] from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day [yom] and made it holy because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” The question we have to ask here is: was
God's creation "rest" limited to a 24-hour period? On the contrary, Psalm 95 and Hebrews 4 teach that God's Sabbath rest "remains" and that we can enter into it or be prevented from entering it.

• Miles Van Pelt observes: In Exodus 20:11, the command for the people of God to remember the Sabbath day is grounded in God’s pattern of work and rest during the creation week. The people of God are to work for six solar days (Exodus 20:9) and then rest on the seventh solar day (Exodus 20:10). If, therefore, it can be maintained that God's seventh-day rest in Gen 2 extends beyond the scope of a single solar day, then the correspondence between the "day" of God's rest and our "day" of observance would be analogical, not identical. In other words, if day seven is an unending day, still in progress, then our weekly recognition of that day is not temporally identical. As such, there is no reason to maintain that the same could not be true for the previous six days, especially if the internal, exegetical evidence from Genesis 1 and 2 supports this reality.

• The "Day" of Genesis 2:4 Cannot Be 24 Hours Long

• After using “the seventh day” in an analogical way (i.e., similar to but not identical with a 24-hour day), we read in the very next verse, Genesis 2:4: “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day [yom] that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.”

• The precise meaning of this is debated. But what seems clear, if we believe the Bible does not contradict itself, is that this (singular) "day"—in which the creation events (plural "generations") occur—can not refer to a single 24-hour period. In fact, it does not seem to correspond to any one of the creation weekdays, but is either a reference to the act of creation itself (Gen. 1:1) or an umbrella reference to the lengthier process of forming and fitting the inhabitable earth (Gen. 2:2ff). In either case, this use of yom presents a puzzle for those who insist that "young-earth" exegesis is the only interpretation that takes the opening chapters of Genesis “literally.”

• Defenders of the 24-hour view acknowledge that yom can mean more than a single calendar day but often insist that “[numbered] yom” (e.g., “first day”) always, without exception, refers to a 24-hour day in the Hebrew Bible. This is not true, however. Not only does the rest of the canon tell us that the "seventh day" is not 24 hours, but
Hosea 6:2 ("third day") seems to be used in an analogical way that does not refer to a precise 24-hour time period.

- **The Explanation of Genesis 2:5-7 Assumes More Than an Ordinary Calendar Day.**
  - In his article “Because It Had Rained” (part 1 and part 2), Mark Futato of Reformed Theological Seminary explains the logic of Genesis 2:5-7 and shows its role in OT covenantal theology. Futato sees in this passage a twofold problem, a twofold reason, and a twofold solution.
  - The twofold problem?
    - No wild vegetation had appeared in the land and no cultivated grains had yet sprung up.
  - The twofold reason for this problem?
    - The Lord God had not sent rain on the land and there was no man to cultivate the ground.
  - The twofold solution to this problem?
    - God caused rain clouds to rise up from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground and the Lord God formed the man.
  - Note the reason why there were no shrubs or small plants in the Garden: because “it had not yet rained.” The explanation for this lack of vegetation which is attributed to ordinary providence. But if the sixth day is a 24-hour period, this explanation would make little sense. The very wording of the text presupposes seasons and rain cycles and a lengthier passage of time during this "day [yom]" that God formed man. This doesn't mean that it refers to thousands of years or hundreds of years. It just means that it's very doubtful it means a 24-hour period.
  - **So What Does God Mean by “Days” in Genesis 1?**
    - On the seventh day, according to Exodus 31:17, God “rested and was refreshed.” Why would an omnipotent and inexhaustible God need to be “refreshed”? It’s the same Hebrew word used for getting your breath back after running a long race (Exodus 23:2; 2nd Samuel 16:14). The reason it is not improper to say that God was refreshed is the same reason it’s not improper to say that God breathes, hovers, is like a potter, gardens, searches, asks questions, comes down, etc.—all images of God used in Genesis. God’s revelation to us is analogical (neither entirely identical nor entirely dissimilar) and anthropomorphic (accommodated and communicated from our perspective in terms we can understand).
    - So when God refers to “days,” does he want us to mentally substitute the word “eons” or “ages”? No. Does he want us to think of precise units of time, marked by 24 exact hours
as the earth makes a rotation on its axis? No. Does he want us to think of the Hebrew workday? Yes, in an analogical and anthropomorphistic sense. Just as the “seventh day” makes us think of an ordinary calendar day (even though it isn’t technically a 24-hour period), so the other “six days” are meant to be read in the same way.

• This is what the great Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) believed: “The creation days are the workdays of God. By a labor, resumed and renewed six times, he prepared the whole earth.”

• This is also what the Presbyterian theologian W.G.T. Shedd (1820-1894) advocated: The seven days of the human week are copies of the seven days of the divine week. The “sun-divided days” are images of the “God-divided days.”

• This agrees with the biblical representation generally. The human is the copy of the divine, not the divine of the human. Human fatherhood and sonship are finite copies of the Trinitarian fatherhood and sonship. Human justice, benevolence, holiness, mercy, etc., are imitations of corresponding divine qualities.

• The reason given for man’s rest upon the seventh solar day is that God rested upon the seventh creative day (Exodus 20:11). But this does not prove that the divine rest was only twenty-four hours in duration any more than the fact that human sonship is a copy of the divine proves that the latter is sexual.

• Augustine (the most influential theologian in the Western Church) believed something similar, as did Franz Delitzsch (perhaps the great Christian Hebraist).

• It was the most common view of the late 19th century and early 20th-century conservative Dutch theologians. God is portrayed as a workman going through his workweek, working during the day and resting for the night. Then on his Sabbath, he enjoys a full and refreshing rest. Our days are like God’s workdays, but not identical to them.

• How long were God’s workdays? The Bible doesn’t say. But I see no reason to insist that they were only 24 hours long.

Summary of Creation

Whatever. We all read the same Bible but we all interpret it – even the so-called experts – differently. May the Spirit of peace and love abide when there are differences – because there will be differences among the faithful. And perhaps once we can learn to get along with each other in this area we can then
learn to get along with the scientific, even the atheistic, communities. These topics do not make the faith what it is – no matter what people suggest. They just don't. Faith in Him does. And our love.

**Religious Crooks**

By drawing lines in the sand and then only accepting those who stand on their side as valiant believers (while rejecting those on the other and marking them as questionable in the faith), Religious Crooks take topics like creation and carve out a niche within the Body. The method of divide and conquer is a method of control. This is the result – control of the many through ideology. The greatest defense against such manipulations is refusing to pick sides and to love those who do.
The word denomination is a derivative term that includes the word part, “nom,” meaning name.

Denomination is frankly a word we use that means, “to name.” For instance, relative to currencies we apply the term denomination to a one dollar bill, a five dollar bill, a twenty, and so on.

They are all bills, per se, but are bills that are of a different denomination or name to indicate differing values.

This makes sense when it comes to currencies because without proper naming of bills (as a means to differentiate between them) we would have fiscal chaos.

Unfortunately, in what should be the body of Christ, wherein all believers are and play a part, naming different sects, groups or gatherings only leads to infighting, sectarianism, and division – things that should not be part of a Body that operates systematically rather than individually.

So while there are certainly differing parts of the Body, all of the parts are of the Body, and none of them are superior or inferior to the other, none have the right to separate from the body, nor do any have the right to think of themselves as a fifty dollar bill while esteeming the rest fives.

Below is a simplified “denominational path” to consider.
Interestingly enough, the faith all began with Christ Jesus who taught unity, love and placed an emphasis on those who are His remaining undifferentiated and yet not becoming culturally differentiated.

What brought about the differentiation or denominations in the Body of Christ, causing groups in his name and cause to give themselves different names and even values?

Men and women, that's who. Men and women who took a look at what had happened before, and who looked at what was happening around them, and rose up with a new vision of what should be believed and done in the religion called Christian.

They called these changes revolutions, reformation, and restorations.
Unfortunately, while many of these reformers and restorers and rebels had good insights, ideas, and improvements on what had been and on what was, they all neglected to instill the absolute need for unity and instead moved for a division in the name of different practices and beliefs. Let's see how this came to be by pulling from a lesson from the history of Western philosophy.

We might suggest that Western philosophy began with two opposing thoughts which stood against one another in general.

Parmenides said that everything is in a fixed state, and Heraclitus said that everything is in a state of flux. These stances were roughly established about 500 years before Christ.

From them, Greek philosophy spread into what we might say were denominations with each one attempting to establish the perfect response to the question, "How to live."

Before Parmenides and Heraclitus, there was Thales, who seemed to sort of start things rolling, along with a number of others. Then we had Socrates, and Plato who taught us about him, and Aristotle, Epicurus, Epictetus, Abelard, Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Hume, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and on and on and on – with hundreds in between.

It is of interest that like the Christian denominations, Western philosophy started with a few thinkers and contributors, then continued to spread out in breadth and depth over the centuries with more and more people stepping forward to explain why their way, answers, and insights were superior to the ones posited before they came along.

Then in the late 1700's, a man named Hegel came along and instead of trying to come up with a new view to trump all the others, he suggested (in an admittedly simplified explanation here) that all that had been stated worked together to form a thesis. Hegel then said in the face of this established thesis that other philosophies would come along and present ideas that confronted all that had been suggested (he called this the antithesis). Then he said that the two different ideas (which were in conflict with each other and he called this conflict "the dialectic")
would in the conflict form a synthesis. An example of Hegel's dialectic might be:

Thesis: Bicycles have fenders.
Antithesis: Not all bicycles have fenders.
Synthesis: Some bicycles have fenders.

• Hegel then suggested that the synthesis would then become the new Thesis, and the cycle would start all over again and would continue on and on with each new thesis initially creating opportunities for conflict but ultimately providing some tremendous avenues of thought and growth.

• After Hegel, who was dealing primarily in the discovery of objective truths through the system called the dialectic, a new stream of thinkers popped up that suggested that subjectivity or the subjective view was superior to trying to argue and debate over which objective truth was best.

• Soren Kierkegaard was in many ways the front-runner of subjectivism, and from him sprang others like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

• The important application of this information to the issue at hand (denominationalism within Christianity) should not be overlooked.

• Christ brought the Good News. His chosen Apostles shared the Good News with the people of that age. Some received the message and others rejected it. Those who received it were saved from the end-time destruction that fell on Jerusalem in 70 AD when Christ came, as promised, back to earth with a reward for those who received and believed by faith and punishment for those who didn't.

• Since the wrapping up of that biblical age, men have tried to create on earth an unassailable objective faith. Some have tried to make it extend directly from Jesus and His apostles. Others have tried to reform it. Still, others have attempted to restore Jesus church to the earth. But in the end, they have all been utter fails at concocting the best objective brick and mortar religion under the sun.

• Nevertheless, the first attempt was formed under what we refer to as the Universal (or Catholic) faith. Under Constantine, this approach quickly wound up, as history
proves, being untenable to the basic truths and ways established by Christ. Instead of adopting the Hegelian approach to the church Constantine created, where opposing ideas would be allowed to help create new and improved views and practices among believers, most criticisms resulted in the people presenting them being labeled heretics – with some even being put to death.

- Not too Christian, eh?
- The biggest denominational split in the first 1500 years of Roman Catholicism occurred in 1054 AD when a group of dissenters split and became the Greek Orthodox church.
- Splitting doesn’t sound very Christian, does it?
- With the Protestant Reformation (which was a Protestation against the Catholics) which was set on fire when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Thesis (of complaints) to the door of a Catholic church in Wittenberg, Germany in 1517, sectarianism, divisions, and denominationalism was well underway.
- As the chart above shows, the denominational "names" are abundant with all of them originally springing out of Roman Catholicism, then out of the Protestant Reformation against Roman Catholicism. Anabaptism, Calvinism, and Anglicanism soon followed. The 1800's produced further divisions, with Adventism, Pentecostalism, and what is known as the Holiness Movement gaining popularity at that time. In roughly this same period, the world saw the development of what is known as the quasi-Christian denominations in 19th Century Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and Christian Scientists. Then Pentecostalism seemed to explode with all of its various denominational values, and then Calvary Chapels, and Vineyards, etc., etc.
- What is of profound interest to this book and our purposes is that very few genuine attempts at applying Hegel’s dialectic to the problem of Christian denominationalism has ever truly been attempted. Excepting perhaps what is known as Christian Universalism but this attempt is left wanting of a reasonable and sound biblical exegesis. Instead, all the Body of Christ has experienced is a thesis, met by an antithesis, which created just a new thesis, with genuine
synthesis avoided entirely. A sort of poor example of this might look like this:

Thesis: Calvinism is true.
Antithesis: Calvinism is false.
New Thesis: Arminianism is true.

You get the point – another denominational value is born.

• Perhaps, in the face of the 35,000 Christian denominations that are presumably part of the Body of Christ today, many of which have disdain and corresponding criticism for another – at least in some degree – Christians today might begin to step away from trying seeing their church and its approach to playing church as "the best" or "the truest" and instead accept anyone and everyone who calls Jesus Lord as a brother or sister?

• Does a Catholic call Jesus Lord and Savior? Yes. So then Catholics (not necessarily Catholicism) are our brothers and sisters, even though their church history and rituals are appalling to some of our Christian sensitivities.

• Does a Mormon call Jesus Lord and Savior? They do. So then I will glance away from their temple work, and practice of polygamy, and the fact that they call themselves “the only true church on the face of the earth,” and assume that people who are Mormon are brothers and sisters in the Body.

• Perhaps no matter who says Jesus is Lord – whether they are a trinitarian, a binitarian, a modalist, or a oneness Pentecostal – they all have the right to pursue God in whatever form they want, they will be considered brothers and sisters, (or parts of the Body of Christ) and will never be excluded over the denominational affiliation of their choice.

• See, denominationalism divides, and to be perfectly clear, so do doctrines (see Doctrines below). Believers must remember that the only church, the only proper official
acceptable denomination before God is the one where individuals receive His Son by faith. And this faith, with all of its variable interpretations, ought to serve to unite all people who receive Christ and never divide them – no matter how disparate the individual or denominational views might be.

- Even radical theological differences on ontology (make-up) of God, soteriology (how a person is saved) or religious praxis ought to have the power to take people who claim to trust in the life and death of Christ and divide them.

- In the end, denominational divisions and the critical attitudes that are associated with them are based on fear, pride, unrighteous judgment and feelings of superiority. They are not founded in humility and seeking to see with best in all people but upon suspicion and bias. True followers of the King seek to do all they can to eradicate such attitudes from their person, not to reinforce them. If a person says that they love and seek and accept the Lord Jesus work in their life, its high time all believers receive them in total, uncritical fellowship.

Summary of Denominations

The fact of the matter remains, even within Christian denominations there resides within the hearts and minds of congregates a wide chasm between individual beliefs and views. Realizing this, we might as well admit that Christians do not see eye to eye on most things in the faith and therefore we ought to simmer all the elements of the faith down and arrive at a final resting place upon which we can give all people the benefit of the doubt. That simmered down resting place is Jesus Christ. Even on the subject of Him, there will be differing opinions. But even these ought to be left in the hands of Him who judges the hearts of man. Now is the time to begin to deconstruct all denominational walls, for all people who claim Christ in any form to give each other the benefit of the doubt that their claim is heartfelt, and let God decide if their professions matched their hearts.
Religious Crooks

In an effort to conquer, religious crooks must divide. They've done it for nearly two thousand years. When someone can get others to believe that their ways are superior to all other ways, they can gather unto themselves a crowd of devotees who will recruit on their behalf as a means to draw more to their views. Denominationalism, in general, serves to keep the Body divided, allowing the foot, as it were, to tell the hands that they have no need for them. The solution does not lie in the creation of another denomination, any more than the answer to objective philosophy lies in creating yet another philosophical path to best the others. The solution lies in the deconstruction of what has been built through the subjective acceptance of all who claim Christ as Lord with believers refusing to castigate anyone anywhere for their chosen walk of faith. Do we share our views of particular religious institutions? Of course. If there are ecclesiastical abuses or theological or practical nightmares present within an organization how else will people understand what they are unless they are expressed? But they must be expressed in love and with longsuffering and patience, never suggesting that individuals "aren't saved or aren't Christians" by association but merely suggesting that elements of their chosen faith are, in our limited perspective, troublesome.

Death

When we read about death in scripture, particularly in the New Testament and relative to Jesus and His ministry to save the world, death typically refers to spiritual death.

For example, in John 5:24 Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

We know that this means passed from spiritual death unto everlasting life spiritually.

In John 8:51 we read Jesus say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."
Again, we know that since all men and women experience physical death what Jesus was speaking about was spiritual death or the death of things that occur in the spiritual realm. This is called the second death in the Bible. The first (spiritual) death coming by and through sin being introduced into the world (and all people naturally being born spiritually dead) and the second being the second death, which occurs in the Lake of Fire, which was created for Satan and His angels. That Lake of fire is in the presence of the Lamb and his angels so we might expect the fire of it to actually be the fire or light of God consuming all the dead dross present in those who had not received Christ by faith.

Of course, physical death is naturally addressed in scripture. In fact, we read:

1st Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

This passage is speaking of the resurrection, how Adam introduced physical death to the inhabitants of the world but in Christ, all will be made alive or resurrected from the dead carnal body to a living spiritual one.

Jesus makes it plain that this resurrection is applicable to all – saying in John 5:29 (of all people) that

“(they) shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

But still, all, through Christ, will be resurrected. But will all be saved from what scripture calls the “second death” which occurs in the Lake of Fire? Apparently not.

Understand that we are not talking about hell and hellfire. We'll get to that topic and expose it to what it is all about. But right now we are talking about death, especially spiritual death, and even more specifically, "the second death" that occurs in the Lake of Fire.

• Bottom line: those who believe and receive Jesus, who is offered to all by the Spirit of God, in this life, will be spared from after-life loss – or the second death.

• We have a tendency to read this as the death of the entire person.
• Remember, all are resurrected by and through Christ. He does not give bad gifts so even a resurrection of damnation must be a good thing. (Why would God who is love and His Son who is love, give a resurrected life to people that were evil or bad? He wouldn't. But it is not nearly as good as those who, having received Christ, are resurrected to life.

• In any case, it appears from scripture that those who reject Christ in this life by refusing to accept God’s call to receive Him, will suffer afterlife loss and those who have received Him and sown to their spirit will not (see Sowing and Reaping below).

• Afterlife loss is the death of all things present in a person that is not of God – also known as the Second Death.

• Again, the second death is afterlife loss and afterlife loss is the second death. We must not see the second death as the total death of a person but merely the death to the things about that person that is of the world. The more of the world in them, the more afterlife loss or second death they will experience.

• We might associate this second death to a person who has a toe or foot that is dead - full of gangrene. The person, while still living, might say, "my foot is dead and has to be removed." So it will be with the individual whose life was not transformed by Christ to abide in the Spirit. And so in and through their lives, they lived only to and for their flesh. The things they catered to and fed will suffer death in the Lake of Fire (or the fiery presence of God.

• But those who receive Christ and his teachings will not see death - they will suffer afterlife loss, but will instead be resurrected to life, given a “body” that can abide in the fire that is God.

• The question remains - what of those people who were black spined and evil all the days of their lives? What is of God in them will make it through the fire and what is not will be consumed, leaving only that which can abide in the presence of God.
Summary of Death

Christ Jesus has had the victory over death brought on by the wiles and ways of Satan and his angels. In and through Him all things will be made alive (resurrected). He has also overcome spiritual death by granting life to all who choose to believe and receive Him by faith. Those who don’t will taste of afterlife death - to the extent that they bear in their soul’s elements not fit to thrive in the presence of God. Those things will be consumed in the fire that is God, and the only thing that will remain of them - of their mind, will, and emotion, will be that part of them that submitted to His will and ways in their lives.

Religious Crooks

Religious crooks use the scriptures discussions of death and loss and hold it over all who do not think as they think or believe as they believe. They suggest things like, “only those who believe and receive Jesus in this life will be saved from the second death which has a total and complete effect on such souls.

They propose all or nothing stances, saying things like those who are resurrected to life have eternal life and those resurrected to damnation are eternally, and egregiously damned. This is not supported by a reasonable, contextual study of the whole of scripture, which clearly alludes to the fact that none will be lost entirely, none will abide eternally in purgative fires, and though some will suffer an egregious loss of things they could have retained through faith in His Son, they will be ultimately reconciled to God by and through Christ's total and absolute victory over all things. (see Hell below)
Doctrine

Directly above we discussed the problem of denominationalism in the Body. Generally speaking, the driver behind all denominational division is differences in doctrine. If a denomination is a tree then the roots are doctrine.

• Take any doctrine of the Christian faith – any – and we will readily discover something remarkable – there will be differing views among people who truly love God by Christ Jesus.

• Give it a try. Get a few believers together for dinner and randomly pick a topic – any topic – water baptism, salvation, church membership, the role of an elder, inerrancy of scripture – and guess what? Most thinking people will differ, to some extent or another, on how they understand and view the doctrinal topic at hand.

• Take it a step further – get a handful of people – studied people – from the same denomination, and do the same thing. And once the surface information on a topic is discussed and perhaps (perhaps) agreed upon, see what happens when you dig a little deeper. Even among people of the same denomination are involved doctrinal difference will arise.

• Why is this the case?

• All we can do is hypothecate the reply. Perhaps it’s because we are all unique and therefore our insights will be unique. Perhaps it has to do with upbringing, nature, nurture, world-view, and the indoctrination people have experienced in their lives. Some might suggest that it has to do with study and scholarship but we note that we have scholars from all over the world who also disagree on doctrine and practice (which is merely doctrine in action).

• Instead of being able to answer why (which will only create differing opinions) what we can, what we must agree upon, is God Himself has allowed this to be the case among the human race.

• I mean it would have been quite easy for Him to drop an easy to read, easy to understand clear and concise book out of the sky for all who seek Him to clearly understand.
Under WATER BAPTISM for Christians

1. All believers in Jesus must be baptized by full immersion in any body of water where full immersion can occur. Water temperature, dress, time of year, time of day, and words spoke are irrelevant.

2. Any believer that is physically able can baptize another by full immersion in water.

3. Once the water has fully covered the “baptized” they can be brought up out of the water.

4. No person under ten years of age may be baptized.

5. A child who believes can be baptized on the anniversary of his birth after nine full years of life.

6. There is no age limited to receiving water baptism.

7. A person may receive water baptism as often as they would like as long it is in accordance with the above.

8. No records need ever be kept of this rite.

9. Water baptism is a symbol of being buried with my Son and rising to new life in Him. No other meaning can be assigned to it.

• And the book that falls from the sky could go on and on detailing everything perfectly for followers of God through Christ to know.

• But this is not what we have, is it? We have a book that is subject to an enormous amount of interpretation, don’t we? Hence, denominationalism, infighting, and division in the body of believers for nearly 2000 years.

• Has God authored division? Never.

• But has He authored the situation we are in? In a sense, yes! He has allowed the Bible to come forward to us in the way it has and He knew it would create the situation we are in.
• Perhaps all this time He has wanted His children to pursue and understand Him in another way rather than through taking every little doctrine and making denominational mountains out of them.

• Perhaps He never wanted us to take the written words of the New Testament as a manual of laws, but instead has hoped we would use His word as a map for each individual that is to be read and studied, and understood by the spirit and not the flesh; not as a manual of musts, but a book of spiritual principles that speak to every individual in unique, fitting and applicable ways.

• (see Sola Scripture in Volume II)

Summary of Doctrine

As follows of Jesus we have convinced ourselves that we know things, that we can take stances on doctrine, and even divide with other believers who differ with our interpretations. Some believers maintain that they can, through the Bible, prove certain positions expertly and without error. These latter types are often the founders of new denominations, where doctrinal certainty reigns. But the reality is most believers will differ on points of doctrine, theology, and practice.

The question that must be asked is what saves us? Doctrine and theology or faith and love? Is perfect knowledge the imperative to a believer or does God prefer our striving for perfect love? Perhaps God has left His body in a place without perfect answers to every point of doctrine so that His faithful will seek, instead of having all the answers to unknowable things we will choose to have all the love possible to get along with one another?

Religious Crooks

Religious crooks, those souls who seek to trap and own others as a means to rob them of time, resources and freedom, bask in doctrinal certainties. They demand allegiance to their pet views as if God Himself was speaking from on high. In and through demanding such allegiance they are able to keep people in chains which therefore limits in the ability to love – because real love rarely presents itself more genuinely than
when we choose to endure with longsuffering those who disagree with us. For centuries on end, religious rulers have been able to convince people who mean well and want to please God that doctrine and doctrinal certainty is a requirement for holiness, righteousness and a place in heaven above. They act as if there is going to be a theology exam at the gates of heaven where the only passing grade is perfection. It's time for true followers of Christ to refuse such ideation, to break down the walls of doctrinal intolerance, to allow all believers to seek and believe as they are lead, and to trust that God through His Spirit will teach and lead all men who love Him to the truth.
Authors Note: Almost all of the perspectives shared in this book are founded on what I see as a proper eschatology. If our understanding of the biblical end-times is off-center then most of our remaining views will be affected. Therefore, I spend no small amount of time explaining a sound contextual eschatology in this section. If you seek and want to be consummately free from religious myth and manipulation take the time to read, understand and challenge to the following information. It will forever open your eyes to really getting what this faith is all about today.

End Times (Eschatology)

Standard fare for most Christians today – most but not all – is the idea that we are waiting for His second coming, and that signs are all around us evidencing this apparently wonderful event. Trained in the ministry at Calvary Chapel and possessing enormous respect for Chuck Smith, founder, I was steeped in the culture of futurism, or the idea that the Bible speaks of a time when Jesus was going to come back in the future to bring destruction upon the wicked and give rewards to the faithful.

So strong and prevalent is this belief today that most Christians tie it right in with a view necessary to be considered true.

Through a series of unexpected events my eyes were opened to what the Bible is really talking about when it comes to Jesus and His return to the earth. What is fascinating about this is I was able to read the Bible through futurist eyes and was able to see what I wanted to see – which was futurism and the expectation of Jesus coming back at any minute. But when the time was right, and my mind and heart were willing to entertain
a view I had never even considered, I unveiled itself in living and full color, and I now see the content of the Bible making a more complete, unified and rational sense.

So, let’s cover the major points of this view (known as the Preterist or Fulfillment View of scripture. If you too, are able by the Spirit to see its validity, it will radically alter almost everything you have ever understood about Christianity and the Christian faith today.

• There are those who think nobody taught the fulfillment/Preterist view before the late 19th Century. Throughout this thumbnail survey of scripture, we will prove that stance incorrect by citing several devout believers who sustain the teaching that Jesus returned in 70AD for His church and brought with Him destruction for the faithless and rewards for the faithful.

• We’ll begin with a quote from Jonathan Edwards in 1776:
  - “Tis evident that when Christ speaks of His coming; His being revealed; His coming in His kingdom or His kingdom coming, He has respect to His appearing in those great works of His power, Justice, and Grace, which should be in the DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM and other extraordinary Provinces which should attend it.”
  - Eusebius, in 314 AD said:
  - “And all this prophecy of what would result from their insolence against Christ has been clearly proved to have taken place.”

REVELATION AND HIS SECOND COMING

Let’s begin by offering up another way to view the book of Revelation.

Ask yourselves, who was the Book of Revelation written to? Why was it written and then delivered to them? And when the intended recipients received it, did they read it and say to each other:

“We’ll these writings don’t have anything to do with us – they are for the future!” Or did they gather around and dissect every word, and take them seriously? Let’s put all this
together and examine the book of Revelation from a genuine historical perspective.

First of all, let's touch on the date that it was written. Today many believers teach and are taught that the book was written by John in 95 AD. For argument's sake let's just agree to this for now and take a few minutes and examine what the revelation actually says.

It opens up chapter one, verse one, and says:

Revelation 1:1-2 “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.”

That word translated shortly comes from the Greek word "tachos," and it means within a brief period of time. It does NOT allow for a hundred or a thousand or two thousand years but a short span. Tachos is only used fifteen times in the New Testament and always means "in a quick period of time." So in the introduction of the Book of Revelation the Lord delivers the Revelation that God gave Him which was to show His servants (who were alive at that time) things which must shortly come to pass.

Now, I don't know about you, but this passage causes me to think two things:

Either when the scripture says "shortly" it doesn't mean shortly, and the readers of this revelation were fooled, and therefore the book has need of constant revision since it was written to fit the changing times OR it meant exactly what it said and those who read it (at that time and to whom it was written) believed and trusted in what it said, that it was true and reliable and trustworthy from God's mouth to Jesus' ear, to John's pen. But let's move on.

Third verse first chapter - ready?
“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” Revelation 1:3

The Greek word for "the time is at hand" is "engoos" and it means nearby. Three verses into the Revelation and we've already had two warnings to the reader that the time (for the things written in Revelation) to occur. So, again, who was reading this Revelation? Who was is written to and who was Jesus warning that the time was at hand?

Then in the first line of verse four, we read

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia.”

Those churches had people in them. And those people were trusting in the words John was delivering to them on Jesus errand, right? Or no? At this point in this presentation, a great majority of believers today are ready to offer up resistances.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” they will say, “but there is so much in Revelation that hasn’t happened yet so we know that . . .”

So we know what? That Jesus was wrong? That the time (for the things in the book to be accomplished) was not at hand?

So far that is all we can conclude – that Jesus was wrong, and John was wrong, and all the believers in the Seven churches were misled. Let’s move on. Jump to verse seven:
“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.” Revelation 1:7

From this passage, we know that what verses two and three are talking about "happening soon" was Jesus coming. Would you agree so far or am I wrong?

Verse seven also says that he will come in the clouds (just as when He left and the angel said that He would return in the same manner) and that every eye shall see Him.

Now this line, taken by itself, is used by futurists (those who believe Jesus return still looms out ahead of us) who say, "Obviously not every eye on earth has ever seen Him return so this hasn’t happened yet."

Not so fast. We have to take all of scripture into account before we make a decision on what a single verse says and with that being the case we have to consider what Hebrews 9:28 means when the writer says:

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them ‘that look for him shall he appear the second time’ without sin unto salvation.”

By including this passage in our understanding of verse 7 I think we have to say that when Jesus says “every eye shall see Him” He means every eye that is looking for Him will see Him, right? Notice also that Revelation 1:7 says:

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, “and they also which pierced him:’”
Now we know that some of those who participated in His would also see Him coming in the clouds – and from this, we know the time-frame being spoken about, right? As a means to justify the line “and they also which pierced Him (shall see Him),” futurists will often say, “well that’s all of us – we all pierced Him.” Not so. The Bible never says we all pierced Him. It only speaks of those who pierced Him and that line always relates to the actual people involved in His crucifixion – some of whom were still alive when Revelation was written. Finally, verse seven says:

“And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.”

All the “foolay” (which could mean “tribes” as in the twelve tribes of Israel or kinfolk) of the “ge” in the Greek (not the kosmos (which is the better term for the world) but the “ge” which could mean something as simple as the country. Taking this into account we would read the last line of verse seven as “And all the twelve tribes of the country will wail because if Him.” Because of His very presence or could it mean because of the judgment He has brought upon Jerusalem? We are seven verses into one disputable book and already I am sure that the average reader has had their eyes opened to things they have never before considered.

Then, just to reiterate context, verse 11 has Jesus saying to John:

“I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia (which compromises our modern Turkey); unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.”

Again, why would Jesus have John write what he sees and then tell him to send what he wrote specifically to those real house churches at that time? Why doesn’t Jesus add, “And to all
Christians forevermore out into the future.” And again, what would the recipients of this letter in the house churches think upon hearing these words from Jesus to John? That they weren’t going to happen or that they were?

Let’s leave the 1st Chapter of Revelation and all we have just laid out and go to the last chapter of the book. Now, remember, everything in between has been taken and assigned a future date by most Christians today. If this is so why did He have John send it to actual churches in actual places at that actual time if none of it had a direct application? Was it for them to pour over the content and then say to each other – "Well this isn't going to happen for a couple thousands of years?"

In chapter one Jesus emphatically repeats that He is coming quickly, He tells John who this Revelation was for, and He even goes on to say that those who pierced Him would see Him. In the last chapter of Revelation, the other bookend as it were, John continues to write the things he saw. At this point, we would have to agree that the Revelation is choked full of imagery. The Christian's living in the time post Christ's resurrection were involved in spiritual warfare and so the language (though extremely apocalyptical in nature) is speaking to images, responses and advice that is discovered in realms of the spirit for the believers of that day by people who would understand the imagery and was never supposed to be a map of future generations. We cannot possibly think we can sufficiently comprehend the book outside of its most obvious messages founded upon that day, that time and among those people.

So, to chapter 22. At verse 6 John writes:

“And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”
The Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Because this is at the end of the Revelation I take this to mean that all the things between Chapters one and twenty-two must shortly be done.

There’s that Tachos word again which means “speedily, near at hand.” The next verse? Seven, which is a repeat of what was said in the first chapter:

“Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he (who are in the seven churches) that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. Revelation 22:7

Again from the Greek, “I come without delay.” Go to verse 10 as John writes again:

“And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.” The word for at hand means “nigh,” “before you.” Again, verse twelve - to the seven Churches:

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Revelation 22:12

And then after warning the readers there in the Seven Churches about messing with the contents of the Revelation, we read from John (in the second to the last verse):

“He (meaning Jesus) which testifieth these things saith, “Surely I come quickly. Amen.” And then the apostle John adds to all of these warnings, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Four reminders in the opening chapter of the Revelation that promised He was coming quickly to the readers of the Revelation in the seven churches and then he concludes the Revelation with
four reminders chapter that He was going to do the exact same thing. Come back quickly!

And He did what He said He would do! To say otherwise is to say He was wrong.

Why haven't the majority of believers read these simple Bible verses and accepted them as true but have instead been waiting for Jesus to return to them? It's because they have accepted a man-made interpretation of these scriptures which have taken books like Revelation, Daniel, and Ezekiel and concocted an unbiblical view of them rather than choosing to look at what the Bible actually and simply has to offer.

As a result, and for nearly two thousand years, people have been running about getting ready for His imminent second coming (a term we don't even find in the Bible). Is Jesus is going to come back and rapture believers or did that already happen? While not a hill to die on (after all, we are not saved by doctrine but by grace through faith - see Doctrine above) if the Bible clearly shows when Jesus was supposed to return as He said He would wouldn't this information go a long, long way in helping believers today focus on living as Christians in a way that has never been attempted in the past.

Many people refute the whole Preterist idea by claiming the Book of Revelation was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, therefore, its contents were NOT talking about the Destruction of Jerusalem but of another time (like ours) in the future.

For starters, the dating of all the New Testament books is a debatable issue at best. And it is doubtful believers will ever agree on the subject. Because of this, I would suggest the "dating debates" have very little to do with my views on the dating of the Book of Revelation. I would instead suggest that the content of the New Testament books (what is said in them) and the context of who and where things were said, along with the secular history surrounding what was said is far more supportive of my stance then debatable "datings" of the books themselves. That being said, however, the dating of the single book of Revelation is very important to the Preterist view - and here's why:

A Preterist believes that the events of Revelation have occurred and a futurist believes that the events described in Revelation
are still headed our way. If Revelation was written before 70AD it goes a long way to support the Preterist position because we could at least say that the destruction of Jerusalem occurred after it was written therefore supporting the idea that the book's contents were therefore fulfilled.

If Revelation was written even one day after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD then its contents obviously had no bearing on Jerusalem's destruction and therefore must have application to a day in the future – as the futurists claim. In other words, if Revelations was written pre-70AD we could easily agree that its fulfillment was God's judgment on Israel. If we date it after the Destruction of Jerusalem then there is ample evidence that its contents have not occurred and Christians had better maintain a pure physical church for Jesus to come back and get. Here's the key to knowing when the book was written - it's not through scholarly debates over historical evidence that prove the dating of Revelation but the contents of Revelation itself. Those who hold to the late dating of Revelation typically assign its authorship to be around 95-96 AD. This was a year when a man called Domitian Caesar reigned. And this dating was determined by the following statement by Irenaeus (AD 130 to AD 202), as quoted by Eusebius, the church historian, in AD 325. Now note two things about this quote - it came from two men - Eusebius (in 325 AD) quoting Irenaeus, who lived 123 years earlier and who was writing about an event that supposedly took place nearly two generations before that! This is Eusebius' quote taken apparently from Irenaeus:

"We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign."

To add fuel to the already questionable nature of this quote we also have to note that Irenaeus did not witness this. He was actually referring to Polycarp (who, according to tradition knew the apostle John). Then, we are not sure if the "it" Polycarp was referring to was John, the visions he saw, the name of anti-Christ, or the book itself!

This is debated!
Finally, we do not know if he meant that the book was written at that time or not. In the end, this single statement, which comes to us from three separate people separated by three centuries, is at best hearsay and is certainly unclear as to its meaning. And it is this statement alone, amidst all of this uncertainty, that serves as the evidence to support the "late date" theory of the dating of the Book of Revelation.

I call this tradition – something I refuse to build my faith upon.

But why don’t we let the Bible itself tell us when the Book was written. Here are some main points – consider them by His Spirit.

**POINT #1 “John must prophesy again.”**

In Revelation 10:11 we read that John "must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." If Revelation was written in AD 95-96, John would have been over ninety years old. In that day and age, ninety was ancient and traveling was brutal. Not that God couldn't have supported him but it typically would have been very difficult for him to travel to the various "nations and...many kings" and preach. However, with Revelation written earlier, John would have been in his mid-sixties and at that age, his traveling would have been more reasonable.

**POINT #2 The Seven Churches in Asia**

Chapter one verse four proves that John wrote Revelation to a specific group of churches in Asia. The importance of this statement cannot be overlooked (even though it has been by many scholars). There is only one small window of time in which there were only seven churches in Asia. The early AD Sixties. The apostle Paul established nine churches in that area, but only seven were addressed in Revelation. The reason for this is that the cities of Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea, were all destroyed by an earthquake around AD 61. Laodicea was rebuilt soon afterward, but the other two cities were not. This left only seven churches in Asia during the five years just prior to the beginning of the Roman/Jewish war. Of particular importance
is the message to the church of Philadelphia found in Revelation 3:7-13. In verse's 10 and 11, Christ told John to inform them that an "hour of temptation" was "about to come upon all the world," (i.e., the Roman Empire GE, not the KOSMOS or entire world). Christ then said that He was coming quickly and that they should "hold fast." The reason that this is important (besides the fact that this was directed to an actual church in the first century) is that the first persecution of Christians took place under Nero Caesar in AD 64. Another reason Revelation could not have been written after 70 AD.

POINT #3 The Temple was still standing

As mentioned last week one of the most compelling proofs that Revelation was written before Jerusalem was destroyed is the fact that the Jewish temple was still standing!

Revelation 11:1-2 says:

"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."

How do we know that this was the temple of the first century and not some future one?

First, there is not one verse in the entire Bible that speaks of a "rebuilt" Jewish Temple. Not one. That alone should be proof enough. Nevertheless, this passage is very similar to Luke 21:20-24. Notice that Jesus told the disciples that they would see this event. They had asked Him about their temple (verse 5), and Jesus told them it would be destroyed before their generation passed away (verse 32). Notice again what Jesus said in verse 24, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles." This is the same thing Christ told John in Revelation 11:2! Therefore, since the disciples' generation has long since passed away, Revelation must have been written before the nations trampled Jerusalem underfoot in AD 70.
POINT #4 The Tribes of the Earth

Most writers consider the theme of the Book to be Revelation to be chapter 1 verse 7. It reads:

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

This verse is very similar in context to Matthew 24:30.

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes (same Greek word as Revelation 1:7) of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Standing alone this is not conclusive by any means but from it we can see that just based on the language use alone that a case can be made because Matthew 24:30 is a verse that speaks of “the fall of Jerusalem” and the Revelation verse, we might suggest, is speaking of the exact same thing - and therefore had to be written prior to the date of its fall. Also, take notice again of the language of Revelation 1:7. It refers to those who "pierced him."

Although we know that the Romans crucified Jesus and pierced Him, the apostles accused the Jews of the act in Acts 2:23 and 36. Later, Acts 3:15, 4:10, and 5:30 says the same thing. Stephen, in Acts 7:51-52, calls the Jews murderers. Paul, in 1st Corinthians 2:8, speaks of the “Jews killing the Lord.” And again Paul, in I Thessalonians 2:14-15, speaks of the Jews that killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets.

From this, we might suggest that the book itself concerns itself with the Jews who were utterly dispersed or killed in 70 AD. When Revelation 1:7 refers to all the "kindreds of the earth" ("kindreds" is from the Greek word "phule," which means "tribe") this is a direct allusion to the Jewish tribal system. Now, we must identify, from Scripture, who those "tribes" were. To do that, we must keep in mind this simple rule of interpreting the Bible: let Scripture interpret Scripture. This we can easily do by looking at Zechariah 12:10-14. There we read:

“And I will pour upon the...inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom
they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son...In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem...And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."

Obviously, this is the foundation for John's statement in Revelation 1:7 that
"every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth (or land) shall wail because of him."

Zechariah was saying that the "tribes of the land" would mourn for "Him whom they had pierced." Who were those tribes? "The inhabitants of Jerusalem" - not the world at some future date. From these things (and more) we can see that one of the main purposes of the Revelation to the seven churches was to reveal Jesus to the Nation of Israel. The place of this final revealing would be Jerusalem and it would be to those "who pierced Him."

This is not a general reference to the Jewish nation, who today are not one bit different in the eyes of God than every Gentile but was a reference to Christ's contemporary generation - a generation was destroyed in AD 70, by the Roman Legions.

POINT #5 The Woman

The next thing that we need to look at is "the woman" spoken of in chapters 17 and 18 of Revelation. John wrote that he saw a "woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." (17:6). The "woman" had this name written on her forehead: "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (17:5). The angel said that "the woman" was a poetic symbol of "that great city" (17:18); in whom "was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." (18:24).

Then in chapter 18:20-21 John wrote, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged
you on her... Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."

So who was this "woman?" This "great city?"

John gives us a clue to Revelation 11:8, where he wrote,

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

This shows us, as we saw above, that John was referring to the Jerusalem of his day. To prove this assertion, we need to look at the term "Sodom," John used to describe it. This was a figurative name describing her spiritual condition rather than an actual location. Letting the Bible interpret itself, we find this is a reference to Jerusalem. In Isaiah, chapter 1, after declaring that he had a "vision...concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (verse 1), Isaiah wrote, "Hear the words of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom."

In Jeremiah 23:14, because of the adulterous prophets, God said that Jerusalem and her inhabitants were "all of them unto me as Sodom."

But what about the reference to "Egypt," some may ask? Nowhere in the Bible is Jerusalem called Egypt. However, the first-century generation of Jews was also in an Exodus as were the Children of Israel ancienly. While Old Testament Israel's exodus was from the bondage of Egypt, the New Testament Israel's exodus was from the bondage of the Old Covenant Law - housed at Jerusalem. In this, I think we have a fairly clear reference to Jerusalem, (as both a Sodom and an Egypt) being referred to in Revelation.

**POINT #6 The Sixth King**

So far we have seen that Revelation deals with the revealing of Jesus to first century Israel. We’ve also seen, that "the woman" John saw was first century Jerusalem. We then read in Revelation 17:10:

“And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.”
I would suggest that the "kings" spoken of here were the rulers of the known world of John's day (the Roman Empire) since the Jews had "no king but Caesar." These "kings" were not ruling at the same time, for as the text says "five fell," meaning that five of those kings had come and gone. Then "one is," referring to the "king" who was ruling at the time Revelation was written. This is where we have one of the clearest proofs for dating this book. If we simply examine the list of Roman Emperors, we will be able to determine who the sixth king was, and the time that Revelation was written.

Here are the Roman Emperors of John’s day:

1. Julius Caesar
2. Augustus
3. Tiberius
4. Gaius (Caligula)
5. Claudius

"and the sixth emperor," (the one who "now is" was...)
(that’s right,) 6. Nero.

And when did Nero reign?

From 54 AD to June of 68 AD!

Again, Revelation 17:10 says:

"And there are seven kings: five are fallen (we named them), and one is (Nero), and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space."

This last king would be a man named Galba who would reign only six months after the horrid Nero. Nero did terrible things to Christians. He had both Peter and Paul put to death and he was whom God used to destroy the Jews in Jerusalem. It was Nero who was in power and gave the command to Vespasian to destroy Jerusalem. Historically, Nero is the one that persecuted Christians beyond all comparison. John's banishment to Patmos was itself a result of the great persecution of Nero. This was the sixth king mentioned in Revelation, proving beyond any doubt that Revelation was written before the Roman/Jewish war.
POINT # 7 The Song of Moses

To anyone familiar with the Law of Moses and Jewish tradition, Revelation 15:2-3 will have to mean. It says that those martyrs "who had come off victorious from the Beast" were singing "the Song of Moses."

The first thing we have to ask ourselves is if these martyrs (spoken of here) are going to be Christian’s living today why are they singing the song of Moses? How does the song go? What is the tune? The Song of Moses is found in Deuteronomy 32:1-43. The Jews were to sing this song to remind themselves of what would befall them "in the latter days" (Deuteronomy 31:29). The song specifically talks about "their end" - the Jews (verse 20), and details their destruction by a consuming "fire" (verse 22), "famine" (verse 24), "plague" (verse 24) and "bitter destruction" (verse 24). In it, God calls them a "perverse generation" (verses 5 and 20) and says He will "render vengeance" upon them and "vindicate His people" (verse 41 and 36 respectively).

Why would Christian martyrs of the 21st century be singing this song? They wouldn’t. This is just another evidence that the Book of Revelation was written to them in that day not to us in ours.

POINT #8 The Element and References to Time

As we have pointed out Revelation is the “Revelation of Jesus Christ,” who tells John that the fulfillment of the prophecies of this book “was soon.” Right off the bat in Revelation 1:1 and 3, John informed his readers, the seven churches of Asia (verse 4), that the contents of this volume "must shortly come to pass." Did you catch that? “The CONTENTS of this book!” Again – take note! John did not write that some of the events, or even most of the events must “shortly” take place. He wrote that all of the events contained in Revelation (the CONTENTS of this Book) "must shortly come to pass."

(Why?)

Because "the time (was) at hand."

(At hand for whom?)
The seven churches of Asia, specifically, and to the church of the first century in general.

(The time was “at hand,” for what)?

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

Then, in Revelation 22:6, John wrote that the Lord sent an angel to John "to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done."

So here, at the end of the book of Revelation, John recorded the exact same message that he did in chapter 1. Have you ever noticed this? This again emphasizes that all of the events contained in Revelation were about to take place in the first century — not stretched throughout time, and certainly not for any future generation.

In Revelation 22:10, the angel of the Lord said to John,

"Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."

Once more, we have proof that the events of Revelation were about to take place in the first century. However, another element was added to this warning. Do you know what it is? The angel told John not to seal the Scroll. Why is this important? To get our answer we have to let scripture explain so let's look at the book of Daniel. After Daniel had received visions concerning his people (the nation of Israel), he was told, "thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (12:1). Daniel is then told how they would be rescued — by resurrection, some would be rewarded with "everlasting life" and others with "everlasting contempt" (verse 2). But then, Daniel is told something very peculiar. In verse 4, Daniel was told, "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." We have to refuse the temptation to believe that when Daniel says "the time of the end," it is not the same thing as "the end of time". There is a huge difference between the end of time and the time of the end. So the time of the end of what and for whom? Verse 1 told us that Daniel's visions concerned the nation of Israel, not mankind in general. Next, Daniel saw two angels talking about the fulfillment of all that he had seen (verse 6). One asked the other, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The answer was, "when he shall have accomplished to scatter the
power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." (verse 7). But Daniel could not understand what they meant, so he asked again, "When?"

This is what the angel said in reply:

"Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end."

Did you know that there is only one other place in the Bible where “a sealed book” is referred to? Revelation, chapter 5:1 which says:

“And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.” The reason this has a direct bearing on Revelation 21-22 is that Daniel was told to “seal his book” concerning the end "for it pertains to many days in the future" (Daniel 8:26), but John was told not to seal his book "because the time is at hand" (Revelation 22:10). The end of Old Covenant Israel was at hand. The end of that world or age. All things that were written had to be fulfilled by the time Jerusalem - that age, that world, fell. Then, speaking of timing Revelation 21:12 Jesus says to John:

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Notice that Jesus did not say that "when I come, I will come quickly," He emphatically said that He was coming "quickly." But He also said something else. He said, "that His reward was with Him to give every man according to his works." Now some state that this has not happened yet. However, we AGAIN must let Scripture interpret Scripture and so we turn to Matthew 16:27-28, Mark 8:38-9:1 and Luke 9:26-27.

Did you know that Jesus said the exact same thing in these three verses that He did in Revelation 21? Again, in Revelation 21, He said He was coming and "he shall reward every man according to his works." But Jesus also said in these three different Gospel verses,

"There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

Notice that Jesus tied His coming to the lives of His disciples. And that He said that some of his listeners would not die until
He came. And to whom was He coming? Those alive within that generation. And what will be their reward? Daniel told us that the "rewards" would be that some would be resurrected to "everlasting life" and others to "everlasting contempt".

POINT #9 No mention of the Destruction of Jerusalem to the Seven Churches

To believe that Revelation was written after the destruction of Jerusalem - but did not include one reference to the devastating destruction of Jerusalem or the Temple - is simply foolish. And while not empirical evidence, it’s really, really odd.

POINT #10 Conclusion

If a person doesn't believe the first three verses of Revelation (i.e., the near expectation of the events), neither will he believe the rest of the book. For if a person is unwilling to accept the time constraints of the text, the rest of the document can mean anything that the reader desires.

If the Apostle John was banished to Patmos under the reign of Nero, as the internal evidence indicates, he wrote the book of Revelation about AD 68 or 69, which was after the death of that emperor.

If all the books of the New Testament were written after 70 AD why do they speak as if Jerusalem is still standing - temple and vibrant community intact?

It is of interest that in the Syrian version of the Book of Revelation, first published in 1627 (and, afterward in the London Polyglot) we find the following inscription:

"The Revelation which God made to John the evangelist, in the Island of Patmos, to which he was banished by Nero Caesar." This places John's hand on paper well before 69 AD.

Let’s drop the legends. We claim to love the Bible why not start letting it really speak for itself contextually and through the spirit instead of by the traditions and fears and myths of Man.
What the Gospels say about Jesus Return

• Let’s move on to other parts of the New Testament and what they speak about relative to the Second Coming and thing associated with it.

• To make things really simple the Bible speaks of two resurrections – the first resurrection (or the resurrection of the just) and the second resurrection (or the resurrection of the damned). Once the first resurrection is complete there will follow what we call the second resurrection OR the resurrection of the damned. Many believers have been waiting for Jesus to return to initiate the first resurrection but they do this mistakenly as He – being the first-fruits of them that slept – initiated the first resurrection when He rose after three days in the grave. Shortly thereafter we read in Matthew that others also rose from the dead. In other words, it was Jesus rising from the dead that ignited the First Resurrection. We'll call His resurrection the first fruits or the very first phase of the First Resurrection.

• What most Christians are actually waiting for is the second phase of the First Resurrection which scripture plainly says will occur when Jesus returns. So our question is, "When does the Bible say Jesus will return?" Not "When does Shawn McCraney, or John McArthur, or anyone else say Jesus will return but when does the Bible say Jesus will return. And I want to thank my pastor friend Glenn Hill for showing me from the Bible what it says on the subject.

• Now, when it comes to teaching the Bible there is an approach that I think really helps. First, we “observe” what is being said, then we “interpret” what is said, and then we give what is being said “application” to our present-day lives. In my estimation, it is a fantastic method for teaching the Word of God. In the first phase (observing – which is what I want to talk about here) we might ask things like:
  - Who is the writer?
  - Where is he writing from?
  - Who is the audience?
  - Why is he writing to them?
  - What is the surrounding situation (the context)?
  - What is occurring in the secular world around the time the word was written?
  - And perhaps most importantly, what would the words being written mean to the recipients at that time.
Let me repeat that last point:

- "What would the words being written mean to the recipients at that time?"
- Often believers walk about with this idea that the Bible (especially the New Testament) was first written to us - to readers and believers today. Many people today have allowed themselves to believe that the New Testament epistles were written to a people who didn't really understand what was being said at the time and that is because it was written for us. I would call that 100% pure baloney. The Epistles written to the Church at Rome was written to (drumroll please) the church at Rome, etc., etc...
- In other words, the New Testament letters were first written to the believers of that day, encouraging and instructing them first and therefore the primary application was to them and their physical needs, their understanding, and their Christian walk. At best the epistles have a secondary application to later generations like ours. If we read the New Testament in any other way we are quite likely to misinterpret what was being said wrongly and then make the mistake of thinking the text has meaning or application in areas and ways to us that it doesn’t . . . that it couldn’t.
- Admittedly, the Word of God is the living word, and I am convinced that even though the purpose for passages being written back then often don't have the same applies to us in our day, they can be applied to believers now with tremendous - even equal - significance. Mostly spiritual significance.
- For example, Jesus employs a lot of imagery in His teachings that borrow heavily from an extremely agrestic community. Lots of stories and illustrations about planting, harvesting, reaping and sowing. To a city dweller the imagery may not carry the same weight, but then again, it might bear more, revealing things to the mind of someone not familiar with the processes of agriculture in ways that would go unnoticed by those who are - and of course, vice versa. This is just one of the beauties of the living word.
- My point, then, is not to suggest that we lose benefit because we are not part of the original audience - the Word is Living - but when it comes to theology or issues like, "When does the Bible say Jesus should return," we HAVE to include in our examination as many critical bits of
information (as possible) in order to really comprehend what was being said, to whom it was being said and why.

• Okay . . . so what we are going to do is break our study down on "When the Bible says Jesus should return" by looking at what specific speakers in scripture have said on the subject. Earlier we observed who the writer of Revelation (John) was addressing which helped us see the primary purpose of the revelation itself.

• Here we are going to begin to see what Jesus Himself said – as recorded in the Gospel accounts – about when he would return.

• We’ll start off by examining the big discourses the Lord gave in the synoptic accounts (located in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21). For efficiencies sake, I am going to use Matthew 24 as the essential narrative and add to it from the other accounts of Mark and Luke as necessary.

• Now, Matthew chapter 24 takes place when the Lord and His disciples (actually there are only three there with Him) as they are sitting on the Mount of Olives. Here Jesus Himself supplies to these men His own description of when He is going to return. In order to really get the full picture of this chapter, however, we have to start back three chapters (in Matthew 21). It was here that Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Remember that? He rode in on the donkey who had never been ridden upon and people waved palm branches and threw down their coats and cried, "Hosanna" to the Lord.

• Well after entering the historic City of David Jesus went straight to the temple. And when He got there He drove out the money changers and overturned the tables. This was incendiary behavior and I believe He did it to stoke the fires of the evil that burned within the hearts of the religious leaders of His day. Then with His disciples, He retreated to Bethany. Remember all that?

• The next day He came back into the city (from Bethany) and do you remember what He saw? A beautiful leafy fig tree which, (from a distance) had the appearance of being a fruit bearer, but when the Lord got closer He found that it actually bore no fruit at all (a picture of the Nation of Israel) and so He cursed it, and to the amazement of the disciples it immediately began to wither. From there Jesus returns back to the Temple Mount and began one of the most railing accusations against the Jewish religious leaders imaginable.

• His words compose chapter 21-23 of Matthew. In these chapters, He calls them:
- "hypocrites, a generation of vipers, blind guides, serpents" and heaps upon them a bunch of other imprecations. All through these two chapters, Jesus is telling them that they are essentially "done for."

- Chapter 23 ends with Jesus saying to those Jews (beginning at verse 35): "... upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed, is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

- Unquestionably, when Jesus tells them, "Your house is left unto you desolate," the "house" was not only the very temple that Jesus stood in but everything that represented the distinct features of this Nation - their culture in Jerusalem, genealogies, land, nation, priesthood, their way of life - all of it - left desolate. These things all bring us to the contents of Matthew chapter 24.

- So let’s now turn to Matthew 24 and see what happens next as the narrative continues.

Matthew Chapter 24

- Matthew 24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

- The Lord had just laid some tremendous and horrible predictions out against the Nation of Israel. For some reason, the disciples decided to point out the grandeur of the temple to Him at this time. Maybe they were trying to change the subject, maybe as a means to indirectly say, "You know Lord, we believe all you said in the temple today but . . . but, wow, just look at the magnificence of the Temple!" Or maybe their purpose was much more significant than this - we don’t know. Whatever the reason, (verse 2)

- 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye, not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
In my opinion all that happened in chapter 22-23 must have been really hard for the disciples to hear as Jesus was really making everything seem pretty dismal and futile and we might even imagine that as they traveled to the Mount of Olives, which would have given them the most magnificent view of the whole city of Jerusalem, they were pretty solemn and quiet. It appears that traveling with Jesus in the early years was probably fun, right? He was changing water into wine, and healing people right and left, and when they ran out of food He reproduced fish and bread, and when their family members got sick He healed them. But in the past few days He has ripped the temple thieves apart, cursed a beautiful fig tree (which immediately withered), threw down some really ugly imprecations on the Jewish leaders (of whom the disciples at this point were still terrified) and now He said the temple mount (which was a marvel to them) was going to be “thrown down” to the point that not one stone would be left upon another! The party was ending and its quite possible that the mood was very somber. (verse 3)

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately (Mark tells us it was only Peter, James, John, and Andrew, by the way) and they essentially asked the Lord three questions.

1. “Tell us, when shall ‘these things’ be?
2. and what shall be “the sign of thy coming,”
3. of the end of the world?

We have admitted to seeking to know the answer to the second question here, aren't we? But in order to get to it, we have to examine questions one and three too. I am personally of the opinion that all three questions are interrelated. In fact, I believe they are all asking for the same answer to each question – when?

Some people believe the disciples were asking entirely different questions here that are not related. I disagree. I think the succession of them and the context surrounding when they are being asked proves a direct correlation. Now listen closely – the disciples knew that in the Old
Testament when GOD "brought judgment upon a nation" the prophets often spoke of Him as having "come down and executing His wrath and judgment upon them.

And while we probably do not have all that Jesus told these disciples about His coming return we can see they associated His current prophecies of the coming judgment upon the nation with both His return and the end of their world (not the end of the World and I’ll explain why in a minute). So the four disciples asked the Lord three questions that in my opinion were all interrelated:

1. Tell us, when shall these things be?
2. and what shall be the sign of thy coming,
3. and of the end of the world?

Now hang with me here. They had heard Jesus say that "the Nation would be laid desolate," and that "the grand temple toppled to the ground," that this would be the end of "their world," and that all of it would happen in "this generation." When disciples ask Jesus (in the King James) when "will be the end of the world," they were asking "when will all of this happen which would put an end to the world as we know it."

I think we can understand this on some level - or at least through the unfortunate lives of people as described in country songs. It’s similar to a person discovering that their spouse is leaving them, that their house is being foreclosed upon, that they have been fired from their job and then their dog dies - all on the same day! So they sit down and write a song with a title that might be, “The end of my world,” right?

This is what the disciples wanted to know of the Lord - when is all of what you have described going to happen to us? (and not when is the end of the earth). If they were asking when the "end of the world" (earth) was going to occur we would read in the Greek that they would have asked, "and when is the end of the kosmos" which is the Greek word for world (as in, earth and even solar system). But that isn't what they asked! Instead, they asked Him "and when is the end of the "age" - again, that Greek word meaning a period of time, and in this case, the apostles wanted to know when the end of their "age" was coming . . . the end when all things Jewish, as they knew it, would be
“left desolate,” the end when the temple would be brought down . . .

“When will judgment fall on the Nation, which you have described?”

- My friends, Matthew 24 (and the Mark and Luke accounts of the same information) is Jesus’ answer to these specific questions.
- If (and when) we are able to recognize this and the material contained in Matthew 24 we will take a giant step toward embracing a clearer eschatological picture of things and therefore a clearer picture of what church means, of what it means to be a Christian and will be equipped to set all the “end-time” scare tactics aside that churches have been pushing for nearly 200 years. Jesus words here to the disciples, if we accept that He was born in 4 or 3 AD, were spoken around 30 AD. The accepted length of a biblical generation is forty years. So if we take 30 AD when Jesus promised that “all of these things will happen within this generation,” (both to the Jews at the temple in Matthew 23:36 and then to His disciples here in Matthew 24:34) and add the full forty years of a generation, we have 70 AD – a most important date in the annuls of biblical history because it was in 70 AD that the Roman army, under Titus, helped accomplish all of what we will read here in Matthew 24 from Jesus own mouth.
- As an aside, we note that the Old Testament prophet Micah also prophesied of this temple destruction, saying in Micah 3:12:
  - “Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.”
- In George Peter Holford’s book, “The Destruction of Jerusalem,” we read:
  - “It is recorded in the Talmud and by Maimonedes, that Terentius Rufus, captain of the army of Titus, absolutely ploughed up the foundation of the temple with a ploughshare.”
- To show that it was God’s hand that moved this destruction we read the Jewish historian’s Flavius Josephus (Wars of the Jews) that the Roman general Titus actually decided to spare the temple from destruction feeling that it was too magnificent of an edifice to destroy. Instead, he believed that it ought to remain standing as proof of the
Roman Empires success. But one of the soldiers ignorantly threw a firebrand through a window and set the place ablaze. In his account, Josephus says that when General Titus got word of the fire and

- "He rose up in great haste and ran to the holy house in order to have a stop to the fire," that he gave orders with, "a loud voice," and with "his right hand gave signals to his soldiers to stop the fire," but the normally disciplined Roman soldiers went wild and pushed to see the whole thing destroyed - first by fire.

• This was God’s judgment upon the people - not Rome’s. In fact, Josephus, in his “Essential Writings,” (page 365) wrote the following:
- “As Titus entered the city (September 26th AD 70) he was astonished at its strength, and especially the towers which the tyrants had abandoned. Indeed, when he saw how high and massive they were, and the size of each huge block, he exclaimed: Surely God was with us in the war, who brought the Jews down from their strongholds, for what could hand or engine do against these towers.”

• We can choose to believe that what Jesus said to His disciples about, “all these things would happen in this generation,” that He was right, and what happened in 70 AD was the fulfillment of it . . . . OR . . . we can side with a number of believers today who contend that all the things he said have NOT happened, and Jesus was wrong. So let’s go back to Matthew 24.

• Now, Christians who believe that what Jesus has been describing has not yet happened use chapter 24 constantly trying to assign and describe these signs of our day and age.

• Frankly, it’s quite easy to read these passages in this way. Open a newspaper, then open Matthew 24 and read them together for a few months and you are likely to “see” signs that Jesus describes in Matthew as occurring in our day! This is how futurists have been reading the Bible for centuries on end.

• But let’s go through them and see if they really apply to our day - or to the events of 70 AD.

In our first run through let’s take note of to whom Jesus is directing His descriptive words. If these words were prophesied by our God and King for a date in our day and age why doesn’t He
make this clear? Instead, He (and the apostles) give plenty of indications He was speaking to them and to their generation and time.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (the three questions - Jesus replies)

4 “Take heed that no man deceive you.”

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end (of the age) is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:
18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

24 For there shall arise false Christ’s, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

I know there is a lot here - questionable things - but let’s hit on the major explanations of what these verses are saying relative to that time and place and the 70 AD destruction.

As we read, try to remember that when Jews write they often use hyperbole, illustration, and comparisons to convey what the Holy Spirit is saying to them. For example, Paul, in Romans 1:8 says:

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."

Does this mean, “the whole world?” Catalina Island? Logan Utah? and to the inhabitants living at the base of Mount Fuji? No. How about the whole inhabited world? I don’t think so.

But perhaps the established Roman empire? Yes. There is a time to take the words of the Bible literally and there is a time to read them as representations or figuratively. Literalists love to emphasize lines like the “whole world” and say it means the whole world but often their assumptions are incorrect - which, again, is why we try and ask and answer all those questions we spoke about when we analyze scripture.

Many people today (thanks to the newly created teachings promoted by pre-tribulation fanatics like Hal Lindsey) believe that “the end” is going to be a nuclear holocaust, and that we are waiting for an anti-Christ to pop up on the scene. When we consider the contextual indicators the Lord provides His disciples we can clearly see that Jesus appealed to both local and ancient descriptions of things and did not use language that would describe nuclear holocausts or have futuristic meaning.
Alright, in verse 6 Jesus says:

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end (of the age) is not yet.”

The rumors of war and difficulties for Jerusalem were rampant in and around the decades prior to 70 AD – all reasonable precursors to its inevitable destruction.

Jesus tells these men plainly:

“see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end (of the age) is not yet.”

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

We have recorded history of all of these “terrors” existing prior to the destruction of Israel – even major devastating earthquakes. Most futurists glom onto “nation shall rise against nation,” as evidence that Jesus was NOT speaking of 70 AD but a future day, but the thing is the Greek word the King James Translators translated into “nations” is “ethnos” – a word where we get “ethnicities,” and that it a better description of the verse, “ethnicities will rise up against ethnicities” rather than entire Nations against Nations.

In verse 8 Jesus says:

“All these are the beginning of sorrows.”
See how He is mercifully describing for them a chronology to look for and to be aware of – a real one, with a real date confined to that generation? (Verse 9)

“There shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations (ethnicities) for my name’s sake.”

The Romans (as well as other ethnicities) were not, to say the least, happy with Jews in Jerusalem (to put it mildly). Verse 10-12 are all validated by Josephus as conditions existing in Jerusalem prior to 70 AD, as the Jews turned on each other, and many false Christ’s arose and many of the Christian elect were deceived. In fact, the book of Hebrews was written to help the Jewish Saints avoid apostasy and to encourage all to hang on to the end during such difficult times.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.
11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.
12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

Jesus then gives them each a promise here:

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

In my opinion, Jesus is speaking of them being saved from the utter physical destruction that was coming upon Jerusalem. Verse fourteen is thought to be the crowning glory for futurists and biblical literalists as it says:
14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Had the Gospel of the Kingdom been preached unto “all the world” by 70 AD? Did the inhabitants of Catalina Island, and Tampa Florida hear the Gospel by then? Or was this another example of Hebraisms being used to mean the whole area?

But there's something even more important to observe here. The Greek word here for "world" is kosmos, right? Meaning the whole world or earth. Wrong. Instead of kosmos Jesus said all the "OI KU MEN AY" – which means the area, the land. Perhaps the Roman Empire. But not the entire earth. Let's read it again.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the (Oi KU MEN AY - land) for a witness unto all (ethnos - ethnicities, not nations) . . . and (He tells His apostles there and then) and then shall the end come.

• How about an interjection from an early Church believer and their opinion on the Second Coming of Christ?
• Athanasius in 345 AD wrote:
  - "It is, in fact, a sign and notable proof of the coming of the Word that Jerusalem no longer stands."
  - And Tertullian in 200 AD said, "And so the times of the coming of Christ, the leader, must be inquired into, which we shall trace in Daniel; and, after computing them, SHALL PROVE HIM TO HAVE COME, EVEN ON THE GROUND OF THE TIMES DESCRIBED . . . "
• Re-read these quotes carefully. They are clear in the opinion of when these early church leaders/fathers/believers thought Jesus Second Coming occurred – when Jerusalem was destroyed!

Looking back we failed to explain something important I all of the above. It plays (and will play) a very important role in our understanding what Jesus is saying (and what will be said) in our future analysis of the rest of the New Testament.
In verse six of Matthew we read:

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end (of the age) is not yet.

- There are all sorts of Biblical tools out there that appeal to the Greek language to help us understand what is being said. There are literal versions of the Bible (like Rotherham’s, Weymouth’s and Young’s), and there are inter-linear versions, and there is something called the Emphatic Diaglott, which gives the original Greek in one column and the English in another.
- The Greek word for “ye shall,” (as in verse six where it says), “and ye shall hear of wars and rumors or wars” is “mello.” Mello means, “this is about to happen,” and/or “This is going to get started very soon.” In fact, if you read either the Emphatic Polyglott or from Rotherham or Young’s literal translations, we get a better idea of the timing of the message.
- In fact, Weymouth’s New Testament translation of Matthew 24:6 says "And before long you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. Do not be alarmed, for such things must be; but the end is not yet."
- Young’s Literal Translation says “and ye shall begin to hear of wars, and reports of wars; see, be not troubled, for it behoveth all [these] to come to pass, but the end is not yet.”
- And the Emphatic Polyglott reads: “You are about to . . .”
- We will come back to this word “mello” in other verses but understand this is the context of Jesus message here in Matthew 24.

Let’s continue to seek answers to the question

“When does the Bible say Jesus should return?” in the Gospel of Matthew.

- There are a couple more issues we need to make clear as we continue to move through these passages in Matthew 24.
First, our study is by no means exhaustive. Entire books—better said, entire volume-sets of books have been written that address, for example, the verse by verse of Matthew 24.

- Ours is to point out what we believe is the best general picture available.
- Secondly, the last thing we want to do is divide believers on doctrine. (see Doctrine above) Having said this, however, you could probably step outside the door and throw a rock in any direction and find a pastor or teacher who is willing to present "their" view on end-times as seamless and infallible.
- This is what churches and denominations are built upon—certainty.
- We would never suggest that our view is the only viable view among believers—there are just too many variables. But this view should be entertained and shared.
- Third, there is an abundant reason for seeking believers to stand by the stance that the Bible is more than clear on when it says Jesus should return. The message is not obscure nor difficult when it is not jaded or colored by man-made traditions.

Alright, as a quick reminder, we are hitting what Jesus said in reply to Peter, James, John and Andrew’s three questions given on the Mount of Olives which were “tell us,

1. when shall these things be?
2. and what shall be the sign of thy coming,
3. and of the end of the world?

We noted, right off the bat that where the King James posits their last question as “What shall be the sign of the end of the world,” the better most literal translation would be, “and what shall be the sign of the end of the age” (meaning the age or dispensation of the Jews and their temple and economy, etc).

And we ended our study with verse fourteen, where once again, the King James use of the English term “world” is not what it should be; that if it meant the world it would have been “kosmos,” but instead it read “oikomenia.” We showed that if
Jesus was speaking of the literal world the Greek would be kosmos.

So let's read on in Matthew 24 and see if there are other evidence within its narrative that tells us “when Jesus should return.”

After (in verse 14) Jesus says:

"Then shall the end come." That is an emphatic statement. Jesus continues with more in verse 15 and says:

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

• History tells us, no matter how much we want these descriptions to describe our day or the signs before a rapture in our time, that in the mid-sixties AD, the Romans attacked Judea and Jerusalem. Then by 70 AD Jerusalem was
utterly destroyed – the temple included. We know that over 1,000,000 Jews were slaughtered and the rest were taken and made prisoners or dispersed out over the world. After describing all these things to these four men and saying that they would occur, Jesus adds at verse 15:

- 15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

• It is significant that the Lord, in connection with his discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem, used the remarkable prophecy that had been given five centuries earlier to the prophet Daniel. Again, this is what Jesus said in verses 15-16:
  - “When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand), then let them that are in Judea flee.”

• The dispensationalist, futurists, the “pre-trib rapture folk” have long argued that the “abomination of desolation” is coming. This is what they tend to say:
  - “The Antichrist,” (an alleged world dictator) will “make the temple abominable” in the so-called tribulation period just prior to the Lord’s second coming.

• These views are correct. “He, them, and it” did show up prior to His second coming with the tribulation beginning around 60 AD and it’s culmination being in 70AD in Judea. In fact, listen to Luke’s account of these same passages chapter 21:20-21. This is how he has Jesus say it:
  - Luke 21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

• The Greek word for desolation is “eray-mosis” and it is used only three times in the entire New Testament – once in Matthew 24 (where Jesus answers when He should return) and in the similar accounts found in Luke 21 and Mark 13 – both places where Jesus is describing when He would return. Again, this is how Luke describes the abomination of desolation to the disciples:
  - Luke 21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

• His use of that word is purposeful tying it directly to Daniel and his prophesies. Even the Jewish Historian Josephus said, relative to the Daniel prophesy in his Antiquities of the Jews (10/11/7):
Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them” (Antiquities of the Jews 10.11.7).

This abomination of Desolation was something that would happen to them not something that would happen thousands of years later but within a time frame of their own lives – “their own generation.”

Some people have resistance to the term “generation” meaning a period of time. Some wonder where generation is defined as forty years.

We know from scriptures that the Hebrews reckoned time by "the generation." In Abraham's day, a generation was a hundred years (as evidenced by Genesis 15:16). But when we get to Moses book of Deuteronomy we see that "a generation" has been re-defined as a period of "thirty-eight years" (this configuration is based on the contents of Deuteronomy 1:35 and 2:14).

Also, the "generation" that would perish in the wilderness during the Exodus was 38.5 years. There is plenty of evidence that a generation was about 42 years as well so from what I can tell the best Bible scholars say forty years is a close approximation and not a hard and fast span of time. However, what is hard and fast is that biblically a generation is close to forty years.

Additionally, if we look to Matthew 1:17 it says:

- "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations."

Since the Babylonian captivity occurred in 586 BC we can divide that by 14 and get about 41.89 years.

Then there are those who say when Jesus said (twice in chapter 23 and 24 of Matthew) “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled,” that the Greek word for generation is “ghen-ee-ah,” and while it can mean generation (as in forty years) it can also mean “a nation,” or “a people” (admittedly, it is the word where we derive the term genealogy).

From this futurists interpret Jesus words as meaning, “behold this people (the Jews) shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.” I don’t see it this way for the following reasons.
First, in plain speaking, generation meant generation—around forty years. Admittedly, Jesus does speak in parables and so this is not the best reason. But here’s a challenge: get out your concordance and look up every New Testament occurrence of the word generation (in Greek, genea) and see if it ever means 'race' in any other place where it is used! Here are all the references where "generation" is used in the Gospels:
- Mark 8:12, 38; 9:19; 13:30.
Not one of these references is speaking of the entire Jewish race over thousands of years but all use the word in its normal sense of the sum total of those living at the same time. In every case, it refers to contemporaries. (In fact, even proponents of the genea theory—who say it means "race" or a people tend to acknowledge this fact but will say that that the word suddenly changes its meaning when Jesus uses it in Matthew 24!)

Then listen to this!

When Jesus was in the temple berating the Jewish leaders in Matthew 21-23, and He says to them (in Matthew 23:36)
- "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation," futurists almost unanimously agree that here Jesus is speaking to those Jews who were alive and present at that time and looking out forty years. But then when Jesus exits the temple with His twelve, and predicts the temples fall, and then they go to the Mount of Olives and after they ask Him their three questions, and He answers them in detail and then adds (in verse 34) "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled," they say that in this situation generation it doesn’t mean what it did in Matthew 23:36 but instead is talking about events and a people way out in the future!

In other words, only in this singular case do they say "generation" does not mean what generation has always meant.

Consider this—scholars and Bible commentators will cite the destruction of Jerusalem as the fulfillment of Jesus
words to the Jews who hear Him in the temple in Matthew 23 but when it comes to the same words to the apostles they say it means something entirely different! And the apostles were actually asking Jesus when everything He had been saying would occur! Nothing changes between Matthew 23 and Matthew 24 – in fact it’s the same message!  

• In order to excuse the fact that they don’t believe Jesus has returned, futurists (dispensationalists) change the meaning of this single New Testament instance.

Okay, so the Lord says that when Jerusalem is surrounded that . . .

- 16 Then let them which be in Judaea (not in the whole world) flee into the mountains (by the way, that is not a very effective way to escape a nuclear holocaust, is it?) But they are very reasonable instructions for the people in Jesus day though, right? And then He says . . .  
- 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house:  
- 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

Let’s cover verse 17 first.

• Bible scholar Edersheim mentions that this advice makes great sense when applied to 70 AD because the houses of old Jerusalem were flat-roofed and situated right next to each other allowing Christians to escape on "a road of roofs" to the edge of the city, therefore, escaping invading soldiers who flooded the streets. If we add into all this the fact that when the Romans actually did attack Jerusalem and the Christians read these signs Jesus had supplied them, they fled to Pella (according to Eusebius) which was beyond the Jordan (this is found in Ecclesiastical History III.5) and not a Christian convert was lost. We might question this report and wonder if the church at Jerusalem was raptured at that time – but that’s another topic.

Then Jesus continues in Matthew 24, saying:
• 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

• Knowing all the horrors that were going to fall on those very people must have tormented the Lord. We know He wept (wailed) over the city. But ask yourself, who cares if the Second coming occurs today on the Sabbath Day, right? But back in 70 AD Sabbath-day observances were really important and pressing on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, weren’t they. Can you see from instances like this that Jesus descriptions of the end of the age could not possibly have had a place in our modern day and age?

• In conjunction with what He said here in Matthew 24:19 Jesus responds to some women in a very interesting way in Luke's narrative (found in Luke 23:27-30) saying

  - 27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.
  - 28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.
  - 29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.
  - 30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

• Notice the similarity when Jesus speaks to the Daughters of Jerusalem here in Luke 23:28 and His words here in Matthew 24:19, where Jesus says:

  - “Woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck (are breastfeeding) in those days?”

  • Luke’s account puts it this way:
  - “Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck.”

  • All of this — and much, much more, fell upon the Jews at Jerusalem in those days and do not describe something we are still waiting to occur in our day and age some 2000 years later! In the Luke account, we read:

    - 30 “Then shall they (especially the mothers, it seems) then shall they begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.”

  • You know where else this line is used? Revelation 6:15-17. Speaking of the judgment of the Lamb falling on Israel John the Beloved wrote:
Revelation 6:15 And the kings of the earth (the country) and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

- We’ve already described how Revelation was written to the seven churches to warn them of the impending destruction, right? So there is the explanation of Matthew 24:19-20. Then Jesus continues, saying (verse 21-22)

- 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.
- 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

- Now, we have read of a lot of carnage when it comes to war in the world. Was Jesus right when He said (in verse 21) “for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world,” (and He does use Kosmos here, so He meant world) “to this time, no, nor EVER shall be.” So we have a choice on how to see these words of the Lord. Either

- Jesus was wrong about this (and we have either experienced a greater tribulation - World Wars, etc) or
- there is a greater tribulation that awaits us or
- what happened in 70 AD was the “greatest tribulation the world has ever seen”
- or there is something we are missing in the language.

- Admittedly, this one is tougher to explain in the context of scripture than any of these other points. Let me conclude this chapter with some possible explanations.
- First of all, the Jews are known for describing apocalyptic events with tremendous hyperbole. Everything was expressed dramatically for emphasis. We look for it to fit literally but that is not always the Hebrew manner of speaking. Was the Lord using this method to stress the point? This is the typical explanation most Preterist’s give. Symbolic language was common in the Old Testament, which, if we take it all literally it leads to some real problems.
- For example -
- In describing Hezekiah 2 Kings 18:5 says:
- “He (Hezekiah) trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.”
- Then in describing Josiah 2 Kings 23:25 says:
- “Now before him (Josiah) there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.”
- How can Hezekiah and Josiah both be the most devoted kings of Judah of all time? They can't. Obviously, the language is hyperbolic. Hebrew hyperbolic language was also applied to other earthly judgments well before the destruction of 70 A.D.
- Exodus 11:6 says:
- "Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again."
- Is that literal or hyperbolic?
- Ezekiel 5:9 says:
- “And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations.”
- Daniel 9:12 says:
- “And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem.”
- Daniel 12:1 says:
- “At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered,
- Joel 2:2 reads:
- “A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, The like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any such after them, Even for many successive generations.”
• So it is highly possible that the Lord appealed to traditional hyperbole borrowed from the Old Testament to describe the destruction of Jerusalem in 64-70 A.D.
• Another line of thinking is that it was the first century Jews crucified Jesus. Because their crime was the worst in history their punishment was, therefore, the worst in history "covenantally speaking."
• If this is the case, the "worst crime" deserves the "worst punishment," type of thing.
• Israel was divorced by God as His covenant people. Never again would the Jews have a special status with God. “Now in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek.” So we could interpret verse 21 in this sense as well.
• But we must wonder if we look at the conditions of the day, the lack of painkillers and/or antiseptics, and the fact that it was God pouring out His wrath upon Jerusalem who rejected His Son, that maybe Jesus was right? Let's wrap up by consulting a report from Flavius Josephus on the end of that age (or the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD).
• Most of our knowledge about the sufferings of the Jews during the siege and the fall of Jerusalem come from his writings. Josephus was a Jewish general who fought against the Romans and was captured in July of 67 AD. He made a very low-odds prophesy that the Roman general, Vespasian, would one day become the Emperor of the Roman Empire. This prophecy seemed doomed because Vespasian didn't have a sound Roman pedigree. Nevertheless, two years after Nero killed himself (on June 9th 68 AD) Vespasian became the new Roman Emperor. And he was so impressed with Josephus prophecy that he freed him from prison, made him a Roman citizen, adopted him as a "Flavian" and then commissioned him to write a history of the Jewish people.
• Josephus first work was "The War of the Jews." Well, Vespasian had a son by the name of Titus. And when Titus went into Jerusalem for the final destruction and Josephus went with him. This gave the historian the first-hand position to record what he saw occur in the final year of the war. Josephus, still a Jew and a man who loved the Jews, even tried to persuade them himself to surrender. No doing. So he ends up just reporting their destruction.
• He began by noting the starvation. The Jews had enough wheat for a number of years but due to infighting (that's right, the love among them waxed cold), they destroyed their own supplies. Then they robbed and slew each other through the most barbarous of means and methods. Josephus says "they did as much harm to themselves" as the Romans.
Soon dead bodies were all over the city. At first, they tried to bury the dead (something very important to Jews so to not was the height of barbarism for them as a people) then they just piled them into houses and just shut the doors. Before long they tossed thousands upon thousands over the wall into the valleys below. Josephus writes:

- "When Titus, in going his rounds along those valleys say them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan; and spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his doing; and such was the sad case of the city itself."

- When Jesus said to the Jewish leaders on the temple mount in Matthew 23:33
  - "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

- He was speaking of this very fate. The reason, again, points to the Greek and the King James translators. Jesus did not use the word that means hell in English today here. He said, "Gehenna," which in English refers to the literal Valley of Hinnom and not hell as the King James translates it! Hinnom was just one of the valleys surrounding Jerusalem and this very valley became "full of dead bodies." A better translation of Jesus words is what the literal Greek says:
  - "This generation of vipers would not escape the damnation of the valley of Hinnom," and/or "How can you flee from the judgment of Gehenna?"

- These terms “Gehenna” and “Hinnom” are in Matthew 23-24 have nothing to do with hell as taught by the futurist Christian church. But that subject is an all-together different one, isn’t it? In any case, Josephus reported many horrors.

- For instance, he witnessed a mother snatching up her son (who was breastfeeding at the time) killing him, then roasting him. He literally said she saved "half of the child for later." He said the starvation was so horrible most wished they could die and viewed the dead with envy. He reported that they got so desperate for food they searched the sewers for human and cattle waste and consumed it - noting that by the law they were forbidden to even touch it. Outside the city walls, Romans soldiers caught more than 500 people per day who were trying to escape and crucified as many as possible. Josephus adds:
  - "Their multitude was so great that room was wanting for the crosses and crosses wanting for bodies."
Listen to Josephus’s own words:

- “Neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation (which was Jesus generation, by the way) more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world.”

He adds:

- “those carried away captive 97,000. And those that perished one million one hundred thousand – a large number because the city was full of visitors due to the Passover.”
- Ask yourself – in the face of all of this information, “Have I been following a tradition of Man all these years instead of what the Bible plainly states?”

Let’s read a few more quotes of early Christian influence regarding when they believed Jesus returned to the earth.

- In his writings known as Liturgy, 375 AD Chrysostom wrote:
  “Remembering this saving commandment and all those things WHICH CAME TO PASS for us: the cross, the grave, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the sitting down at the right hand, THE SECOND AND GLORIOUS COMING AGAIN.”
- And all the way back to the first century Origen said:
  "I challenge anyone to prove my statement untrue if I say that the entire Jewish nation was destroyed less than one whole generation later on account of these sufferings which they inflicted on Jesus. For it was, I believe, forty-two years from the time when they crucified Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem."

Let’s continue discussion what Jesus Himself said about His second coming (in the Gospel accounts) before we can then get into examples from the rest of the Bible of what His chosen twelve thought about it.
All over the earth pastors almost screaming for believers to get themselves ready because "He's-a-coming!" But again, what does the Bible really say on the subject?

- In our study of Matthew 24, we have to recall that the disciples have come to Jesus (at the beginning of the chapter) with three questions. I would suggest that Matthew 24 contains Jesus answer to these three questions, which were:
  - "Tell us, when shall these things be?" (which were the "things" Jesus had been describing to the Jewish leaders in the temple and His prophecies of the things that would happen to the temple itself), and "what shall be the sign of thy coming," and "the end of the age?" (NOT the "world" but the end of the Jewish age). Let’s pick up Jesus where continues His description of the signs of "when these things should be?" at verse 23 through 26, where He adds (to last week’s discussion) saying:
    - 23 Then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.
    - 24 For there shall arise false Christ’s, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.
    - 25 Behold, I have told you before.
    - 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

- During the first half of the first century, there were many false prophets that had arisen in the Roman Empire claiming to have the authority to perform astonishing acts by divine power. According to the church historian Eusebius, when Fadus was procurator of Judea, a man named Theudas led a vast multitude to the Jordan where he promised to divide the river before them. Josephus tells us that upon hearing of this, Fadus sent an armed cavalry against them and many were killed and captured. At about this time a self-proclaimed prophet from Egypt gathered a vast crowd of common people to the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. There he promised that at his command the walls of Jerusalem would fall before them allowing them entrance into the city. However, when Felix heard of this, he sent his army against them and four hundred people were killed
and two hundred more were taken prisoner. Furthermore, in Samaria, many people worshipped a man named Simon. Claiming to be someone great, this man performed many magic acts and many people asserted that he was the "divine power."

- One of the more convincing cons was from Vespasian who believed himself to be the Messiah and was followed by many. Before his triumphal entry into Rome, Vespasian apparently healed a blind man and a man with a withered hand fulfilling Matthew 24:23-24 where Jesus said:

  "At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible."

- Paul wrote in 2nd Thessalonians 2:3-12

  "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

- Of course, futurists are still waiting for this miracle-working demon to show up, but the historical record strongly suggests he already has! Immediately prior to becoming Caesar, Vespasian, the former Roman general of the Jewish War, was approached by a blind man and a man with a withered hand. These two men fell before the emperor and begged to be healed. Initially reluctant, Vespasian finally agreed to try to heal them. Josephus writes:

  "With a smiling expression and surrounded by an expectant crowd of bystanders, he [Vespasian] did what was asked. 
Instantly the cripple recovered the use of his hand and the light of day dawned again upon his blind companion. Both these incidents are still vouched for by eye-witnesses, though there is now nothing to be gained by lying.”

• Shortly after Nero’s death, Rome fell into civil war. Not long after becoming emperor of Rome, Vespasian inaugurated a new age of peace having put an end to both the war in Israel and the civil war in Rome. Vespasian had “revived” the Roman Empire. Having done so, he easily represents “the beast” whose wound had been healed spoken of in Revelation 13. Furthermore, an ancient Jewish prophecy predicted that a king would arise out of Israel to rule the world. During Israel's war with Rome, many Jews fully expected the Messiah to rise-up and forcibly establish a new world order. The Jews, however, ultimately lost this war; and this prophecy was regarded by many to have been fulfilled in Vespasian. Having been stationed in Israel immediately before becoming emperor, Vespasian, the beast of Revelation, was widely regarded as the Jewish Messiah by the people of his time.

• Additionally, during the Jewish War, the leaders of the Jewish rebellion compelled a great many people to act as prophets sent by God. These people were suborned to predict that God would deliver Israel from the Romans in order to encourage the people to continue fighting. One of these prophets was the cause of a multitude of deaths. According to Josephus, this man made a public declaration in Jerusalem that God had commanded the people to seek refuge in the temple where they would be miraculously delivered.

• Of course, Jesus warned His apostles to be on the look-out for such deliverers. Naturally, these predictions proved to be false and these false prophets were collectively responsible for a tremendous loss of life. (In verse 27 Jesus continues, and says)

  27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

• There are several ways to understand this apocalyptic verbiage and one or more of them could be correct – they are all that viable. First of all, re-listen to what Jesus says:

  For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.
• In the simplest of terms, we could say that the coming of the Son of Man would be quick, bright, and evidenced in signs in the sky from the east, and not his literal presence on the ground.
• In the Old Testament, when God was described as coming in the clouds, the spirit of the Lord was pictured riding dark storm clouds accompanied by rumblings of the earth, thunder, and lightning.
• Listen to 2 Samuel 22:10-15 as an example:
  - "He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his canopy around him—the dark rain clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence bolts of lightning blazed forth. The Lord thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy, with great bolts of lightning he routed them."
• In Matthew 24:27, Jesus promises to return in a like manner.
• The fact that Jesus likens his return to "lightning that comes from the east" illustrates the fact that when Christ comes on the clouds in judgment he will do so as the Lord had done in the past – riding on dark storm clouds accompanied by lightning.
• Matthew 24:27 was fulfilled both literally and symbolically in the Jewish War. Historical confirmation of the lightning marking the second coming of Christ may found in the writings of the Roman historian Tacitus who said:
  "In the sky appeared a vision of armies in conflict, of glittering armor. A sudden lightning flash from the clouds lit up the Temple. The doors of the holy place abruptly opened, a superhuman voice was heard to declare that the gods were leaving it, and in the same instant came the rushing tumult of their departure." [Josephus, Wars xxxiii]
• In this brief account, Tacitus, a secular Roman, may have unknowingly recorded the lightning flash associated with the heavenly return of Jesus. Admittedly, Tacitus recorded this in A.D. 66. But Jesus is describing the sign of His coming so it is possible Tacitus inadvertently reported something prophetic that he didn’t even understand.
• Also notice how Tacitus mentions "a superhuman voice was heard" which is literally an echo of 2 Samuel 22:14 which says:
  - 2 Samuel 22:14 The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice.
• Josephus also mentions this in his War of the Jews, saying:
"[B]efore sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities."[War, xxxiv]

- Perhaps the most detailed description of the second coming is found in Revelation 19:11-14:
  - “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”

- In these verses, Jesus is pictured riding a white horse leading an army of angels on horseback on the clouds. The description of the second coming in Revelation 19:11-14 and Josephus’ account of the army in the clouds over Israel bear an uncanny resemblance.

- Could both Tacitus and Josephus had unwittingly recorded the glorious second coming of Christ?

- Additionally, according to Tacitus:
  - "[a] sudden lightning flash from the clouds lit up the Temple."

  He seems to imply that lightning struck the Temple during what appears to be the miraculous appearance of Christ. Where did the Temple stand? On the “eastern” edge of Jerusalem. Therefore, if lightning struck the Temple, as Tacitus seems to imply, then in this event one can appreciate the literal fulfillment of the “lightning that comes from the east” mentioned in Matthew 24:27.

- It seems that the lightning Jesus mentions in verse 27 that would accompany the miraculous coming “of Christ on the clouds” was a sign for the Christians in Jerusalem to leave the city, first at the start of the war in Iyyar of A.D. 66 (which Tacitus reports) and then following the entrance of the Roman army into the city under Florus, and then later again in the fall of that same year.

- According to Josephus, Wars of the Jews 2.19.4, the second time Jerusalem was surrounded by armies (during the Jewish War) was when Cestius encamped with the 12th Legion on Mt. Scopus to the northeast of Jerusalem in Tishri - A.D. 66. This “12th Legion” was mustered out of Syria where it at one time guarded Rome’s eastern borders against the Parthians.
The 12th Legion had another name – “Legio duodecima Fulminata” which means “armed with lightning.” Additionally, the military flag of the 12th Legion which was flown wherever they went was none other than “a lightning bolt.” Again, this army was brought in from the eastern borders of the Roman Empire and encamped to the northeast of Jerusalem before entering the city. When they entered its flags bearing lightning bolt flying high, another possible sign connected to Matthew 24:27.

- Additionally, we have to note that the symbol of Rome was Aquila" who was the messenger of Jupiter that carried Jupiter's lightning bolt. Yet another way verse 27 had fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem.

- At verse 28 of Matthew 24 Jesus says: 
  - “For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”
- Vultures and eagles easily ascertain where dead bodies are, and come to devour them. So with the Roman army. Jerusalem is like a dead and putrid corpse. Its life is gone, and it is ready to be devoured. Could Jesus be saying that the Roman armies will find Jerusalem out (as an eagle would with a dead carcass) and will come around it, to devour it?
- When it comes to how God has always worked on fallen men and nations all that Jesus says rings true – where wickedness abounds God uses an instrument of chastisement to fall upon them – in this case, the Romans. It is interesting that Jesus does not use the term vulture to describe the invading Roman armies but truly the Greek describes eagles. To me, this speaks of a superior "hawkish" army of power coming in and overwhelming prey while it's still living and not just a crusty old buzzard picking on the bones of something already dead.
- Additionally, it is said that the Roman armies had eagles sewn onto the epaulets of their uniforms. More potentiality. Then, just prior to the fall of Jerusalem, the remaining Jewish rebels fled to the temple fortress of refuge. Eventually, the Romans broke into the temple causing a great massacre. Concerning the aftermath, Josephus writes:
  - “Nor was there any place in the city [of Jerusalem] that had no dead bodies in it, but what was entirely covered with those that were killed either by the famine or the rebellion; and all was full of the dead bodies of such as
had perished, either by that sedition or by that famine. [xxxvi]

• There is sound evidence in verse 28 (and later in Revelation 19:21) that these unburied bodies became food for the vultures. Listen - because of the apocalyptic nature of the words Jesus uses these explanations (which in my opinion are solid) are the weakest in proving His return in 70AD. Keep reading - there’s more to come.

Signs, the Son of Man in the Clouds, and this Generation

• Let’s continue to push through Jesus reply to Peter, James, John and Andrew’s questions:
  - “When will these things be, and what will be the sign of thy coming and the end of this age?”
• In verse 29 Jesus then adds:
  - 29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:
• Futurists love this passage because they don’t believe such things have happened yet and it gives them some things to seek in the heavens as signs that Jesus is on His way. Before explaining this verse I want you to read the following passage and then ask yourself, “Exactly what are these words describing?” Ready?
  - “For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.”
• What is this passage describing? For starters, it is found in Isaiah 13 and it is Isaiah's description of the destruction of Babylon! How about another?
  - ”Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.”
• What is being described? The destruction of Tyre as described by Isaiah in Isaiah 24:23! Now check this one out:
  - “And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their
host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the
vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree."

- Where is this written and what is it describing? The
slaughter in Bozrah and Idumea written in Isaiah 34:4! I’m
doing this to show how these passages certainly sound like
a description of the end of the world, don’t they? They
certainly describe things that once they have occurred that
the whole world would have recognized them and would speak
of them even till this day, right? Hardly. When was the
last time you heard of someone talking about the “slaughter
in Bozrah and Idumea” where “all the host of heaven was
dissolved,” and “the heavens were then rolled together as a
scroll?”

- The point is the Hebrew writers were renown for describing
God's visiting hand of judgment upon them in these very
descriptive terms. To take literary license and apply them
to our day is a foolish mistake.

- Here on the Mount of Olives Jesus is simply following suit
(since He authored the words Isaiah used to describe these
Old Testament judgments) by speaking in a way and with
language that those to whom He was sent (the House of
Israel) would understand. The imagery Jesus used to answer
His disciple's questions should not be taken any more
literally than we would take Isaiah 34:4! So “the
darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the
stars” could be translated as “an inexpressible calamity”
so could the overturning of Jerusalem (which Jesus is
describing) be summarized in the same manner. But instead
of Jesus simply saying, the destruction is going to be
great,” he uses Old Testament imagery to describe how bad
it will be. Luke’s account of Jesus words adds that there
would be a “distress of nations (with nations being ethnos
again, which could mean peoples of varied ethnicities
instead of actual nations) with perplexity; the sea and the
waves roaring; men's hearts falling them for fear, and for
looking after those things which are coming upon the
earth.”

- Again, all figures of speech describing a great and
terrible calamity but with very Hebrew imagery. Lines
like the “roaring of the waves of the sea” suggests a great
tumult and affliction among the people, “perplexity” means
doubt, “anxiety,” means people not knowing what to do to
escape. Etc., etc.

- For thousands of years, futurists have taken these very
descriptive, Hebraic literary tools that have been used for
centuries to describe actual events (which have already
occurred) and gotten us to believe they are still in our future because in their mind we have not experienced anything like how they are described. Moving on, those who believe in a worldwide second coming often quote Matthew 24:30 where Jesus says:

- "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

• For most futurists, this verse cannot be dismissed away. "This is proof that Jesus has not yet come because it describes something that has not happened or we would have heard about it," comes the claim. Those who read the NIV translation of the Bible should examine their Bibles closely relative to this verse. Why? Because in it there is a footnote after the line “all the peoples of the earth.”

• Do you know what the footnote says? “All the tribes of the land,” meaning the twelve tribes of Israel. Additionally, the Greek word translated “earth” in Matthew 24:30 is once again “ge” (and not kosmos) which can be a global term, though it is often used to specify an isolated city, kingdom or nation. Looking at context the interpretation is best applied to the Nation of Israel alone.

• At verse 30 I believe Jesus begins to answer the second question the apostles asked which was, “And what is the sign of thy coming.” Here Jesus says:

- 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

• Then He adds (using Hebraic language, of course)

- 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

• Now, while verse 31 sounds even more futuristic that verse 30, it is far easier to understand than 30 right off the bat. We know from previous studies that the word "anggelous" in the Greek (where we get angel) simply means messenger - of ANY kind - human, heavenly, disease - any messenger - ANYTHING God employs to rescue his people from danger. Biblically speaking it most commonly refers to the race of heavenly beings more exalted than man who is often employed in God's work among men. In either of these senses, this verse might refer to angelic deliverance granted to his believers amidst the calamities of
Jerusalem. I say this, in part, because of the mention of the "trump" sounding. To a Jew "a trump sounding" was a familiar thing as their assemblies were often initiated in this manner (Leviticus 25:9; Numbers 10:2; Judges 3:27).

For Jesus to say to these men here that angels are coming with the sound of a trump we have Him giving them a well-recognized picture taken from the Old Testament of a gathering of the chosen (or elect as verse 31 plainly states). I interpret Jesus words to mean that when He comes, angels will arrive and gather the elect (or the Christians) and help escort them to safety (in this case it was either to Pella or they were raptured up). However, it is the last two lines of the verse that make my interpretation difficult for people to believe, as Jesus says:

- "and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

It’s understandable to view these scriptures as futuristic - and they may very well have application in the futuristic sense. But it is a mistake to think that they do not have application to the context of what Jesus is saying here about the destruction of Jerusalem (and what we could consider His second coming). In this sense and setting, God gathered together His elect by sending forth his "messengers" (which could have been other spirit led humans AND/OR heavenly messengers) so they would not be destroyed along with the rest of Jerusalem.

Where Jesus says "the four winds" the Jews described the globe as being quartered - east, west, north, and south - and often expressed those quarters by the winds blowing from them. We could take this literally or as representing the north south east and west of that area where all believers had been scattered. Contextually, this makes the better historical sense.

Then we have another line that is easy to apply only to a futuristic sense, where Jesus says, "from one end of heaven to the other."

Really, this is just another way of saying, from every direction - from the four corners of the land. Listen to the passage again and hear the words the Lord chooses. Try and hear them relative to Jesus describing the destruction of Jerusalem and how the Christian believers would be saved from its ravages . . . see if you can apply his literary license to what would actually happen there in 70 AD. Ready:
“and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

The primary sense and purpose of Jesus saying these words were in response to the disciples three questions — this cannot be lost.

At this point, Jesus launches into a parable — right here on the Mount of Olives. He says:

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

In the parable or illustration, Jesus tells his four disciples there on the Mount of Olives to “LEARN” the Parable of the Fig Tree.

He tells them — sitting there with Him — to learn to apply this parable to all He has said. And He goes on and says:

"Just as when they could look at a fig tree and its leaves they could know that summer is near, likewise," He tells them, “When they begin to see these signs come to pass they would KNOW that it is near, even at the doors.”

What would be “at the doors?” What would be near happening? Everything the apostles had asked Him about! All that He has described to them! When they saw the signs it would be like viewing a fig tree and knowing that summer was on the way.

When THEY saw the signs . . .
- “The judgment upon Judah would be near.”
- “The desolation of Judah would be near.”
- “The destruction of the grand and glorious temple was near.”
- “The end of the Covenant age was near.”
- “And the return of Jesus, His second coming, was near.”

This brings us to the verse of which there is no getting around — Matthew 24:34

34 Verily I say unto you (Peter, James, John, and Andrew), This generation shall not pass, till all these things are fulfilled!

The Greek word here for generation is genea and it means “an age” — forty years if we are speaking contextually of a biblical age. Some people have tried to say that generation here means a people type — like the Jews — but
the Greek word for this type of generation is genos (see 1st Peter 2:9 (KJV) “But ye are a chosen generation . . . “)

• So how do we as believers explain Matthew 24:34?
• I would suggest that the Word can be trusted. Jesus (and His disciples) were right on, they meant what they said, what they said is what it means, and everything He described has occurred! But a futurist cannot agree to this faithful stance. They HAVE to either say Jesus was wrong or generation does not mean generation - and in either case, they have twisted the clear meaning to suit their twisted views.

• Did you know that even the great Christian thinker and apologist C.S. Lewis despaired at finding a solution to this dilemma? Typically a brother provided reasonable defenses of the Christian faith in this one instance he reluctantly conceded that skeptics had some ground upon which to stand.
• "Say what you like," he wrote, "we shall be told [by some critics - and at this point Lewis gives critics a voice, supposing that they could say], "the apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved to be false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared and indeed created, their delusion. He said in so many words, 'This generation shall not pass till all these things are done.' And he was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else."

• At this point in his narrative, Lewis stops giving voice to the complaints of the imaginary critics and adds, speaking of Matthew 24:34
• "It is certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible. Yet how teasing, also, that within fourteen words of it should come the statement "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." The one exhibition of error and the one confession of ignorance grow side by side. To this, the skeptic may reply, "If Jesus incorrectly predicted His return within the contemporaneous generation, but actually did not know that He was going to return within that time frame, then why did He so confidently assert that all of the words He had just spoken would come to pass in Matthew 24:35? He said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.'"
• We are all allowed mistakes and CS Lewis was not above making them. I do not judge the man as I love his heart and works for God. But to call this passage, “the most embarrassing in scripture,” was an error on his part. It is NOT embarrassing in the least – it was correct, it occurred and we have embarrassingly misunderstood this fact.

• Bringing more reason to the topic, in 1993, at the Covenant Eschatology Symposium in Mt. Dora Florida, another Christian scholar, R.C. Sproul (who is still alive and standing over Ligonier ministries) said this about the “this generation” passage spoken by Jesus and the Churches interpretation of it:

• “Maybe some church fathers made a mistake. Maybe our favorite theologians have made mistakes. I can abide with that. I can’t abide with Jesus being a false prophet because if I am to understand that Jesus is a false prophet, my faith is in vain.”

• Looking at the words of Jesus here to His apostles, we are left with only three real choices:
  - 1 He was speaking to them and He was speaking to what would exist again (for us) at another time with another coming, or
  - 2 He was speaking to them only (and He was absolutely correct in what He said), or
  - 3 He was speaking to them only (and He was wrong).

• We have already covered the meaning of generation above but the bottom line is: If Jesus words were not fulfilled completely within that generation CS Lewis description of our critic’s attacks against us were dead on – and Jesus was wrong – along with all of His chosen apostles. This is an impossibility in my book and it's time for pastors and churches to step up to the plate, admit that the descriptions of Jesus second coming were correct, and put the mistaken, errant, idiotic excuses and ideas of Man behind us. Jesus came, and all He said to the Pharisees in chapters 21-23, and to his Apostles about the temple at the end of Matthew 23, and all He has described in the first 33 verses of Matthew 24 have been fulfilled – period and like it or not.

• Resorting to more figurative language the Lord delivers yet another line that is frequently used to justify all sorts of things, but in context, the line relates to the validity of all Jesus has said here to these seeking men.
• In the face of this reality many people, at this point exclaim: “So where’s the hope, then? If He has come, what do Christians have to look forward to?”

• Ask yourself:

• What does or has the second coming and/or rapture meant to all the believers who have died physically since post 70 AD? Really? When we really think about it Jesus expected return has a very limited application to most believers, and will only affect one generation of His church, right? So why have we allowed ourselves to make such a big deal out of it?

• Secondly, why are Christians always hopping “He would just come back?” I mean, aren’t there a lot of people who have yet to receive Him by faith? Wouldn’t we want Him to delay His return rather than expedite it? It seems the desire for Jesus return is rather selfish, self-centered, and contrary to our hope that he would delay so more could receive Him before this life is over. In my opinion the self-centered “please Jesus come and destroy this world” attitude fostered and maintained by many churches today is frankly antithetical to a heart that does not want any to be left behind or cast into hell.

• Finally, we still have all of the elements of his return with us but our perspective has got to change on how it is applied. In other words, I am convinced that all believers experience a personal rapture (being taken up), a second coming, a judgment, and the experience of either being saved from hell and going to heaven or the reverse. And it all occurs at the moment of our individual and respective deaths.

• Just as the believers in Jerusalem were warned to prepare for His arrival, so are we – knowing we could personally and individually exit this world at any given moment – therefore we’d better always be ready. Since this has been the reality of every person to live since the post 70 AD destruction, why do we need to believe He is personally coming back to meet all of us in the air when we know we will all individually be caught up to meet Him at our respective deaths?

• The physical, material Kingdom is complete and all believers now relate to Him through spiritual means – not the physical. That was completed in 70AD with the end of that age.

• So now we all are freed to prepare our own individual existences for life with Him on high. We savor every moment of life knowing that it could end at any moment –
but whenever it does, we are, by faith, ready to meet Him—just like we would have been if we were living in Jerusalem in 70 AD.

After Jesus said in Matthew 24:34

- "Verily I say unto you" (to the Apostles with Him right there and then), "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."
- He then adds some even greater emphasis to this promise, saying:
- Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.
- Let's talk about this passage, and about what contextually speaking the phrase heaven and earth will pass away, and what the "last days" means from this reasonable biblical point of view. If we hear anything repeated over and over again today—among the churched and even the unbelieving communities—it is referenced to this being "the last days." Add in the speed and clarity with which technology keeps us in the loop of nearly every evil happening on earth and our fears and phobias tend to seem justified.
- Pandering to the fears keeps a majority of "believers" in the pews, reading the signs of these times and filling the storehouses with grain for the eminent tribulation ahead. Are heaven and earth getting ready to pass away? Are we in the last days truly right now? What do you use to support such a belief? Is it because your pastor keeps reminding you of it—like they have been reminding believers for nearly 2000 years? More importantly, are you reading the Bible to fill your fears? Do you read the Bible and believe it is telling you that these are the last days? We all read the same Bible. How come some don't read these things and you do? Perhaps the best way to put this debate to bed is to ask:
- When did the writers of the New Testament believe “the last days” were happening?
- Obviously, in the New Testament Jesus had come to earth. He came to fulfill all the Law and the Prophets. The Old Testament prophesied of Him and His time, and the New Testament was a fulfillment of Him doing all that was said
of Him. In the Old Testament book of Joel, we read of one of these prophesies. It says:

- Joel 2:28-29  And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

• Jumping to the New Testament, on the Day of Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit fell on a large group and some supposed they had been drinking) we read: (listen carefully)

- Act 2:14-21  But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, “Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

• But this (what you are seeing) is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days (in those LAST DAYS) of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy; and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

• When did Peter believe the LAST DAYS were? Right then and there, my friends. If we jump to the first verse in the Book of Hebrews we discover when the writer of Hebrews believed the last days to be. Ready? Hebrews 1:1-2 says:

- “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days . . . spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”

• We are talking almost two thousand years ago the writers of the New Testament narrative spoke and wrote that they were in the last days? What gives? We can't suggest they were talking about something else or we would be totally dishonest with ourselves. So what most futurists say is, "Well they were writing by the Holy Spirit and didn't
really know what they were saying because it was all for us in our day and age. But this is not true. They were writing to actual people, in actual places who were reading and trusting their actual words as being inspired. So when they wrote, "in these last days" the recipients of their words trusted that they knew what they were talking about and that they were truly in the last days.

• Of course, the futurists fumble around and try to explain these passages:
  • “Ya see, Shawn, the last days started way back yonder and continue to us today! That’s what these passages mean!”
  • But the whole Old Testament economy under the law of Moses lasted only about 1500 years and we are supposed to believe that “last days” spoken of by Peter and the writer of Hebrews has lasted for nearly 2000 years!
  • There is absolutely no biblical support that suggests that the last days started in the New Testament and have extended out to our day and age. So of what last days does the Bible speak? Who was the Bible written to? What was being “wrapped up,” what was “ending” once Jesus came and fulfilled all that was prophesied would be fulfilled? Does the Bible anywhere say anything about the book being written so it could all be applied to our day and age?
  • Extending “the last days” is one of the only options futurists have to explain their view that Jesus has not returned and is just around the corner. That, and the claim that the apostles, when they wrote about the Last Days had no idea what they were talking about either! And that position is even more difficult to accept.
  • We are NOT living in the last days - not from a biblical perspective. The Bible was written to the Jews, and to the early converts (most of whom were Jews) and is a record of how Jesus glorious Good News sprang forth to the world and of a wrapping up of all God did dealing with that age which was ending.
  • In 1st John, the beloved apostle wrote this:
    - 1st John 2:18 “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.”
  • We’ve talked about the Last Days (a term used by Peter and the writer of Hebrews) and now John, who wrote last among the apostles, giving us an even more specific allusion to time! He says:
  • It is “the last time” twice (in the King James the Greek term translated to last time is taken from the Greek term
horah (who-rah) which means “hour.” So John is saying it’s the last hour! Peter used the term “last days” in his narrative which was written years before John but when we get to John’s epistle he says, “the last Hour” twice! When a generation gets to the “last day” of the “last days they are then left with remaining hours, and then ultimately, the “last hour.” This is what John is saying here – nearly two thousand years ago – it was “the last hour!”

- And remember, John was sitting on the Mount of Olives with Jesus and was one of the apostles who asked, “Lord, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of thy coming, and the end of this age?” (which futurists love to read as “and of the end of the world”).
- This same John, so many years (decades) later, when he saw everything Jesus had warned about coming into play, who knew the signs of the end of their world, was bold enough to put away the phrase “last days,” and actually used the “last hour.”
- He encouraged his “little children” to hang on, that the end was imminent, that the end was more than near, it was at hand. So we have to ask ourselves if they were in the last days – even the last hour – then . . . how could we still be in the last days . . . here and now? We couldn't. We have been fed a myth.
- Here’s the deal – they were in the last days of that physical economy of religion. We too are in the last days of our respective lives – every second – never knowing when we will be called forth. We will be similarly taken up or left behind to face salvation or destruction. I mean the spiritual application to our lives would take years to properly articulate, but it is high time we take the idiocy of taking this contents of this book – especially when it comes to making it apply to us and this age – and trying to twist it all to this time.
- What was actually ending in these last days and hours in the New Testament? What was passing away in the early church which was established by Lord and His Hebrew Apostles? The Age of Moses and the Prophets was what was in its last days and was passing away, making way for who and what? Christ and His Church. The age of the Old Covenant was in its last days and was passing away, making room for the New Covenant. Is this discussed in the Bible?
Listen closely to what the writer of Hebrews says in chapter 8 beginning at verse 6:
- 6 But now hath he (Christ Jesus) obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.
- 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.
- 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:
- 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
- 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:
- 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.
- 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.
- 13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

• So the age of being in God's family by blood, by genealogy, by being Abraham's descendant, was coming to an end. These were the last days of all of that. Now there is no difference between Jew and Greek, male and female, bond and free — they were in the LAST DAYS of all of that and the world with the age of anyone coming into the family of God opening up to the world.
• Additionally, the age where natural Jerusalem being “the place where men ought to worship,” (as Jesus said) was giving way to the time when, as Jesus said, “when ye shall neither worship in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem” will worship the Father.
• Instead, those were the last days of all of that. Now, (again as Jesus intimated) the Father seeks those to worship Him in spirit and in truth.” Then (and LDS people need to pay particular attention to this) the last days of a Levitical priesthood were coming as well. The genealogies of the Jews were about to totally be wiped out.
in the destruction of the temple and the time was coming when God would establish a “royal priesthood of believers – male and female – rather than a priesthood by direct lineage.

• The Law of Moses – harsh and condemnatory was ending – in its last days – and was being replaced by grace and truth and love of Christ Jesus.
• And so (finally, it’s taken some time) we come to the words Jesus said in Matthew 24:35:
  - "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words (to you Apostles about all of this) shall not pass away."

Listen closely,

• The old physical Jerusalem was in its last days and would soon be gone. In its place, a NEW JERUSALEM, a NEW SPIRITUAL CITY which is above, which is the mother of us all, the city of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem was about to come.
• Ever wonder what Paul meant when he said in Galatians 4:26:
  - “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.”
• This is not a physical Jerusalem restored. It is all spiritual now. We have no idea who are real Jews of the right priesthood or lineage. And it does not really matter because in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek. Where is the New Jerusalem?

- Hebrews 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,
  - 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,
• These things have nothing to do with physical restoration or Zionism, or any of that. Christ did something better, gave something better, established something better and it was no longer tied to the physical of a physical people and nation.
• Speaking to Jewish converts to Christianity, the writer of Hebrews said:
  - Hebrews 13:14 “For here have we no “continuing city,” (Not a material earthly city) but we seek one to come.”
• So when Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away” (within “that generation,” by the way) He was not speaking of literal heaven and literal earth (as zealous, unthinking literal futurists love to imply) but he was speaking of everything related to that world, that age – they were in the last days of all of that. He was preparing for a “new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwell righteousness,”

• So let’s put another nail in the New heaven and new earth mess that the futurists have created. In Isaiah, there is a fascinating set of passages which say to the nation of Israel:

  - “But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”

• We are reading these passages from Isaiah to help illustrate Hebrew writing style and inference. Here God is saying that He brought Israel through the Red Sea, and then at Sinai, He put His words in their mouths by giving them the law and then establishing them as His people. In doing this God says this line:

  - “That I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth.”

• We all know that He literally planted the heavens and literally laid the foundations of the earth well before this in Genesis so we can see that such language is figurative; that in culling the Nation of Israel out for His purposes God is figuratively (or spiritually) planting a new heaven and new earth for them. So when Jesus says:

  - “Heaven and earth will pass away”

• it is the heaven and earth established when God created and carved out Israel that He is speaking about not the literal heavens and the literal earth upon which we are still living some 2000 years later. Get it?

• Remember what Paul said in 1st Corinthians 7:31? He said

  - “the fashion of this world passeth away.”

• Which world was Paul talking about? The only fashion of a world Paul could have been writing about was the Nation of Israel, Judaism. John says something similar in 1st John 2:17
"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Both Paul and John were speaking of the world and the fashion of it "PASSING AWAY." But it was not the natural world. It was the heavens and earth created when God culled the Nation of Israel out. It was that world and its fashions. In place of this former system of Law, and condemnation, and religion, and ordinances, and objective rites and demands was a far more glorious way:

- God would write His laws upon our hearts and minds and He would be our God and we would be His people subjectively and not through yet another system of religion. Speaking of the last days of the former system being replaced by Latter-days of subjective relationship, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:11 - "For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious."

- John put it this way in describing what remains and what it looks like, saying:

  1st John 2:8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

Way back then the whole former system was utterly getting ready to completely decay. The new has no vestiges of the old or former. The new is spiritual, heavenly, based in grace, not in law whatsoever, based on faith first followed by love. Church and playing church and using the New Testament as a new law to beat each other with was never the plan. He writes His laws upon our hearts and minds and no man needs to teach His neighbor anything for we (believers) will all know Him.

- Let reiterate from Hebrews 8 where the writer says plainly, of the former Jerusalem, of the former Law, of the covenants, of religion, of demands, he says:

  Hebrews 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

  9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

  10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:
And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

Jonathon Edwards, the author of “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” said in 1736:

"Tis evident that when Christ speaks of HIS COMING; His being revealed: His coming in His kingdom; or His Kingdom coming; He has respect to His appearing in those great works of His power, Justice and Grace, WHICH SHOULD BE IN THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM and other extraordinary providences which should attend it (meaning the destruction of Jerusalem.)"

RC SProul, in his book, The Last Days According to Jesus (page 158) wrote:

"The coming of Christ in AD 70 was a coming in judgment on the Jewish nation, indicating the end of the Jewish age and the FULFILLMENT of a day of the Lord. Jesus really did come in judgment at this time, FULFILLING his prophecy in the Olivet discourse."

Thus far in Matthew 24, we have read through Jesus words up to verse 35, where He said:

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Up to this point, Jesus has responded generally to the questions:

“When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming (note, they did not ask, when shall be the day of thy coming but the sign – which He has abundantly delivered), and the end of the age.”

Now it seems at this point he begins to speak directly to the actual day that He will return and says in verse 36:
- 36 "But of that day (singular, meaning the specific day) and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

- Notice a change in focus compared to the previous verses wherein verses:

- 19 He says And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

- In verse 22 He said:

- "And except those days should be shortened," there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened.

- And then in verse 29, he says:

- "And immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

- Suddenly, however, here in verse 36, He speaks of a specific day? Why? Because up to verse 36 Jesus was describing to them when all the things He had been warning about would happen and the signs that would precede His arrival. But now in verse 36, He addresses the actual day of His coming, which would wrap up the end of the age (or the "end of the world"). So He says:

- 36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

- Not only does He get more specific here Jesus admits something to His disciples – He did not know the day or hour of His return. “But my Father only,” Jesus says. Plain and simple.

- In John 14:28 Jesus says to His disciples:

- "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I."

- The Greek word for greater here is “miezon” and it literally means, “larger and or older” but in scripture, the word is used forty plus times and almost always means superior - like the way we would use greater. Part of the Trinitarian creedal system of Man is to say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-equal. I do not understand this belief in light of what Jesus Himself says of He and the Father. For instance, consider John 12:44-50, where Jesus actually cries:

- "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come "a
light" into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”

- Scripture likens the true and living invisible God to love, fire and light – and we have long said that His light and fire and love filled His only literal Son who was completely covered in flesh as a means to reveal the Invisible God to the world. In any case, we can see here that Jesus (the Man) as in "no man knows the day or the hour" Jesus did not know the exact time ONLY His Father did.

- Then He adds this caveat:
  - 37 “But” (in other words, “But where I cannot tell you the exact day or hour” I can tell you this) “as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.
  - 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,
  - 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

- Now, in the first 35 verses, Jesus is describing the signs of his coming and the end of the age. I believe the signs were exactly that - signs that would stand out amidst an otherwise typical everyday life scenario. At verse 36 Jesus, having described the signs of His coming reveals that the exact day and hour He cannot say because He does not know them. But He does give them something. In verses 37 through 39 He warns them to remain alert because the day of His actual coming will be like the day it started raining on Noah and His ark. People will be doing regular things - eating, drinking, marrying and getting betrothed, and nobody was aware that the day was at hand until the first raindrops fell. And He wraps this up saying to them:
  - “So shall the Coming (not the sign of His coming anymore but His actual coming) be.”

- Now, the next verses are rejected by many traditional Preterists as speaking of the rapture because of its connection to Noah and the flood. Instead, they suggest
that verses 40-42 are speaking of the wicked being taken (as they were in the days of Noah) and not the righteous. This is what verses 40-42 have Jesus say:
- 40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.
- 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.
- 42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

• Could it be that this speaks of the rapture of believers who were in the Lord's Church prior to 70 AD? It's entirely possible that there were Jewish converts who recognized the Messiah for who He was (from the promises in the Old Testament) and being the faithful received and believed on Him and were rewarded by being taken up prior to the utter destruction of Jerusalem.

• "Were all believers at that time taken then," is a common question. We can’t say. Maybe the gentile converts were left to carry the word forward. Maybe John was too. All I can say is Jesus has plainly described the signs of His coming and he is speaking of one being left and one being taken in the context OF His coming. Taking scripture plainly, it seems to me that what He was describing to four of His twelve applied to them and one would be left in the field when another was taken. What we can also say, definitively, it that to take these passages and apply them to our day totally ignores the setting, the audience, and the context of what Jesus says here in Matthew 24.

• At verse 43 Jesus now offers these four apostles a parable. It is given in light of what He has just said about not knowing the day or hour and that His coming would be a surprise. So He adds

- 43 But . . . know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."

• In other words, be like a watchful goodman over his house, who would never allow a thief to sneak up on his house.

- 44 Therefore (in light of this parable, He warns these four) be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

• It seems that the Lord is saying, "you know the signs – look for them. But remember, things will also appear quite normative – as they were in the days of Noah before the rain began to fall. And at this point, He appears to instruct them on being good servants now, on living up to
what they were called to do in His name in the face of all this. So He says (or asks):
- 45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?
- 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.
- In other words, Jesus seems to say, “Which of you will be found a faithful and wise servant? Which of you, who have been made a ruler over my church will do my will, and feed my household and will be seen as a blessed servant because you are so doing such things when I return.”
- 47 Verily I say unto you, (He says at verse 47) That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.
- And then He gives them a warning, saying:
- 48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, “My lord delayeth his coming;”
- 49 And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;
- 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,
- 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- It is an obvious stern warning to these four that they need to remain vigilant until the day He appears; to not rest back on their laurels, to refuse the attitude of eat drink and be merry but to hold fast serving until His return. But this is just one view of verses 45-51. There is another just as cogent thought that says Jesus here was speaking of the prophets of the House of Israel in his description of their ultimate destruction.
- It is a personal decision what people think Jesus is speaking to in all of these passages. Reason and context seem to clearly suggest that all He said had to do with them at that age and not to any of us thereafter.

That is Matthew 24 (along with insights taken from Mark 13 and Luke 21-24 which cover the same teaching of Jesus on the Mount of Olives).

The Lord would have been highly misleading, and frankly incorrect, if He has spent all of this time talking with four
(of His twelve) and describing all of this stuff, and personalizing it to them (“ye,” “ye,” “you,”) only to have been describing a bunch of stuff not applicable to them.

Let’s now wrap up some other highlight verses from the Gospel accounts to bolster the argument that the Bible clearly says Jesus returned in 70 AD.

They are found in:

Matthew 16:27-28
John 21:21-23
Matthew 26:64
Matthew 10:23

Matthew 16:27-28

• In Matthew 16:27-28 Jesus clearly says something reasonable and logical about His return. He says:
  - Matthew 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.
  - 28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.
• Pretty straightforward, eh?
  - 28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.
• Do you know how the futurists explain this? They say Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit falling on the day of Pentecost! Have you ever heard of the Holy Spirit being called “the Son of man?”
• Because they can’t accept that He has already come they have created a fiction out of scripture saying that the Holy Spirit falling on Pentecost is the fulfillment of this passage.
• By the way, to add some flame to this powder keg of a passage, let’s look at a few additional bits of information about them.

• When we read in the King James verse 27, where Jesus says:
  - Matthew 16:27 “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

• We really don’t get much information from the English about our question, “When does the Bible say Jesus will return?”

• But when we turn to the Greek our eyes are illuminated. Why? Because when the first line says “For the Son of man shall come,” the word shall in Greek is “mello,” which does not allow for a long period of time to pass between the pronouncement and the fulfillment.

• This is why all the literal New Testament translations say
  - “For the Son of Man is about to come in the Glory of His Father.”

• Now, when futurists argue that this speaks of Pentecost we know that this could not mean Pentecost because well after Pentecost the apostles were still writing about “the glorious appearing to come.” If Jesus words here were fulfilled at Pentecost, we would never read Paul saying in Titus 2:13 that they were:
  - “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

• Finally, note one last important little detail – the phrase coming of the Son of Man or the words coming (tied to) the line Son of Man, are only used by Jesus in Matthew, Mark, and Luke? Never anywhere after Jesus life do any of the apostles use the phrase Son of Man in connection with Christ coming. The Apostles always refer to Him (post-ascension) as the Son of God, and only in Acts is Son of Man used but it is not in connection to his return but to His standing on the right hand of the Father.

• This is because Jesus, when speaking of His return, always uses the title, Son of Man in connection to it because His return was going to be for His brethren the Jews – and to them, this was how He referred to Himself. Even to Caiaphas, He referred to Himself as the Son of Man coming in the clouds, not the Son of God. However, when Paul (apostle to the Gentiles) writes of Him it is never Son of Man, but always Son of God.

• So we have yet another evidence that Jesus came back to the House of Israel, His brethren, as the Son of Man but there is no reference of His return to the rest of the world (who know Him as the Son of God).
By the way, one more aside to this line of thinking:

My middle daughter Cassidy pointed out to me that in some ways the Christian church is no different than Jews today.

- "What do you mean?" I asked.
- "Well," she said, "the Jews today are still waiting for the Messiah to show up on the scene and a lot of Christians are still waiting for Him to come back. But both parties have yet to see that He has both come (the first time) and that He has come back (the second time) and everything is finished— in Him."

It’s a fantastic point. Just the other day I had an ardent defender of futurism tell me that she is convinced Jesus is coming back to establish a literal physical kingdom here upon the earth. Remembering Cassidy’s insight I replied, "And that position is the very same way the Jews in Jesus day viewed the Messiah – as a literal earthly king. But Jesus clearly made it known that His Kingdom was not of this world."

John 21:20-23

We then we have a unique discussion that Jesus has with Peter in John 21. Peter has just been rebuked (in a sense) by the Lord and was reminded indirectly in the rebuke that he had denied the Lord. He was then told by Jesus that he was going to suffer for His name's sake. We then read in verse 20-23:

- John 21:20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?
- 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do?
- 22 Jesus saith unto him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."
- 23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

Jesus here plainly tells Peter, “what business is it of yours if I want this disciple (who was presumably John) to live until I return?”
• This automatically implies that His return would be within a reasonable period of time - not some 2000 years later. In fact, a rumor was spread that the disciple would not experience death but John clarifies the matter, and bringing in reason says in verse 23:
  - Jesus said not unto him, “He shall not die;” but, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”
• It stands to reason that they believed Jesus return would come within a reasonable amount of years and not so far out in the future that magical thinking had to be in place for it to be believable.

Matthew 26:63

• In Matthew 26 we read of Jesus standing before Caiaphas, the High Priest. This is what the account says in verse 63:
  - Matthew 26:63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.”
  - 64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou (Caiaphas) hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”
• That is one heck of a bold statement and it would have no wriggle room at all to prove Jesus return except for two points. Reading it in the English it seems to have Jesus telling Caiaphas that He would personally see Jesus both sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.” The problem is Caiaphas died in 37 AD - so was Jesus wrong? The key, as usual, lies in the Greek.
• Let’s re-read verse 64 with proper Greek tense.
  - 64 “Jesus saith unto him, Thou (singular - meaning, “You, Caiaphas”) hast said: nevertheless I say unto you (plural - the Nation that Caiaphas represented), Hereafter shall ye (plural - the nation that Caiphas represented there in Jerusalem) shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”
• Understanding the verse in this manner allows us to see that first, Jesus was not wrong, and two, His words were fulfilled when the people Caiaphas represented as high priest of that area at the time were around when Jesus returned in 70 AD.
Matthew 10:18-23

- Finally, in Matthew 10 beginning at verse 18-23 Jesus says to His disciples:

  - Matthew 10:18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.
  - 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.
  - 20 For it is not ye that speaks, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.
  - 21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.
  - 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.
  - 23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, (this is the applicable part) Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man come."

- The Revised Version puts this last verse this way:

  - "When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of man comes."

- The Twentieth Century Translation says:

  - "But, when they persecute you in one town, escape to the next; for, I tell you, you will not have come to the end of the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

- And Weymouth's Literal Translation says:

  - "... for I solemnly tell you that you will not have gone the round of all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

- Again, was Jesus wrong - or have we been wrong all along?

- I would strongly suggest the latter.
Eternal Punishment

Within Christianity, there are several scenarios or perspectives from where "after-life punishment" must be considered.

- First, from the Old Testament perspective.
- Second, from the New Testament to 70AD perspective, and
- Third, after 70 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem (see Eschatology above).

In order to grasp the third scenario (which applies to us in our day), the first and second must be understood. Let's look at each of the respectively.

The First Scenario of After-Life Punishment

The Old Testament

- From everything the Old Testament seems to suggest, the afterlife destination for every departed soul was sheol, known as “the covered place.”
- Sheol (which was later translated to hell by the King James translators) consisted of a dark holding cell (so to speak) which was also known as a prison and a place likened unto a beautiful place of rest, called paradise.
- While the two different names tend to describe very different environments, we must note that they were both part, or under the roof, of the covered place. In other words, sheol (the covered place) had two compartments - prison and paradise - but both places were separated from the presence of God.
- Based on the parabolic teachings of Jesus there was an impassable chasm or gulf between prison and paradise (also called Abraham's bosom) which separated them from each other.
- It is of note that all Old Testament characters - from Cain to Abraham, and from Moses to Isaiah - went to Sheol when they died. Some (the faithless) went to prison and others (the faithful) went to paradise. But all remained separated from God until Christ's atoning work.

The Second Scenario of After-life Punishment

From the Gospels to 70AD
This scenario is what most Christians today read about in the Bible and believe is the destination for all who have not received Jesus as Lord and Savior now—that there is "eternal suffering" awaiting them in endless and literal flames of hell. At first glance, especially in King James, the New Testament seems to support this idea. We will spend our time here illustrating that this view is at best misleading, and at worst, completely wrong.

- Whether hell or lake of fire, the Bible describes the reactions people have to them as painful. “Weeping, gnashing of teeth, torments, and tormented in flames.”
- The physical descriptions include:
  - "Darkness, outer darkness, chains of darkness, and the blackness of darkness" and then ever paradoxically, "hell fire, a furnace of fire, everlasting fire, fire that shall not be quenched, damnation, (a place where) "the wrath of God abides on them," "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, from the glory of His power, "the perdition of ungodly men," "torments ascending up forever and ever, no rest day and night," "everlasting contempt, and "a lake of fire."
- Those who are said to go there are described as: “them that work iniquity,” (listen) “the children of the Kingdom (Matthew 8:12), people who say, “thou fool” are in danger of it, “all things that offend,” “those on the left hand,” “the goats,” those “whose feet or hands offend,” Jesus described one inhabitant only saying he was a “rich man who lived sumptuously everyday,” “those who have done evil,” “raging waves,” “wandering stars,” “those who worship the beast and his image and whosoever receives the mark of the beast,” and regarding the Lake of Fire, Revelation 21:8 says these are they who will have their part in it . . . ready?
  - "The fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars."
- These are not a place anyone anytime would want to step foot in.
- Taking all of this into account, we have those who believe hell and the lake of fire consist of literal flames being applied to the actual flesh of a resident forever and ever.
- Any deviation from this interpretation is considered heretical.
- And while I do NOT downplay the torments of after-life punishments experienced in hell and/or the Lake of Fire, I am
personally unconvinced that these interpretations and applications hold water – especially in the afterlives of people today.

We will spend the rest of this segment explaining why. Let’s begin with just a minor example observed from scripture.

- When Jesus had a chance to tell a story about hell, in the story of the Rich man and Lazarus, He has the Rich Man (while described as awfully thirsty) carrying on a rather intelligent conversation with those on the Paradise side of hell. I would think if his flesh was literally on fire (with literal flames) no such conversation would be possible.
- We might wonder why Jesus didn’t say, “and Lazarus looked down from Abrahams bosom and saw the Rich man on fire, and screaming in unconscionable pain?”
- We have to be careful not to maniacally apply literalism to places where God is speaking in concepts. Admittedly, sometimes it’s hard to tell which is which.

Now, one thing almost all of us do – partially because it is convenient – is to refer to hell as the catchphrase for where everyone has gone (or will go) who has not gone to heaven.

In light of scripture, this practice not only adds to the confusion of the topic but is wrong.

Again, going back to the Old Testament we have the Hebrew word Sheol.

And really this place ought to be referred to as the realm of the unknown. The Hebrews translated Sheol as the grave, as a pit, and a place (listen) for both the evil AND the good. In essence, Sheol is the covered holding tank for souls prior to Christ ascending.

It was comprised of prison and paradise.

The Old Testament translators frequently called it hell but remember, it was the holding for all disembodied spirits.

In the New Testament, the word finds its equivalent in the Greek word Hades. Again, and unfortunately, it is in the English that hades is translated to hell (as in the burning place).
We read in Revelation 20:14 that the keys to Hades and Hades itself will be cast into the Lake of Fire so we can see that it is different from the Lake of Fire . . . that hell is NOT the lake of fire.

Got that?

Another term used for hell is the Greek word Tartarus, and it is only used once (in II Peter 2:4) It is best-translated pit of gloom, a pit of darkness and is considered by some to be lower parts of Hades - the prison part. Prior to Christ's victory, those in Paradise and those in Prison of Sheol or Hades waited.

Christ took paradise with Him to heaven but the prison part remained as the holding tank (so to speak) for the faithless.

Genhenna is another word translated by King James as hell. It was actually a real place - a trash heap in the southeast of Jerusalem - where fires burned the bodies of criminals and the remains of dead animals. It was formerly a place where human sacrifices took place, offered to the pagan god Molech so it had a VERY bad association with the Jews and Jesus used it to describe prison part of Sheol, Hades, Tartarus.

Here many people believe that this describes the ultimate end of people who reject Christ. But it is a term used symbolically.

Even James the apostle uses the term to describe the human tongue - so this is NOT an allusion to the Lake of Fire spoken of in Revelation.

In other words, hell and the Lake of Fire (with all of its inherent descriptions) are two different places. Get this right and you will be well ahead of the game in terms of understanding.

If we turn to Revelation chapter 20:13 we read that at the time of the Great White Throne judgment:

- “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”
The best definition of eternal punishment is found in the next few verses of Revelation 20 where it reads:

- “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

So if we really want to argue where unbelievers went after life in Jesus' day, we would say they first went to hell (the dark, unwelcoming place) and then to the lake of Fire when Jesus returned (see Eschatology).

Again, they are NOT one in the same.

Now, scripture tells us that the Lake of Fire was prepared for Satan and His angels. Jesus tells us so in Matthew 25:41, saying:

- “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Take note, it was NOT prepared for Man.

Revelation 20:7 and 10 tell us that after Christ's return Satan will be thrown into the Lake of Fire so if we consider the contents in "Eschatology" above, I think we are mistaken to believe he is roaming free today (see Satan below).

So, let me briefly summarize. I think we could all agree that when scripture speaks of Hades, Gehenna, Tartarus, Sheol it is where all unbelievers in New Testament times went immediately upon death); that this is a dark and dreaded place of torment but it is NOT the place of fire and it will give up its dead to be judged later. Then, what we are really talking about when we are speaking on the eternality of suffering in flames is the place scripture calls the Lake of Fire.

Accordingly . . .

• Hell is not the Lake of Fire.
• Hell does not have flames but is dark and tormenting.
• Hell gives up its dead.
• The Lake of Fire was prepared for the Devil and his angels.
• In New Testament times the Lake of Fire was a future experience for some.
And that the Lake of Fire is only described in Revelation chapter 19-21.

So what is this Lake of Fire? Revelation describes it in one sentence: “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

Every one of us experiences the first death. 1st Corinthians 15:22 says it –

“For as in Adam all die,”

But not everyone will experience the second death. Who experiences this second death? What is it? And is it eternal?

Revelation tells us plainly who will experience the second death.

Revelation 20:15 says, speaking of those people in that day and age:

- “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (And we know that this is considered the second death).

Let’s pause here and gather up our thoughts in summary.

Since hell will give up its dead, we cannot say (and be correct) that hell is eternal.

No matter how tormenting and dark the holding tank may be, it will end, and all those in it will be brought forth the great white throne and will be judged. This has occurred at the end of that age (see Eschatology above)

If their names were NOT found written in the Lambs Book of Life, they were to be cast into the Lake of Fire which was not created for them! It was created by Satan and his angels. Therefore, is the Lake of Fire eternal? We will see.

Reading the King James (and probably your NIV’s and ESV’s) we are presented with English words that tend to say in absolute terms, yes, the Lake of Fire suffering is eternal, everlasting, endless, etc., etc. After all, it is called, the second death, right?
(By the way, have you ever considered the fact that while all human beings die and are dead spiritually because of Adam we are all still existing after experiencing these deaths? Weird huh?)

Anyway. Let’s take an example from the King James. Matthew 25:41 Jesus describes “the smoke of their torment going up forever and ever,” and Revelation 20:10 says, “they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Such passages lead us to believe that the punishment is unending or forever. If how the King James Translators translated these passages then the idea would be sound. But here’s the deal:

Where we have the word eternal or everlasting in passages found in the King James and other translations, other Bible Translations, (like "Young's LITERAL translation" or "Weymouth's New Testament" or "Rotherham's Emphasized Bible" or the "Concordant New Testament") say something a bit different. They say "age-abiding" torments.

As an example, where the King James says in Matthew 25:46 –

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

These other translations read:

“And these last will go away 'into aeonian punishment,' but the righteous 'into aeonian life.'"

OR

"And these shall go away into the Punishment of the Ages, but the righteous into the Life of the Ages."

“And these shall go away to punishment age-during, but the righteous to life age-during.”

Why the difference?

It all comes down to the Greek noun “Aion” and the adjective, “Aionious.” In the King James, which takes this Greek word and translates it, “forever and ever,” other MORE literal translations of the Greek to the English would translate it, “unto the ages of ages.”
What is an age? A period of time.

The noun aheeohn (aion) means "age." Period. A specific period of time. It begins and it ends. But when some translators got to the adjective, they honestly translated it to the opposite meaning, “without end, without beginning, without beginning or ending.”

I would first and foremost suggest that this is at best a dubious development of the adjective from the noun.

I can say this because the adjective simply does not work in many passages of the New Testament. For example (and you can take note of these passages) Romans 16: 25; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; and Philemon 15 - all of them define "aionous" as the world, which had a beginning and will have an end, instead of as eternal.

But let’s explain this in another way.

When we take the Greek Word “aion” and it’s adjective, “aionous” we know they have a given meaning - from the root word age or eon.

Every time the Greek terms are used they ought to translate into age-related phraseology. Instead of remaining true to the definitional root of the Greek Word, the King James translators took aionon and aionous and subjectively translated the terms depending on the context of what the passage was talking about and according to the religious traditions of their day!

Why would they do this? Because they were intent on maintaining doctrinal purity as they translated.

In most cases, this proved beneficial and congruent but in the case of eternal punishment, it was a fail. So along comes these other scholars (like Rotherham and Young or Weymouth) and instead of translating Greek words into English words they thought fit best, they produced literal translations of each Greek word every time it showed up in the text.

Therefore, Rotherham (and other literal) translations read consistently regarding the Greek. Every time we come across the Greek word aionos or aionious in them we find an age-related definition. But with the King James (and others) which
took up doctrinal causes as their priority, we are presented with prejudicial confusion.

Why do I say this?

Because of the King James translators, instead of ever translating aionos and aionious in terms of the English word, "age" (a period of time with a beginning and an end) they translate the terms 197 times using all of the following English words.

For the noun aion they used the English words

Ever (72 times)
World (40)
NEVER (7)
Evermore (2)
Course (1)

And for the adjective, they translated the Greek word aionous

Eternal (42)
Everlasting (25)
World (3)
And Ever (1)

Only twice out of 197 times were the Greek words in the King James translated correctly! The exact same Greek word in one place is translated eternal and in another place, it is translated "never," and in another, it is translated, "world." Amazing!

There are forty places in the King James where the Greek Word aion is translated "world." The Greek word for world is kosmos, not aion.

Aion means age.

So, if we read these literal translations we discover that the Bible, from the Greek, literally does not teach eternality of the lake of fire but an "age-abiding term in the lake of fire. This makes sense when humans go to a place that was created by Satan and his angels.
“The smoke ascends up unto the ages of ages, not forever and ever.”

Reading the Greek properly, we would read the following passages like this:

God has a “purpose of the ages” Ephesians 3:11
He is the “King of the ages” 1st Timothy 1:17
He prepared “the ages by His word” Hebrews 11:3.

A final thought:

There are two very simple Greek words that would have cleared all of this up had they been used. They are akatalous and aperantos. They both clearly mean endless.

1st Timothy 1:4 speaks of endless genealogies” (akatalous) and Hebrews 7:16 speaks of the power of an endless life (aperantos). The word immortal (athanatos) and immortality (aptharsia) also indicate never-ending-ness but none of these clearly defined terms (which denote eternal and endless) are ever used to describe hell, damnation, punishment for sin, or time in the Lake of Fire.

Additionally, there are two simple prevalent adverbs in the New Testament which would have made the argument decisive regarding punishment being eternal – aei (which means always) and pantote (which means evermore) but again, neither of them are ever used to describe damnation, hell, punishment for sin, or time in the Lake of Fire.

It is of interest that the super strong phrase “to the uttermost” is used only once. Does it describe hell? Or punishment in the lake of fire? Nope – Neither. It describes God’s ability at saving us.

Jude 25 says the glory of Christ shall last “to ALL the ages . . .” had this been applied only once to punishment the argument would be over.

But it’s not.

The Greek phrase “for perpetuity” could have also been used to describe the Lake of Fire punishment – but it is only used to describe God and ultimate sanctification.
No Greek word that truly is used to describe forever, forevermore, evermore, always, endless, to the uttermost, etc. is ever connected to after-life punishment . . . but the terms that are related to age (to a beginning and an end) are.


It might be helpful as it says, talking about the Greek word aionios:

"In general, the word depicts that of which the horizon is not in view . . ." (p.16). If the horizon of the extermination spoken of by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 is simply not in view, then we can see that what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:22 can truly occur. The same all who are dying in Adam, which includes some who incur eonian extermination, can indeed eventually be vivified in Christ. The Bible, in fact, does not speak of judgment and condemnation, death and destruction, Hades and Gehenna, or any of these serious consequences of sin, as unending. It may refer to them as not having the end in view, but none of these fearful works of God can keep Him from achieving His will (1Tim.2:4); reconciling all through the blood of Christ's cross (Col.1:20, and becoming All in all (1 Cor.15:28).

So there are some of the thoughts on the second perspective we have to consider relative to hell, the lake of Fire, or what we collectively call afterlife punishment, and how they applied to the people in Jesus day.

But there’s more. A lot more, which we will summarize here.

Thus far we have asked, “Is hell eternal?” And biblically speaking, the answer is “No, it is not. Hell gives up her dead at the Great White Throne judgment.” We know this from Revelation 20:13. Check it and see.

The next question relates to the Lake of Fire - “Is it eternal?” After all, those whose names are NOT written in the Lamb’s book of Life are cast into this place created for Satan and his angels. And after all, since this does occur after what we read as the Great White Throne judgment it seems like we could logically concur,
“Yes, those in the Lake of Fire will never get out. They experience the second death.”

If we say they will get out, we face some degree or another picturing universalism. But if we say they will never, ever get out, we are then left with subsequent questions that bear some weight, like:

“Are those in the Lake of Fire (who from what Jesus says encompassed most of humanity) “literally burned” with “literal flames of fire” “forever and ever and ever” in the worst pain and anguish imaginable and without end?”

OR

“Are they annihilated? Burning so deep and badly that they are ultimately and totally consumed?”

OR

"After a time of purposeful suffering aimed at purging and not punishment, are they let out, only to come to faith and enter His all in all at some level or another?"

The idea of no after-life loss or purging is not an option and since we know that God is just and all will reap what they have sown in this life we must dig deeper. Hang with me.

• There are four passages in the Book of Revelation (which is the only book that mentions the Lake of Fire) which tie a unique word to that place - brimstone.
• The word brimstone was translated from the Greek word “theion” – T-H-E-I-O-N.
• You probably recognize the Greek word “theos” – it means God - and it’s where we get the word “theology,” which means the study of God.
• Additionally, the Greek word THEIOS means divine.
• So it is really easy to see that the word brimstone, which comes from the Greek word THEION is in the family with other Greek words used to describe God.
• In Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament, the word brimstone is defined as fire from heaven used to purify.
• If you check Strong’s Concordance (or Thayers) you will discover that brimstone is connected to God’s divine power to purify NOT punish.
• So we have to also ask, is the fire - for punishment or purging
- for torture or trying
- for cruelty or for correction?
- As an interesting aside, where is the Lake of Fire actually located?
- There are passages in Revelation 14 that might surprise you where the fire and brimstone exists, or at least who is present amidst them.
- Revelation 14:9-11 "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."
- From these passages, we can see that those tormented in fire and brimstone are “in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb!”
- We know from scripture that God does not take pleasure in this type of death - in any death of the sinner and wicked.
- Ezekiel 33:11 reads
- "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"
- 2nd Samuel 14:14 says something interesting, in my opinion alluding to God and His ways of redemption, saying: “For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.”
- From all these passages and the information they provide, it seems we see the lake as having a few different elements present that what we might have thought were there before.
- We have been taught by almost every faction of modern Christianity that the Lake of Fire is God tormenting evil men for the sake of cruel punishment.
- Listen - this assessment is absolutely correct . . . if the fire is literal and unending.
- It certainly couldn’t be LOVE that forces most of the world of unbeliever into the flames IF they never get out. Right?
- But we can say it is His love if they do and will get out.
- In other words, if those who do not receive Christ shed blood in this life - those who die unsaved - are banished to
eternal torments and fires, those torments must (MUST) be based in cruelty and torture . . . because they have no redemptive value.

• So let’s take a look at that word “tormented” in Revelation 14:10 – the passage that says they “will be tormented by fire and brimstone in the Holy Angels and Lambs presence.”

Ready for this?

• The word translated tormented in Strongs, Vines, and Thayers is “basinizo” which comes from the Greek word that literally means “to put to the test by rubbing on the touchstone.”

• Touchstones are pieces of rock or flint that are used to grind off elements or particles in the processing of alloys or other metals.

• From this definition, we can see that the process in the Lake is not one of a mindless, endless torture for the sake of cruelty but one of refining, purging, rubbing off the rough edges, so to speak.

I find this interesting because in it we discover real meaning – loving meaning – in something Jesus says in Matthew 21:44. Here Jesus had just given the parable of the wicked husbandman to the scribes and Pharisees. He ends the parable by telling these religious leaders

- “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

• They had the True Messiah come and they rejected Him and therefore, Jesus tells them, the Kingdom is going to be taken from them and given to another nation (the Gentiles) which would bring forth fruit.

• Then he says something interesting and relative to this touchstone concept in the very next verse: - “whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

• The nation refused to fall upon Him the Rock or stone and humbly receive Him. Therefore, He says, the other option is He will fall on them and grind them to powder.

• I would suggest, in light of the meaning Torments found in Revelation 14, and the fact that those in the Lake of Fire will be subject to brimstone and fire in the presence of the Holy Angels and the Lamb that again, we are talking about
Some things to think about.

- We also note that Jesus and His apostles are constantly warning the people of their day and age that “the wrath of God was to come” upon them.
- It will be poured out on those who reject His Son. (see Eschatology above)
- Revelation speaks of this wrath, and fierce anger of God, as being contained in a cup – a container of limited dimensions.
- A loving, forgiving, longsuffering God would not have wrath that runs like a river forever. It is limited, justly appropriate to the crime, and delivered in appropriate amounts – like stripes that come to some as a few, and to others as many (Jesus said that).

We could stop here . . . but we won’t.

- There are a couple more concepts that must be addressed in this matter to help round out our understanding of after-life punishment that would be heaped out upon those who rejected Jesus and His apostles.
- There are two basic Greek words for the will of God – THELEMA and BOULEMA.
- Thelema is essentially defined as "God's gracious design and it is indicative of His desires. His desired will. In this word, we see connections to the Greek word Theos or God.
- The second word, Boulemea, is His deliberate design or His purposed will.
- Again, Thelema his desired will.
- Boulema his purposed will – what will not be altered.
- If we look at 1st Timothy 2:3-4 we will read:
  - “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”
- The English word "will" here is taken from the Greek thelo (as in thelema) He desires that all men be saved.
- Now, if eternal punishment is a reality, God will not have His desires accomplished and all men will not be saved – in fact, only a few. This is the standard rationale of most (Arminian) Christians – "God is love and He desires all to be
saved, but His desires (due to the free will of man) will not be met."

- Does this response differ from your earlier view that God will have all His desires accomplished?
- Let’s get a little more emphatic here.
- Go to II Peter 3:9. There we read:
  - “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”
- Where it says that God is NOT WILLING that ANY should perish, are we talking Thelema again, “that He does not desire that any should perish?”
- No. The Greek word is Boulema – His purposes and expressed will shall be done!
- In other words, God will NOT allow any to perish ever!
- From these two passages, we see that it is both God's desire and His purpose that none should perish, but all should come to repentance and be saved.
- From these passages (and passages like these) we are confronted with a serious breach if intellectual, biblical, and spiritual integrity is not maintained.
- What is the breach?
- The teaching that a sovereign God, who knew and knows all things from the beginning to the end would fail to see His loving and good desires and purposes fulfilled through His foreknowledge of our freewill choices given to us by Him!
- This is an impossible contradiction.
- Calvinists (see Calvinism above) meet it by saying this Sovereign God’s desires and purposes are accomplished in that He has predestined some to burn in hell forever, ignoring the fact that He is love and mercy. But the Bible suggests otherwise.
- In and through this beautiful approach, God maintains LOVE, SOVEREIGNTY, A RESPECT for FREE WILL, and JUSTICE while having his pleasure and desires completely and fully met that none would perish.

Another point to consider.

- In light of all we have talked about I find new meaning in the term "lost."
- In the Old Testament, all were lost as all went to Sheol, the covered place, which was separated from God. In the New Testament Jesus came to the "lost sheep of the House of
Israel" and gave Himself so they could escape end-time judgment which was going to fall on that generation and be saved from after-life purging – be saved. Today the world is divided into those who have found and those who remain lost to the world.

• Seeing the redemptive work of our King through these respective views enables us to see those who have yet to believe as lost due to a lack of faith and not due to sin in the sense of a numbered and categorized hierarchy of sin.

• This is important because when we as believers start looking out at the world as "the Sinful" and the "Unforgiven" and themselves as "the Worthy," it is easy to forget that our righteousness has come by His grace through faith.

• If we are able to see the rest of the world as failing in faith (and therefore lost due to spiritual blindness) it enables us to retain a modicum of humility and gratitude for Him who redeemed us and keeps us from looking down our noses at those who have yet (I emphasize YET) . . . to be found.

• In other words, if we see people as “lost” it merely means they are temporarily separated from the Good Shepherd who owns them and in time they will be found.

• And here’s the key – a Good Shepherd would never abandon the search and return of those who are His.

• In Luke 15:4 Jesus said:

  - “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

• Let’s dig deeper and talk about the terms lost, perish, and destroy as they are used in scripture.

  - In Luke 13:3 Jesus says (KJV) “. . . except ye repent, ye shall all likewise “perish.”
  - 2nd Corinthians 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” And James 4:12 says:
  - “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.”
• These words sound definite and complete, don’t they? But all of these words come from the Greek word, apollumi. (apoolomee)
• Unfortunately, some have assigned meaning to this Greek term that is not consistently applied. For example, in my PowerBible software, it suggests that "apololamee" means to obliterate. In a sense it does because the better definitions mean "ruin," and "loss," but it does not mean total extinction.
• We can prove this through other passages of scripture. For example in the story of the Lost Sheep Jesus tells, the Greek word for lost is apoloomai.
• In the story of the prodigal son the word is “apolломai,” and in Luke 19:10, where Jesus says:  
  - “For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,” the word is the same.
• It obviously does NOT mean totally destroyed or completely perished, but simply suffering loss.

Two more points.
• The first is the Psalms.
• When I read them I am able to hear the heart of God shining through.
Admittedly, I have come across a number of them that give me pause. For instance:
  - Psalm 2:7-8 “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”
  - Psalm 22:27-28 “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations.”
  - Psalm 24:1 “The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”
  - Psalm 65:2 “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.”
  - Psalm 68:18 “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.”
Psalm 89:11 “The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.”
Psalm 86:8-10 “Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and dost wondrous things: thou art God alone.”
And of course,
Isaiah 45:22-24 “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.”

Didn’t Paul say love never fails? If God is love, can He, will He, ever fail to bring about His goodwill and pleasure?
Doesn’t the Word say that Death will be swallowed up in victory? Would this include the second death where only loss and purging occurs? I would suggest so. No death or any kind can escape victory of Christ on the cross.

Many people, in response to all of this, will scream: “But God is Just! God is Just!”

He certainly is. And because He is just He sent His Son, a Son who not only saved all men, He is a Son before whom “every knee will bow and every tongue will confess.”

Do you know what James, Jesus brother said about Mercy and Justice?

He says, “Mercy Triumphs over Judgment.”

Let’s wrap this all up and hear from some of the men known as Early Church Fathers – men who believed and were around after the last living apostle died his physical death. Admittedly, being men, they made some mistakes. But they were willing to voice their opinions on the topic and were not castigated as heretical when they did.
I would suggest, prior to reading them, that the doctrine of endless eternal punishment was a rarity among believers in the earliest centuries of the post-apostolic church and it was the Roman and Greek traditions that helped bring such ideas to the church over time.

In fact, it was Augustine (in 354 -430 AD) who was one of the first to truly popularize the teaching of eternal punishment.

Proving the teaching was still around in the church when Augustine was alive let’s first hear a quote from him, which says:

“And now I see I must have a gentle disputation with certain tender hearts of our own religion, who are unwilling to believe that everlasting punishment will be inflicted, either on all those whom the just Judge shall condemn to the pains of hell or even on some of them.”

Augustine aside, the earliest church fathers tended to believe that the torments were purposeful, and aimed at purging and cleansing rather than cruelty and suffering for suffering's sake.

These thoughts all fell under what was known as "the restitution of all things" (which, interestingly enough, Paul refers to frequently but never mentions referring to all things original prior to the fall but he does not mention hell). It wasn't until 533 AD that an official attempt was made to rid the world of the "restitution of all things idea." By this time, most of the men (who dominated Christianity) couldn't even read Greek. Anyway . . .

Irenaeus (130-200AD), who wrote intimately of Polycarp and who was a close friend of the Apostle John, reveals through his writings a belief in “an ultimate reconciliation of all things back to God.”

Clement of Alexandria (185AD - 254) wrote: "The Lord is a propitiation not for our sins only, that is, of the faithful, but also for the whole world. Therefore, He indeed saves all universally; but some as converted by punishments, others by voluntary submission, thus obtaining honor and dignity, that "to Him every knee will bow, of things in heaven, of things in earth, and things under the earth, that
is to say, angels, and men, and souls who departed this life before His coming into the world."

Origen (185-254AD) wrote:
“He that despises the purification of the Word of God, the doctrine of the Gospel only keeps himself for dreadful and penal purifications afterwards; that so the fire of hell may purge him in torments whom neither apostolical doctrine nor gospel preaching has cleansed, according to that which is written of being “purified by fire.” But how long this purification which is wrought out by penal fire shall endure, or for how many periods or ages it shall torment sinners, He only knows to whom all judgment is committed by the Father.”

We could write on and on, adding a dozen or more to the list, but let’s conclude this whole thing with the words of Luther, that if uttered today, would certainly cause many to scream, “heresy!” This is what the Father of the Reformation said in a letter written in 1522:

"God forbid that I should limit the time of acquiring faith to the present life. In the depth of the Divine mercy, there may be opportunity to win it in the future."

So in conclusion of our look at afterlife punishment that was apparent during the days and age of Christ through to the year 70AD, the overall message and their application to the people of that day and age goes something like this:

Because of Adam and his sin, all the world fell into a fallen state, a state where they were physically and spiritually separated from the direct presence of God.

All people prior to the death and resurrection of Christ, when they experienced physical death, went to Sheol, a covered place, a place still separated from God, which consisted of either a prison (the dark place of torments) or to paradise (called Abraham's bosom).

When Jesus came, as the Second Adam, His life, death, and resurrection reconciled those who were in the paradise part of Sheol to God and He took them with Him into the presence of God after His resurrection.

Those who were in the prison part of Sheol remained there.
Jesus promised to return to earth within a generation (forty years) and to bring with Him judgment and reward. He came as promised (see Eschatology).

With His return, everything in scripture was materially fulfilled.

According to the contents of Revelation (which was written to the Seven Churches of Asia minor then), this would include the fact that hell gave up its dead, and all the inhabitants stood before the Great White Throne Judgment and were judged.

Those whose names were not found in the Lamb’s Book of Life were sent to the Lake of Fire, which was in the presence of the Lamb and his angels, and experienced what is called, “the second death.”

This second death was not eternal but was for an age (aion) or period of time. What was dying or experiencing the second death in the Lake of fire? All things that were not of God – they were being purged or rubbed away in the fire and brimstone of God's light and love.

All of these things, detailed in Revelation and in other parts of scripture wrapped up that biblical age where Jesus has had the total victory over all things and we are now left with the last or third scenario of after-life punishment.

**The Third Scenario of After-Life Punishment**

Post 70 AD to the present

As a means to truly understand the Third Scenario, which applies to us today living in the modern age of Christianity, let’s begin by asking ourselves:

“Is God’s will always done?”

Scripture says that it is. We might then ask ourselves:

“Is God’s will good or is it evil?”

If He is a good God whom we can trust, then we would have to say that His will is always good. Always good.

Then we might ask, “Well then, what is His will relative to the salvation of the human race?”
This is an interesting question because the answer comes out in different ways depending on an individual’s religious perspective.

To ardent five-point Calvinists, His will translates to an almost wholesale indifference to certain individuals that He has literally created for hell and is wholly devoted to others whom He has chosen for eternal life.

Part of the problem is the Bible does seem to support both the I would suggest we answer this query with a number of passages employed by both sides of the coin. Let’s consider some passages. What does it mean when we read in:

- 2nd Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”
- Isaiah 45:23-24 “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.”
- 1st John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.
- 1st Timothy 2:3-4 “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”
- 1st Timothy 4:10 For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe.

Check out Isaiah 46:8-11 where God says: “Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”
Next, let’s go back and ask ourselves, “Is God just?”

As we admitted, if He is to be considered a God that can be trusted, He must be completely just. And then, if or since He is just, we ask the fourth question, “Is there a hell and/or place of punishment?” for those who reject His will in this day and age?

As a means to answer this, we ought to go to the Book of Hebrews. Here, in chapter 13:1, in comparing Jesus to angels, the writer asks:

“But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?”

Read that passage carefully again. Have you ever considered what it is telling us? First of all, has God ever said to any of the angels to sit at His right hand? No, never. The writer of Hebrews took this passage from Psalm 110:1 which is a Psalm that is repeatedly quoted in the New Testament and refers to the Messiah. When Jesus was on earth He applied this passage to Himself (in Matthew 22:43,44). Peter applied it to Him too (in Acts 2:34,35).

Notice something here. The passage says that Christ will sit “at the right hand of the Father UNTIL . . . until He makes all His enemies his footstool.” What does this mean? Have you ever considered the fact that Christ will be at the side of the Father UNTIL a certain period of time?

A footstool is what we put under our feet when we sit on a chair and so the phrase here pictures that His enemies are entirely subdued. Entirely . . . subdued. Could it mean, when “every knee bows and every tongue confessed?” Perhaps.

I am going to lead you into some amazing imagery now – one I challenge all of you to prayerfully consider and studiously pursue. In First Corinthians 15 Paul touches on the topic of "all things being subjected" with a little more depth and says at verse 23. Read these verses carefully. Speaking of the resurrection Paul says:

23 “But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.
24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.
25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.
27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. (LISTEN)
28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

We know from scripture that hell is a biblical reality. We know people went there and we know it is described as a place of this was all covered in the above section.
But we also know from scripture (1st Timothy 2:4) that, speaking of God, Paul said “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

We know from scripture that Jesus atoned for the sins of the whole world, and we know from scripture that God does some amazing things to bring about as many as possible to saving truths.

Finally, we know that God elected the nation of Israel, as a people, to do certain tasks - to bring forth the Law, the scripture, and the Messiah - among other things. And when they were “in the game” they kind of thought of themselves as “all that,” that “everything sort of began and ended with them,” right?

They were reticent and surprised that the "great unwashed" Gentiles would be accepted by God, right? And they resisted the notion. They still resist the notion today. But contrary to their ideas, the Lord did open the gates to all, didn't He? It was at the conversion of Cornelius. And from this Christ has gathered unto Himself a bride (or a church) that the gates of hell would not prevail against and this bride was elected to do certain things to help bring about God's ultimate will too.

Is it possible, that just as the Jews thought that they were “all that” and that no others were allowed into the kingdom that we, as the body of Christ, could be making the same mistake relative to the rest of the world today?
Is it possible that those who go to the lake of fire, if the Lake is still in the operation of purging souls, that once they have bowed and confessed that Jesus is Lord (by the Holy Spirit), will too, come forth and bring to fruition God’s will that all men be saved and that none would perish?

Why does Jesus remain at the right hand of the God only until all His enemies have been placed under His feet? Who are His enemies? And where are they located? Are they in hell? On earth? In the Lake of Fire? And exactly how does God make them His footstool? Are they in a big pile of souls serving as a pillow under his feet? What does this look like? What does God look like in this picture? What is the imagery suggesting? We then wondered out-loud “to what purpose” or “what is the end result” of His enemies being placed under His feet?

So, as we would do when faced with any sort of philosophical problem, I went back – way back. We started at the beginning and appealed to scripture to clarify what the actual picture was of all of this. Now, the Calvinists have a point of view that is centered on what they call “God’s Sovereignty.”

To them, He does His will irrespective of the will and ways of Man. This premise is sort of summarized by the “I” in the well-known acronym T.U.L.I.P. (where the I stands for Irresistible Grace).

Irresistible Grace essentially says that God is totally and completely sovereign and if He will’s you to believe, you will believe – there’s no choice on your part – His grace is irresistible. I fully embrace the idea that God is righteously sovereign (not just Sovereign) and that His will is done. Scripture supports this completely.

In fact, let’s take some examples from scripture some of which may surprise some of you. Consider:

Psalms 115:3
“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

Proverbs 19:21 says
“There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.”

Jesus said in Matthew 19:26
“with God all things are possible.”

Ephesians 1:11 (puts a sharp end on this point saying - speaking of Jesus it says),
“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

That passage in and of itself seems to support the idea of irresistible grace.
Revelation 4:11 says
“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Daniel 4:35 adds
“And all the inhabitants of the earth [are] reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”

Psalms 24:1
“The earth [is] the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

Proverbs 16:4 says something interesting, something that troubles many:
“The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.”

And listen to Isaiah 45:5-9
“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:
6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.
7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.
8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.
9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?
Echoing these sentiments Romans 9:21 says
“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to
make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?”
From these passages (and many, many more) we KNOW God does
“whatever He pleases” . . . “that His counsels will stand” . . .
that “with Him all things are possible” . . . “that we are
predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things
after the counsel of His own will” . . . and “that He even
created all things for His own pleasure ???”
When we read in Proverbs that “He made all things for Himself,
even the wicked,” and in Isaiah it says “He created evil” and in
Romans 9 it says “He has the power to create one vessel for
honor and another for dishonor” (one for heaven and one for
hell) What are we to think!!!???

It certainly sounds like God is a sovereign – even a despotic –
God . . . at least that is the way Calvinism presents Him. But
then we read passages like James 1:3 which says:

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God
cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.”

Does this speak to the free will of man? In the face of a
sovereign God does man have free will?

Consider 1st John 1:5 which says:
“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and
declare unto you, “that God is light, and in him is no darkness
at all.”

There are so many passages that speak of God as loving, more
merciful than a cold glass of water in a hot desert, more
longsuffering than a thousand Jobs and more forgiving than any
human parent. How are we to understand all of this? Would a
loving, good, kind, merciful God even create human beings, whom
He loves, for an eternal hell?
Go back with me, then - way back to before the world or the
heavens were. To the “before all things.” To the place where
all we can say is “God.” The first and the last. Did God know
all things about all things prior to creating them?

Absolutely.

In the face of this, we have to agree that He is . . .
- Omniscient (all knowing).
- Omnipotent (all-powerful).
- Omnipresent (everywhere present).

Being all of these, being all things, being the first and the last, knowing the beginning to the end, did this God WHOM JOHN DESCRIBES AS LOVE know all things about each and every one of us . . . PRIOR to creating us?

Of course. He had to.

Not only because scripture says He did but because if He didn’t He could be surprised by our acts and if surprised then not in control of them - which is counter to scripture. This leaves us facing a tremendous biblical conundrum. Enormous and one where the answers provided have plagued me since I could think. We are told He is light. We are told He is love. But we are also told He is in control and He does what He will. In response to this, men have come along and made propositions.

Today we have men who are claiming something called Open Theism which suggests that God does not know everything, He is only fully prepared to respond to what comes up.

Intellectually it is a reasonable response but the problem with it is it counters biblical representations of Him. I reject Open Theism as a non-biblical creation of Man. Then there is Calvin.

He took these concepts and explained them in the form of what has come to be summarized by others in the acronym T.U.L.I.P.
First, God, knowing all things, unconditionally created and elected some of us, before the foundation of the world, for eternal life and others for eternal hell. Born of flesh and due to the Fall all of us are totally depraved (having no ability to choose God). Then God unconditionally elects (saves, regenerates) those whom He will "to life," then Jesus came and suffered only for the sins of those whom God elected to save (limited atonement). And because God always gets His way those whom He has elected cannot refuse His call (irresistible grace) and then finally, once He calls or elects a person they will persevere - endure to the end / Once Saved Always Saved because God does not give them a choice . . . His will be done!

The system is workable through much of scripture but it does not, in my mind, answer a number of other significant descriptions of God and His heart.
For instance
Isaiah 55:8-11 comes to mind where He says
“For my thoughts [are] not your thoughts, neither [are] your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”

And then, knowing God is love and good, how are we to understand Isaiah 46:9-11 where God says:
9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,
10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:
11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

As a God of love from eternity to eternity, what is His pleasure, His will, His purpose? What does Jeremiah 29:11 mean when God says
“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

What does it mean in the face of all this information when we read in 2nd Peter 3:9 that
“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Or what does 1st Timothy 2:3-4 mean which says
“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth?”

Somehow, we have to come to terms with ALL of this information - not just some of it and NOT embracing what generations of Men and Women have taught and believed if it is NOT right nor biblically sound.
So go with me (again) back to the beginning - prior to where God created the heavens and the earth and all that in them is.
If (or since) God knew He was going to create beings that would become kindling for hell, burning forever and ever and ever in real flames and created them anyway, calling it, His Good Pleasure, we have a serious problem with the other passages that call Him love, and good, and merciful, and Holy.
Calvinism (see Calvinism above) has provided the word with a myopic and therefore limited view of God – emphasizing His sovereignty while either ignoring or redefining what love is. On the other hand, Arminianism, a response to Calvinism, refutes God's Sovereignty and places salvation in the hands of a man who is responsible for freely choosing all things and then being responsible for keeping his salvation thereafter.

Is there a reasonable, biblical response that offers us a solution to these seemingly contradictory issues and if there is, what does it ultimately reveal to us? I would strongly suggest there is an alternative view – neither Calvinistic nor Arminianist – that is wholly biblical.

Let's say this from the start – we want nothing to do with the philosophies of Man. We do not want to tickle ears or please men instead of honoring God. We want to teach what is biblical and refuse that which is not. The Bible must be taken as a whole and as a whole, we are faced with some paradoxical issues. Nevertheless, let us also warn ourselves . . . what the explanation will ultimately reveal or suggest is going to be considered heretical by most.

May God and His Word enable you to decide for yourselves. So here we go.

First of all, we must admit that God is certainly righteous sovereign and in total and complete control over things in and through His righteous ways. Can or would real agape love control the way we define control or the way the Calvinist defines control. I would suggest not.

Control, as we see and define it, is diabolical in most applications. Love is liberating and free and never controlling. How then is God (who IS love – pure love, all love, the very definition of love) completely but righteously Sovereign?

By His foreknowledge. He controls by foreknowledge, not by force. We get a picture of this in the story of Joseph when he was sold into Egypt by his brothers.

After going through all sorts of hell, he became a mighty prince overseeing the distribution of food. When the brothers who sold
him into Egypt years early came to him in search of food, he revealed himself. Of course, they felt horrible and frightened for having sold him but Joseph said in Genesis 50:20:

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as this day, to save many people alive."

How did a good and loving God, in light of the free will choices He knew humans would take before creating them, still create them, knowing some would burn forever in hell? Additionally, how is He able to have His will done in the face of such free-will choices?

Foreknowledge friends, foreknowledge.

His omniscient foreknowledge existing in the glory of pure love allows for human beings and angels and saints and demons to freely choose while at the same time giving Him total and ultimate control over all things and for His pleasure. We’ll get more into what His good will and loving pleasure is next week.

Speaking of His foreknowledge God said through Isaiah (42:9) “Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

Psalm 33:11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Speaking to King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said:
Daniel 2:28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.

Speaking of the day when heaven and earth will pass away, Jesus said:
Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

That’s foreknowledge. In describing himself, Peter said that he was

1st Peter 1:2 “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and
sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

Even when it came to the suffering and death of His own Son, we know it did NOT occur by the indiscriminate actions of the Jews, or the Romans, or even of Satan Himself, but by and through the foreknowledge of God. Did God force Satan or the Jews or Romans to do what they did? Not in the least. They chose. But God, knowing all things, allowed them to do what they chose to do to bring about His sovereign will.

In Acts 2:23 Peter is speaking to a group of Jews on the day of Pentecost and says to them:

"Him (meaning Jesus) being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

When Jesus was taken by the Jews was there any surprise to God? Not at all. Again, listen to what Peter said:

"Jesus was . . . delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God to them, where they took Him and with wicked hands crucified and slayed Him."

So, again, let’s go back. Ask yourselves,

In the beginning, did God know Adam and Eve would sin?

Absolutely. No surprises, right? Did Satan get them to sin? Sure. He tempted them. Did God create Satan? Yes. In this way did God force them to fall? No. Did Adam and Eve have the free will to choose evil? You bet.

As a result, scripture says that Jesus was slain from BEFORE the foundations of the world. Stay with me now. We know from scripture that God is good, light, love. He desires a good and expected end, not an evil one. We know that out of His good pleasure (and out of His loving good pleasure because God is LOVE) that He created all things, knowing beforehand how all things would freely live, and walk, and be.

Not forcing us to be, but freely allowed us to be.
Prior to creating all things with a complete foreknowledge of them would a loving God desire or will that only some would be saved or all?

Again, we know He is love, and mercy, and forgiving, and longsuffering, so PRIOR to creating all things, having a complete foreknowledge of all things from the beginning to the end, would it be His desire that only some of His creations are redeemed or that all of them are? We know from scripture that He is righteously sovereign and He will have His way. But we also know He is all about freedom so He doesn’t have His desire met by and through force, He has it by and through working in and around the free will choices of Man – which He foresaw from the beginning.

Got all that?

As a means to help round out the idea that God has done a number of things to bring about His ultimate will in the existence of free-will Man, let’s talk about the very biblical concept of first-fruits.

The word used for first-fruits in the Greek is (aparchn) and it generally applies to the first-fruits of a harvest – or the that which is first collected and consecrated to God as an offering of gratitude. The idea is when the blessing of God is poured out we respond by taking the first part of it, in recognition of His love and mercy, and give it to Him. Built within the concept is an order or rank.

Additionally, first-fruits also applies to the best of the whole harvest. So let’s say you have a grove of apple trees and you want to give the first-fruits to God.

This does NOT mean the very first apples to come to the grove are God’s. In fact, we learn from Leviticus 19:23-25 that when it came to tree first-fruits the Children of Israel were to wait for four cycles of harvests before either offering first fruits or harvesting them for themselves. So the order and rank part applies to the first acceptable harvest as a whole and the best of the harvest.

Numbers 18:12 says it well:
“All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the first-fruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.”
When it comes to humans, the first-fruits of the womb, however, is always the firstborn sons, which is naturally a picture of our Lord. The purpose and symbolism are manifest even in our day and age. The person to be served first is typically someone of highest honor.

Proverbs 3:9 says, "Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase."

It goes without saying that the first-fruits, as we’ve defined them, were very important to God. Ezekiel 48:14 says:

“And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the first-fruits of the land: for it is holy unto the LORD."

So, and in accordance with God and His sovereign ways and perfect foreknowledge, the idea of first-fruits - picturing His Only Begotten Son - was initiated from the beginning. Remember, first-fruits include the concept of the best, the first, and a rank among others what are to come. Did you hear me? First-fruits include the notions of the best of a crop, the first out of a crop, and a rank (meaning there are other ranks coming in behind the first and best.)

When God created everything in the Garden of Eden it was good. Adam and Eve were the first-fruits of all humanity. They were first, they were the best (God created them, right) and they were first in rank. God gave them a choice - to love Him and therefore obey Him or to choose their own will and way. Did God know what they would do? Certainly. Which is why scripture says that His Son was slain from the foundations of the world. Did others follow in after the first and best called Adam and Eve? Certainly. Even all the way down to each of us today. With the first-fruits of the Human race failing to love and choose God, God elected a nation above all other nations. Romans 11:16, speaking of the Nation of Israel and likening them to a tree God created and elected for specific purposes, Paul wrote to Gentile believers in Rome:

“For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.”

See, the first-fruit nation, like the first-fruit couple, failed to live the law and choose God. Now listen - this is key - Just as more individuals came after the first-fruit couple Adam and Eve, filling the earth, so did other nations follow in after
the first-fruit nation failed to choose God and ultimately rejected the Messiah.

Listen - ALL OTHER NATIONS, right?

God has elected (based on His foreknowledge of what Adam and Eve and the Nation of Israel would choose to do) to use them so He would achieve His good pleasure and will, not because He respected them anymore but because of His foreknowledge of what they would do.

Then we know that God sent His Only Begotten Son, right? Who was the first-fruits of God (now the Father) and of Mary and the only one to do His will? In many ways, Jesus was the first and only of the church.

First and only born of a virgin.
First and only without sin.
First and only to come down from above.
First and only to obey the Law.

And having been the best, the first, and the first of an order of humanity, he became the first-fruits in overcoming the grave by overcoming sin and death. Listen as 1st Corinthians 15:20 says it:

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.”

Because of Him, all of mankind (every rank) will be resurrected, or as it says in 1st Corinthians 15:23,

“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.”

From His ascension on, the Church - His church, comprised of individual believers, has become the first-fruits of believers. Romans 8:23 calls us, the first-fruits of the Spirit.

Of the first, of a rank, of, therefore, the best of all. First-fruits plays such a role in God and His achieving His own pleasure and will, that when a person became a believer in a certain geographical area, they were known as the first-fruits of that area. In Romans 16:5, Paul is giving greetings and says "Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the "first-fruits of Achaia" unto Christ."
Here’s the point, first-fruits in no way suggests that there is no fruit coming after. It merely signifies the first of the best, the first in rank, and the first among many.

Adam and Eve were followed by more people.

The Nation of Israel was followed by more nations.

Jesus, the first resurrected, was and will be followed by more. The first believers of an area will be followed by more, and the church of the redeemed will be followed by more. James 1:18 says it well:

"Of his own will (of His own good pleasure) begat he us with the word of truth (according to His election based on His foreknowledge), that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."

Just as the Nation of Israel thought the sun rose and set on them, and could not accept subsequent nations as being His too, we, in the church, have made an error in believing that the sun rises and sets only on us.

More are coming. I would say, even all are coming, perfectly supporting the fact that God is all knowing, is in control, is Love, and being love He completely supports the free will of every man, yet in the end, God will always have His way. And that way is total victory over all things – Satan, hell, the Lake of fire, and even the free will of Man.

God has had this total victory in and through the work of His only human son. Like a good shepherd, none are lost but all are reconciled to the Father by and through His life, His love, His longsuffering, patience and ultimately His total and complete victory over all things.

Since we know that God is love, and since we know He is all knowing (from before the moment He created all things), and since He always has His will and desires accomplished (by and through His foreknowledge NOT by force) the only way to merge all of these biblically supported facts is to suggest that He will use the “Lake of Fire” (which was not created for the consumption of human beings but for angels) to purge the dross from the many who will go there . . . and once purged, the loving God, the long-suffering God, the God who “forgives” all things, would, at the confession of His Son, bring all of His
creations out from “purposeful purging” as Jesus has paid for all their sin (except the sin of unbelief).
In this way, I suggested, God would, through a number of different means, and peoples (including His first-fruits) would ultimately accomplish all of His good will and desires.
So, after all of this preface material and biblical ideas, let’s summarize it all down to a workable, understandable whole:

**SUMMARY ETERNAL PUNISHMENT**

Jesus has had the total victory over all things – sin, death, Satan, hell (see Eschatology above). In 70AD, at the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, the genealogies, a million plus Jews, and the Law, all things have been fulfilled. This was the commencement of the New Heaven and a New Earth and a New Jerusalem and kingdom that thrives spiritually in the hearts and lives of those who are truly God’s through Christ.
All people since that time are called to come to Christ by the Spirit. Those who love this world and the things of it spend their lives sowing to their flesh, they are building houses on sand, and they have their rewards – here and now. When they die, they will see clearly that Jesus is Lord, that they have been forgiven of sin, and because they will believe they will confess by the Spirit.

They will be rewarded (by and through the resurrected body God chooses to give them) according to what they sowed to the spirit, to the heavenly kingdom, to the things of God. All that was of their flesh, all that was of this world, all that was built on foundations of temporal sand, will be forever lost, consumed in the fire that is God.

Those who sowed little to the Spirit will receive little – only that which was sown in the eternal soil will bear eternal fruit. In this way, the first (on earth) will be last and the last (on earth, because they cared not for the things of that world) will be first.

Those who seek, hear and follow the Spirit of Truth in this life are reborn and begin to “sow unto the spirit,” to eternal things, to the invisible and eternal Kingdom. The more they lived to the Spirit and not the flesh the greater that they will retain and be rewarded for in and through the resurrected Body that God chooses to give them in the hereafter.
Is there afterlife punishment? In and through loss, yes. Is it eternal? In and through the fact that the rewards found in and through their resurrected body are eternal, yes. Is there any reality to eternal suffering in hell or lakes of literal fires applied to the souls of the rebellious and Godless? Not anymore.

**Religious Crooks**

Preaching and threatening people with eternal afterlife punishment in hell or the Lake of Fire is central to the Evangelical faith. For some reason, many believers relish in the idea of hellfire as the future reality for all non-believers. Pastors and preachers also seem to enjoy preaching this position as irrefutable. It fills the pews as fear is often a primary motivator for people. Unfortunately, the idea is anachronistic relative to the biblical text nor does it meet the demands of thoughtful scriptural scrutiny. That afterlife loss is a reality cannot be disputed. It is a certainty in the existences of those who have chosen to live to their flesh, but the notion of eternal, relentless punishment in literal flames of fire is a godless fiction and should be challenged gently but relentlessly whenever it is presented up.
Faith

There are two themes relative to faith that need to be briefly discussed: First, why faith is placed on Jesus and why it’s not, and second, why faith is the primary precursor to genuine love.

First, Why faith is placed in Jesus and why it’s not.

Volumes have been written on the subject of faith. The intention here is not to make an exhaustive presentation of it but to instead present items that are often overlooked or even rejected about it. We contend that God is not a respecter of persons. This being the case, and the fact that His only human son has completed (finished) all that is necessary to reconcile and redeem all of humankind to Him, we submit that God, through His Holy Spirit (which is, in fact, the Spirit of Christ Himself) calls (and is calling) to all men to receive Him by and through faith in His Son.

Those who receive and believe in the message, the Good News, of Christ Jesus are saved both from a life of bondage here in this life and from afterlife loss. Those who refuse to place their faith in Christ’s finished work (as inclined to do of His Spirit) will remain in spiritual bondage here and will suffer after-life loss there. With God calling to all people to

---

2 Acts 10:34 “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons . . .”

3 Romans 8:9 “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”
receive His Son’s shed blood on their behalf it is really as simple as that.

We submit that upon believing, upon accepting and receiving Christ’s finished work by and through the Spirit that a person is made a child of God (though but a babe) whereas before they were merely a creation of God. Additionally and in light of this factor, we admit that all who will not receive Christ by faith here will die as creations of God – not children – and will be justly rewarded (or suffer loss) based on their life of faithlessness. We concur with scripture, however, that every knee will, in fact, bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord and that, due to the fact that no person can do this but by the Spirit, that all will ultimately be reconciled to God at some point in time in their existence.4,5. (see Sowing and Reaping)

Nevertheless, what is the difference between those who believe and receive Christ here and those who don’t? The difference is faith – the spiritual (rather than the material) apprehension that something is true, real or worthy of our trust and allegiance. Perhaps the better question is why do some choose to place their faith in Jesus at the invitation of the Holy Spirit while others choose to reject the invitation?

Again, numerous points of conjecture could be included here – some valid others not – but we will appeal to Jesus words to help us with the answer. There are several insights worthy of examination as Jesus says those who receive and believe but perhaps we can summarize them all through the following –

They love God and others more than the things of this world – with the things of this world including (in part):

- Self6

---

4 Romans 14:11 “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

5 1st Corinthians 12:3 “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

6 Matthew 16:24 “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”
In other words, when someone desires, seeks, wants to love God and others more than their own pet interests, more than themselves, they would be more open and willing to believe in things of Christ over the things the world around them offers. Those who love the things of this world pre-eminently will have a hard time choosing to believe in the things of God (which are not of this world.)

So while God is knocking on the heart of all people, inviting them to believe and receive Him through His Son, most people love their own lives – themselves – too much to accept, receive, believe – place their faith in Him and His promises.

It is as simple as this. Contrary to what many religionists will suggest today, when God and the salvation of man are the topic at hand the event is a two-way street – God calls freely to all to receive, individuals choose to believe. When individuals love the world and all that is in it more than the offering God presents, faith is directed elsewhere – to money, family, or the self. When a person humbly sees themselves and the impotent things of this world as they really are – futile, weak, beggarly, and temporary – they are more likely to look to God and receive His Son by saving faith.

It is for this reason that believers do not fret over loved ones suffering at the hands of the things of this world – when they

7 Matthew 10:37 “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

8 Mr 12:38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, 39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:
become disappointed and broken by the temporal failures that come with riches, substances, family, friends, sin and even self itself. When such things prove themselves to be feeble, the attraction of God and His promises often become far more inviting.

As a result, believers share the simple Gospel message (that Jesus did in fact pay for all of their sin with His life and shed blood) with all who will hear, in patience and love, knowing that the seeds of this eternally significant theme will grow, not return void, and will someday have the potential to brings a soul to what is called, “saving faith” of their own free-will and accord.

Second, why faith is the primary precursor to genuine love.

John the Beloved, one of Jesus chosen apostles, wrote in his 1st Epistle:

1st John 3:23  And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Interestingly enough, when Jesus was approached by a Jewish scribe and was asked what are the greatest commandments He said:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

Earlier He taught His disciples:

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

Why would Jesus, when asked about the greatest commandment only speak of love but when John rehearsing the “commandments” to his audience later describes them (again) in the following way:

“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”
We might remember that faith was intrinsic to the faith of the Nation Jesus came to save. Going all the way back to Abraham, the father of the faith, it was his faith that justified him before God, and nothing more. What is often lost among people (Christians and non-Christians alike) is the important role faith in God and Christ plays in their ability to love as He desires them to love.

For this reason John the Beloved articulated the commandments as (First) believing on God’s son, Jesus Christ and to love one another as He (Jesus explained – with the love for God tacitly implied).

Perhaps an example might help articulate this principle.

Joe and Tom are neighbors - divorcees - and they both have five year old daughters who they love dearly. Joe is an atheist and Tom is a follower of Christ but both men subscribe to the idea that love will conquer all things. The difference is Joe follows the Beatles view of love and Tom follows Jesus example and descriptions of it.

One morning as the men drank coffee and talked about life, their little girls were in the front yard playing in the morning sun with their dolls. A disturbed man with twisted ideas about sex approached the children and violently molested both of them before running away and leaving in his wake two bruised, bleeding children.

The police were called and the man is apprehended but due to a legal technicality is released to continue to roam about the typically quiet neighborhood.

Joe and Tom are equally distraught - to the point of being violently angry - especially as their little girls begin to become withdrawn, fearful, and have nightmares of evil men hurting them.

In this sordid example, Joe and Tom - professors of love for all - are facing the challenge and test of their stated ideals. Both men find themselves obsessing over revenge, both possess hearts full of anger, and both spend time in deep despair over the harm done to their young, innocent formerly healthy happy daughters.

While their initial reaction to these crimes is anticipated and understandable, both men have to come to grips with how they
will react to this event in their immediate and future lives as both want to enact revenge upon the released sexual predator.

While it is possible for both men, from and through their respective morals and standards to forgive the molester and put ideas and actions of revenge behind them, there is a marked difference in what would compel them to respond in such a manner.

Joe would be drawing on his own strength to overcome his innate desires to throttle the perpetrator but Tom has a Lord and Savior in His life who not only commanded that Tom turn the other cheek (to meekly forgive) but to love the man as well.

Here is where Christian faith becomes the precursor to Christian love. If Tom has true faith in Jesus words, that as His follower He should:

- Turn the other cheek
- Forgive all men
- Love those who hurt us and spitefully use us, and
- To trust that revenge is the Lords and not ours

Then Tom will die to his desires for revenge and let God handle the situation in the future. If Tom has not placed his faith in God toward such things, then he is less likely to show love toward the man who has harmed his daughter.

And so it is with everything Jesus said and did in His life. We, as His followers, will decide by faith to trust in Him and His ways and words and love more and more or we will choose to not place our faith in Him and His ways and therefore love less and less.

In this we can see that the more faith and individual has in the words and promises of God the more they are able to love as He would have us love, and the less we trust in Him and His words and promises, the less love we will prove to have first for Him (the first great commandment) and for our fellow man (the second great commandment).

**Faith Summary**

The more faith in the words of God and Christ that a Christian possesses, the more they will love God and Man with authentic
agape love. The less the faith a believer has in God and Christ’s words, the less agape love they will present.

**Religious Crooks**

It seems that when it comes to the subject of faith that religious crooks tend to either add to it, diminish it, or explain it in a manner that is untenable in this day and age. Some, borrowing from the words of Christ to His chosen and trained apostles, teach that if a person has enough faith that they can accomplish anything that they want. Others suggest that the presence of faith is not enough to please God. Between these two positions all sorts of abuses seem to thrive. From scripture, we know that faith comes by hearing of the word. We also know there is wisdom in praying for faith and that it is a spiritual gift. We simultaneously admit that without faith it is impossible to please God. All of these things could be included in an examination of the principles of faith.

**The Fall**

Before we talk about the Fall, let’s mention a few things about agape love or the kind of love that God is, and the kind of love He wants us to have for Him and others.

The love of God, unconditional love, is selfless love. God IS love. The two Great Commandments are to love so agape, unconditional love is key to every ambition God seems to have for human creations. Let’s now talk about how scripture defines this love. Turning to 1st Corinthians 13 we know that this kind of love, the Love that God is, is:

long-suffering
kind
never envious
never boastful
never conceited
never behaves unbecomingly
never self-seeking
never provoked
never reckons up wrongs
never rejoices at evil
rejoices in the triumph of Truth
it bears with all things
ever trustful
ever hopeful
ever patient, and finally
this love never fails.

We know that in and through the life of Jesus the descriptions of this love was lived out. When? In the very face of people and situations that required . . .

long-suffering
kindness
patience
hope
trust

And it was presented in ways that were . . .

never boastful
never conceited
never behaving unbecomingly
never self-seeking
never provoked
never reckons up wrongs
never rejoiced at evil
but rejoiced in the triumph of Truth.

It was a love that bore all things, it was a love that never failed in the face of very difficult and trying circumstances. We know that this love is additionally merciful and endlessly forgiving, right? Got all of that?

So the first thing to consider in discussing what we refer to as “the Fall” is the scriptural definition of agape love, that God is love, and that the two great commandments are to love God and each other with this kind of love.

In light of this we might now ask, “What was the brass-tacks-fail that caused the fall of Adam and Eve (or the nature of Man)?

God gave Adam and Eve life, a garden, and all that they needed in it. He then gave two commandments - to not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil and to multiply and replenish the earth. But then they chose to eat the forbidden fruit. Why?
Maybe they didn’t trust God or maybe they were tricked by Satan. Maybe they lacked faith in God’s words but trusted their own opinions or Satan’s words more. Perhaps they simply loved something more than God – their own intelligence, the words and ways of Satan – whatever. But in the end they obviously loved something more than they loved God – in spite of all that He gave them.

Since God is love, this approach to living – self-centered living, which is the antithesis to love – would not do – and sin entered, and Man fell and experienced a separation from God.

Could Adam and Eve honestly claim to love God after disobeying Him. Not really. They could profess a love but their actions proved otherwise – they loved something more than Him and His Word – what it really was we don’t know – but in the end my opinion is they loved themselves and their desires more than Him and His.

So, what, from the beginning, from before creating Adam and Eve, was God’s hope for humankind.

I would suggest that having created us in His image His ultimate desire for all human beings is that they would choose to love Him first and then each other – with a love that is defined by what we read earlier.

Since God is love and we are made in His image I would suggest that God wanted Adam and Eve to be love – and now wants us to become love.

Looking at the first humans we could say that He wanted them to love Him first and foremost. But they didn’t. They loved themselves and their ways more. Maybe this is just what human beings in animal flesh do – we love ourselves first – like Adam and Eve did?

Now, did God know that they would love themselves more? (beat)

Of course He did. This was no surprise. Did He force them to disobey Him? I would reject that idea completely – he gave them a choice and they choice (like He knew they would) to serve themselves. But He knew what they would do before He gathered the dust they were made of.
There’s a big difference between knowing what will happen and causing that thing to happen (in my estimation).

And there is a big difference between knowing what will happen and wanting something to happen as well.

In Mormonism, God wanted Adam and Eve to transgress, because by and through the knowledge they would obtain from eating the fruit of knowledge of Good and Evil they were able to then procreate and bring children into this world. So to the LDS God gave them two incompatible commandments:

Multiply and replenish the earth BUT don’t eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Without knowledge on how to procreate they could never multiply and replenish the earth. So to the LDS, Adam and Eve HAD to, God wanted them to, disobey one command in order to obey the other.

In biblical Christianity God did not want Adam and Eve to sin against Him but instead wanted them to choose to obey Him and His word (due to love and allegiance to Him) and to then learn from God in their open relationship how to multiply and replenish the earth.

Of course, and as stated, God knew they were going to go south and follow their own imaginations. That’s what men do.

But herein is a difference between the LDS view and the Christian – the LDS say God wanted them to disobey Him and introduce sin into the world while the Christian maintains that while He knew they would He did not desire this as His desires were a much much better option.

Admittedly, this can be a very fine line. And where I whole heartedly disagree with the LDS explanation of what they call, “the fall upward,” (meaning Adam and Eve HAD to transgress so that their eyes could be opened so they would learn how to procreate and therefore bring about the human race) I do agree that what Adam and Eve chose to selfishly do was in full accordance with God’s over-all plan.

We might say that the plan from the beginning was to get man to chose to love God and Man – and there were two paths that could have been taken but one that was going to be taken.
The first plan was for Adam and Eve (and their progeny) to choose to love God (over self or Satan) and from the Garden state relate to Him in love and trust forever.

We note that in order for Adam and Eve to prove their love for God (and the rest of human kind) they would have the choice to disobey Him by eating fruit of a forbidden tree. Had they not eaten it I would imagine that tree would have remained there forever as a means to continually offer them the choice.

Plan B, which was the way it was going to go, was Adam and Eve would choose love of self over love of God, the human race would exit the Edenic state but still, still, still have to choose to love – both God and Man – but in a much more difficult setting.

This was God’s ultimate objective and I believe this for the following reasons:

First, He knew that given the choice Man would always choose self. But God so loved us, whom He created in His image, He wanted us to learn to choose Him and others ahead of self.

This would only happen when Man, filled with the Spirit of God, is spiritually equipped to choose to love – and that spiritual equipment comes ONLY by and through the Spirit of Christ, who – as a human – overcame self and loved God and Man – perfectly.

So from the foundation of the world God knew the role of His Son in the redemption of Man, He knew that Man – from Adam down to a baby born this minute – would never choose to love anything or anyone other than self WITHOUT Christ, and (LISTEN) He also knew that in order for men to truly learn to love it would be in the face of difficulty and trial – and not in an Edenic State – as optimal as that was to His Holiness.

Let me put it this way:

Look at all of the commands that come with the biblical descriptions of agape love –

Love is patient (in the fallen world patience is needed)  
Love is kind (in the fallen world kindness proves love in the face of fallen situations)  
Love forgives (only in a world with sin – a world without sin needs to forgiveness)
And on and on and on.

In other words, God knew Adam would fall, and by and through that act of rebellion God is better able to teach those who are his to be selfless (as He is selfless in the face of selfishness) to be kind (as He is kind in the face of unkindness) to be forgiving (in a world that does not forgive).

By and through the fall God is teaching those who are His . . . to be love. And few be there that find it.

Summary of the Fall

Once we examine Satan (in volume III) perhaps our best understanding of the Fall will come into view. For now, the last line above summarizes it best.

Religious Crooks

Instead of looking to the Fall through eyes of reason Religious Crooks speak of the Fall as something by which God was wholly taken aback. That His plan of perfect human obedience did not include any contingencies. The contingency was that from the foundation of the world, prior to even the creation of Adam and Eve, God gave His only begotten Son – for us – and in this sense, while His perfect way may not have been embraced by our first forefather, He knew all along that in creating human beings there would have to be a Plan B in place to be successful.

The Flood

Think about the obstacles to faith that Noah faced.

• First of all, did they even know what a flood was? There is nothing in the record that any had occurred before from which they could form an idea.
• Noah must have been totally alone in the idea as nobody else seemed to come along and say, “Yep, we stand with
Noah. We’ve seen these floods. They happen every hundred years. He’s right.”

- Instead Noah faced the challenge alone in both the Revelation and in the building of the ship and warning of the people.
- According to Genesis 6:13 he was warned of God. From the Septuagint this seems to mean he was “divinely admonished.” Of what?
- Hebrews 11 tells us:
  - “Of things not seen as yet.” (meaning the flood which was yet in his future).
- How many years in advance was Noah divinely admonished of a coming flood?
- 120.
  - I mean we all start getting weary after a couple hours of God not proving certain things for us and here we have Noah, in very wicked times and certainly before an extremely mocking crowd, building a boat (in a place bereft of any body of water large enough to hold it).
- Let’s do a little background on Noah.
- The Hebrew name Noah means rest and as we mentioned last week Noah was the grandson of Methuselah who was for two hundred and fifty years a contemporary with Adam.
- His father Lamech was about fifty years old at the time of Adam's death.
- At Noah’s birth his father uttered what might be considered a prophetic line, saying in Genesis 5:29:
  - "And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed."
- Once Noah and the Ark take back to dry land he offers up sacrifice and because of Genesis 8:21 it is believed that God backed off on the cursedness of the land that He imposed upon Adam, and made life upon earth a little easier, thus more restful, and thus fulfilling the prophetic words spoken by Noah’s father Lamech when Noah was born.
- Genesis 8:21 says (after Noah offered up sacrifice upon the dry land):
  - "And the LORD smelled a sweet savor; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done.”
- We rarely speak of this fact but it is interesting none the less.
Noah is often regarded as the connecting link between the old and the new world and when we think about it He is like a giant electrical transfer station of the human race with Adam being the origin, and then his line flowing directly to Noah and everyone else getting wiped out behind him so to speak and the human race being continued out through him and his sons.

We note that the whole human race comes through Noah and his three sons as all of Cain’s progeny is destroyed in the flood.

Unless you are a Mormon (who teach that Ham was married to a black Egyptian woman named Egyptus and it was through her that the whole offspring of Cain made it through the flood!)

Noah lived five hundred years, and then there were born unto him three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Genesis 5:32).

He was a "just man and perfect in his generation," and (listen) scripture says that Noah "walked with God."

Prior to the flood (or “deluge” as scholars like to call it) the descendants of Cain and of Seth began to intermarry, and a race of people came about that were distinguished for their ungodliness.

As time passed men, as they are accustomed to doing, became more and more corrupt to the point that God decided that there was nothing worth keeping, and so He was going to wipe everything out. Their corruption was greatly displayed through violence.

Due to the righteousness of Noah God entered into a covenant with him.

He was promised deliverance from the threatened deluge. (Genesis 6:18).

Noah was then commanded to build an ark (Genesis 6:14-16) with the specific purpose of saving himself, his family, and the animals of the land (not any in the sea).

Again, Genesis 6:3 tells us that a span of one hundred and twenty years elapsed while the ark was being built.

From the Apostle Peter we learn that while the ark was being prepared Noah bore constant testimony against the unbelief and wickedness of that generation.

In 2nd Peter 2:5 we read:
- "And (God) spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly."

Some might think that Noah preached righteousness by his actions alone but we know he had to have said something to
tie his construction activities to God – therefore he was in the most literal sense a PREACHER of righteousness.

- Let’s turn to Genesis 6 and read directly from the text of what the Lord said relative to Noah and then the Ark and animals.

- Genesis 6:13-22 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. 15 And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. 16 A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. 17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die. 18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. 19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. 20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. 21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. 22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

- This is the only time Gopher wood is mention in scripture.
- We do not read the methods of construction or the logistics or the work force he employed in the production of the ark.
- In genesis 7:16 we read that "Lord shut him (and his family and animals in" the ark.
- It’s a fascinating concept and one we have to assume by faith. We also have the premise presented that Noah did was He was told and left some unanswered details to faith – like how to shut the what must have been an enormous and heavy) door before the rain fell.
- According to Genesis it rained 40 days and 40 nights. We also read that as the ark floated on the waters as “the fountains of the great deep were broken up,” and “the
windows of heaven were opened.” Presumably, wells of water beneath the earth broke open to assist in the flood.

- Peter says that as a result:  
  - "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished."

- the word for “world” that Peter uses is kosmos, which is typically used for the whole world.

- The Ark floated for 150 days and then God began to recede the waters by a wind (Genesis 8) and the Ark rested in the mountains of Ararat.

- Nevertheless a considerable amount of time passed before the Lord lead Noah and his family and the animals out of the ark – a full year!

- Once they left the ark the first thing Noah did was erect an altar.

- We don’t have altars mentioned when it comes to Adam, Cain, or Abel so we do not know where the notion of them originated.

- Upon the altar it appears that Noah offered up sacrifices.

- Perhaps there is some symbolism in the fact that Noah built an altar out of things of the earth – a practice that would continue forward (through the history of the Nation of Israel and even to this day).

- It’s like he must have been so blessed to see dry ground that the altar in an of itself was an offering of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for saving he and his family.

- Here at the altar we read that Noah offered up sacrifices of adoring thanks and praise to God.

- And now a new covenant existed between God and Man – the first, apparently, where God entered “into a covenant” with man.

- This is what the covenant was all about (as found from Genesis 8:20 to 9:17) which says:

  - And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

(And then to chapter 9:1-17)

  - And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the
fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein. And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

• This covenant appears to remain in force to this very day.
• As a sign and witness of this covenant, the rainbow was adopted and set apart by God, as a sure pledge that never again would the earth be destroyed by a flood.
• Noah "lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years, and he died" (Genesis 28:22).
• Of course there is more about Noah, especially relating to his planting a vineyard, getting drunk and then having one of his Sons (Ham) discovering him naked and doing something
so disrespectful to the drunken Noah that a curse was placed upon Ham and all of his progeny.

- But let’s take a minute and talk about the flood.
- We are doing this as a means to help deconstruct some of the dogma and traditions that have been “swimming” around the topic for a long time and in my opinion, there is a lot of room for divergence of opinion.

For starters, what do we actually know about the flood from the Bible itself?

- The Ark was apparently six times longer than it was wide and I am told that this is the ration that modern ship builders continue to use today.
- God told Noah: In Genesis 6:17 “And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die.”
- Noah took seven of every clean animal and two of every unclean.
- He also took his wife, and his three sons, and his sons wives – or eight people into the ark. The world began with one couple it was now starting over with four.
- The interior of the ark was smeared with pitch – a thick, black tar-like substance which would serve to make the interior water tight. The Hebrew word for pitch is the same as the Hebrew word for atonement and from this we have a type or picture that Noah, a man who walked with God, a man who preached righteousness, was saved in the ark (just as believers today are saved when found surrounded or covered by the atonement of Christ.)
- Again, God shut the door before the rain fell.
- Then the fountains of the earth were broken up.
- Rain fell on the earth for forty days and forty nights and either the influx of water stopped then OR the water from below continued for another 110 days.
- What we do know in terms of chronology is this:

Day 1 - the Ark is entered (Genesis 7:1-10)
Day 7 - The flooding begins (Genesis 7:10-11)
Day 47 - Apparently all flooding stops and maybe at this point the water begin to recede (Genesis 7:12 - Genesis 8:3)
Day 197 - The Ark comes to rest (Genesis 8:4)
Day 261 - the mountains are seen (Genesis 8:5)
Day 301 - Raven released (and possibly a dove at the same time) (Genesis 8:6-9)
Day 308 – Another dove released and returns with an olive leaf in its mouth (Genesis 8:10-11)
Day 315 – Another dove released but does not return. (Genesis 8:12)
Day 351 – The face of the land is dry (Genesis 8:13)
Day 408 – the ark is exited. (Genesis 8:14)

• We also know that once the flood was over God promised to never destroy mankind again by flood. (Genesis 8:21)

Now, there are essentially two major approaches within Christianity on how to view the flood.

• The Young Earth what we will call “the Fundamentalist View” and the Old Earth which we will call the “Liberal View.”
• Let’s cover the essentials of both groups.
• Young Earth-er’s pretty much are biblical literalists and claim that what the Bible says is what it means – period.
• For Young Earther Fundamentalists there is the belief that the flood took place around –
  • 2348-2349 BC
  • The it was global and the entire planet was about 20 feet under water. That all people and land animals in the ark drown and that the type of animals in the ark represented every single animal on earth. That the flood was devastating.
• Old Earth Liberals tend to say that the flood took place around 10,000 BC.
  • Some of them maintain that it was the Mesopotamian area (from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea) that was covered over entirely by more than 20 feet of water.
  • These also says that all peoples and land animals living in the Mesopotamian area described died and the only animals in the ark were those that came from that basin.
  • Of course, they admit that the flood was devastating to that area.

Now, it is up to each individual to decide how they are going to view the flood and to also decide how their view effects their Christian beliefs (if the view affects their Christian walk at all).

• This being said, views on the flood have served to create a tremendous amount of animus between these two groups of believers who see the flood differently.
• For Liberal Christians, the area that was the potential site for the geographical flood was a flat area, about 500,000 square miles or about the size of modern-day Iraq.
• Now Old Earther Hugh Ross points out how ugly the war is on this issue, saying From his book, “The Genesis Question” (page 145):
  • “To some Christians, a person’s belief that the flood covered the entire planet and all its high mountains (as they interpret the Genesis text) provides a reliable litmus test of his or her salvation, of membership in the body of Christ. They have drawn a line in the same where it does not belong.”

• Because the Young Earther’s claim a literal reading of the Bible to describe the flood there is not that much to say about it. It may have been so — simple as that.
• But there are questions and challenges to this literal interpretation that need to be asked — and answered — as a means to seek to worship God in spirit and truth.

Now, a word of caution.

• The fallback to hard questions (especially when it comes to fundamental believers) is a failsafe stance that says:
  • “God can do anything!”
  • Let’s admit right now that God can do anything but He often does not. We cannot approach our study of the word with “magic” in mind. It’s not fair nor is it intellectually honest.
  • God did NOT expect us to believe in fairy tales — He gave us literal history of literal people from a literal time and place who took literal actions (like building an ark over 120 years) to survive.
  • If we are going to embrace a magical approach to understanding God why would He cause Noah to labor so bloody hard when He could have magically produced a miracle ark for the salvation of the world?
  • It seems that everything still needs to be accepted by faith but just as the Berean’s tested all things by the Word we have to test all things to — and accept God’s invitation when He says, “Come, let us reason together.”
  • So, let’s reason together now.

The first problem or question we might address is the animals within the ark.
• Scientists estimate that 1,120,000 species of land animals and birds exist on earth today.
• Because of extinction it is believed that there were far more animals back at the time of Noah (in terms, again, of species).
• The Bible says that Noah took seven clean animals (three “couples” and an extra – presumably for sacrificing) and a male and female of unclean animals.
• If this collection was to take from the entire planet we’re talking about polar bears, otters, and penguins from the Artics, Koala bears and Kangaroos from Australia, pandas from Japan, kimono dragons from (wherever they come from) as well as llamas, flies, fleas, worms and on and on and on.
• At Bible Study (dot org) one fundamentalist scholar estimated the number of animals was 2000. This seems to be a ridiculous underestimation.
• But let’s suggest that he is correct. With eight people on board the ark who labored ten hours a day without a break each for one full year, they would have had to have fed, watered, scooped and cleaned up after one animal each every 2.5 minutes.
• Now, when we are confronted by facts like this we are most likely to resort to God magic and start tossing out all the possible magical explanations, like:
  • God didn’t have the animals eat (but Genesis says that God told Noah to bring food on board for all the animals).
  • Or God kept the animals from excreting waste (again, why even build the ark if such miracles were going to keep the animals alive. Why not just empower all the animals with an ability to sleep underwater or float?
  • The proffered answers from the zealots can become so embarrassing that they greatly demean the reasoning God invites us to participate in. For instance:
    • Some of them include God shrinking all the animals down to tiny, tiny sizes or that he caused them all to fall under a deep sleep.
    • Possible for God? Of course. But first, not part of the biblical narrative, and second not reasonable when we consider the reasonable nature of the rest of the story.

So let’s try and stay reasonable, shall we?

• 2000 total animals in the quantities that the Lord demanded is horrifically low. So let’s examine the facts even more closely.
Even if it was half that ridiculously low amount (1000 animals) the eight adults would have been able to devote 5 minutes per day per animal to keep up—no breaks.

Now "Answers in Genesis" estimates that there were 16,000 different animals on the Ark.

Let’s suggest that only half needed care that would require each person on board to service 17 animals per minute.

But if we look back to earlier estimates in the faith, the Godfather proponent of world-wide flood (fundamentalist Henri Morris) estimated the number to be 35,000 different animals.

Bible Study (.org) estimates them at 40,000 and Christian Apologetics and Research estimates that the total number of animals on the Ark was 145,000.

I’m not going to even try and describe what would be required of the eight souls saved to keep that ark of animal functioning.

- And we have not even begun to answer how all the animals got along together?
- Kept from eating each other?
- And how Noah and his family kept from suffocating on the smell, and hair and feathers that would have been airborne 24/7 of their time on the ark.
- And what about the noise?

Now,

When we look at scripture we have to realize that sometimes the writers resorted to Hebraisms in their description of things.

For example, just this morning in our verse by verse of John we were covering the Triumphal entry of the Lord into Jerusalem.

A large group of people went and obtained palm frons and began waving them at the arrival of Jesus as a means to honor Him and the Pharisees who were watching said (according to John):

- "The whole world has gone after Him." And the Greek word for world is kosmos, which not only includes the earth but the heavens.

A little bit of Jewish exaggeration, wouldn’t you say? And there are other examples of this all through scripture. For example:

In Genesis 41:56 Moses wrote:

- "And famine was over all the face of the earth" probably not over Hawaii and Alaska, right?
• It can be so tempting to be dogmatic on points like this because there is almost a feeling of security when we allow ourselves to support such thinking but the problem is the stances don’t always hold up to scrutiny and therefore lead to disappointment and LOSS of faith for people instead of increasing it.

• Later Moses wrote that God had said that he would put the “fear of Moses” upon “the Nations of the whole earth” but it is doubtful that the Japanese were fearful of Moses at the time the promise was made.

• Samuel described all nations as “eating and drinking and dancing” for biblical reasons and purposes but it’s doubtful that the indigenous peoples of Newfoundland were following suit – at least not for biblical reasons.

• Jeremiah wrote: “And all the earth sought Solomon.” But again, were the pagans of every land seeking Solomon? Probably not.

• Even in the New Testament Paul used a Hebraism when he wrote:
  - “Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world,” but it is highly unlikely that the aborigines in Australia were speaking of this faith he mentions.

• We make note of these things because we are in an age where dogma must take a back seat to faithful reason and sound contextual study of the Word.

• We have to seek God in truth because the faith cannot be sustained by foolish claims anymore – they only hurt us and the sacred Gospel placed in our hands to share.

• Certainly, there are difficulties and circumstances that we as believers are required to take on faith, but we can eliminate many of them if we would just allow the Word of God to work reasonably in our lives and by the Spirit.

• Such an approach is not acting faithlessly but instead is the heart of faith-filled seekers of God’s truths.

• The reason this “whole world” deal is an issue is because if the flood was global there are some factors we have to consider (in addition to the animal issues raised above.)

• One of the solutions to the animal gatherings we discuss that was brought up was the idea that the world was one solid landmass (called Pangea today) and this would allow for the gathering of Kangaroos in from the Australia region and Kimono dragons from Japan.

• But the problem we are left with then is that after the global flood Pangea was apparently (and according to Young earth scholars) “broken up” (into its present shapes) so
the question then becomes how did the pair of dragons make it back to Japan (etc. etc.)

• Let’s talk about some other factors regarding the demand for a world-wide flood. And we’ll begin with the amount of water needed.

• Fundamentalist Young Earth’ers claim that enough water was generated from day 7 to day 47 to cover Mount Everest, (which is 29,029 feet tall) by 20 feet.

• By these calculations the world would have had to have been covered by 29,049 feet of water in a matter of forty days.

• Again, God can do anything – that is not the question. But since he has used natural means to protect the animals and Noah and natural means to remove the water, I would suggest He used natural means to create the flood.

• If the flood was global it would have had to rise 726 feet plus per day to reach these heights – that’s 30 feet per hour world wide.

• This is a tremendous amount of water coming down and rising up awfully fast.

• So fast that the friction of the water falling and rising against the air and land, not to mention the turbulence of the rising water against everything on earth, would have probably boiled Noah and the inhabitants of the ark to death (not to mention ripping them and everything else to shreds).

• For water to fall and rise at the rates necessary to meet the biblical description there would be nothing left in its wake.

• Not a tree, blade of grass, river – anything. Everything would have been completely denuded and utterly covered in silt.

• But from the Biblical description Noah appears to have exited the Ark without much of a surprise or change to his expectations.

• He even planted a vineyard.

• Additionally, the Bible says nothing of Noah collecting seedlings or striplings for reforestation, so where he got the grape seeds remains a mystery.

• Defenders of a global flood suggest that it just wasn’t recorded that God had Noah collect seeds too. But that is stepping outside the biblical account and assuming things that are not there. Certainly, this was possible, but it is not biblical, and if the Bible is our source, we need to stick to its contents.
• We have to wonder, with the absolute natural destruction such a flood would cause, how a dove was able to pluck a leaf off an Olive tree in such a short period of time and return it to Noah’s hand as evidence that land was resurfacing.
• Then, we have the dissipation of the water!
• For the water to retreat from off the face of the land (from day 47 to day 351) it would have had to fall 95 feet a day. How does the Bible say the Lord dissipated the water? By wind.
• For wind to dissipate the water off the face of the earth at the rate of 95 feet per day it would have had to blown like mad (at speeds I couldn’t discover from other sources or compute myself by any means) which too would have rocked the heck out of the ark, caused enormous tidal action, and probably been more violent then the water rising in the first place.
• Why does all of this matter? The water turbulence, the waves, the wind?
• It matters because in over the course of a year the ark only moved about 500 miles from where it launched.
• That’s the rate of about 1.3 miles per day - the rate an average Joe walks is about 2.5 miles an hour. At half that rate, or one mile per hour, the ark would have landed half way around the world at the end of the year.
• So we are talking literally no substantial movement of the ark at all on a daily basis.
• Another issue with the water is the admixture of apparently fresh water with salt.
• A global flood arriving in such torrents, would have mixed everything up so much that the water would have plainly ended up as salt water.
• How did all the freshwater fish survive? How did ANY fish survive?
• Speaking of water, the pre-flood Bible descriptions of the earth include rivers named the Tigress and the Euphrates.
• A flood of the magnitude required to cover the earth would have wiped rivers out like a crashing wave wipes out water channels made by children playing on the sea-shore. And yet the Tigress and the Euphrates still exist - even till this day!
• Taking all these things into account - torrential downpour and uprising of water, the denuding of everything in its path (including the ark) the salt water issue for freshwater fish (not to mention the debris and silt filled water for salt water fish) the lack of travel of the Ark
over the entire year plus the wind velocities required to evaporate all the water back to some place unknown all provide us with a very simple and apparent solution that is based in a reasonable and faithful reading of the world – the flood was geographical and not global.

See, a geographical flood would eliminate so many issues that we as believers face when we insist on a global deluge.

- If the flood was limited to the Mesopotamian basis, a giant vicinity where man had probably not established himself beyond, we have reason.
- The flood would have still killed all of man on earth except those on the ark.
- A geographical flood would solve the problem of animal numbers, animal gathering, and animal distribution once the waters abated.
- (This means we would not have to explain how the Kangaroo – an animal for which no bones have ever been found anywhere except in Australia – remained safely in Australia while the flood in the Mesopotamian basin commenced).
- It would solve the problem of very slow-moving cockroaches (indigenous to Texas) making their way to the old world and Noah obtaining bamboo for panda bears (because that is all they eat) and Eucalyptus leaves for the Koala bear (because that is the only thing they eat too).
- Regarding the dissipation of water, Old Earther Hugh Ross wrote this:
  - Genesis 8:1 describes how God removed the floodwaters from the land. He sent a wind. This removal technique perfectly suits the requirements of water removal from a gigantic flat plain such as Mesopotamia. Water even tens of feet deep would flow very inefficiently toward the ocean, but a wind would significantly speed up its movement. Wind also speeds up evaporation. Thus wind would prove an effective means for removing water from an expansive, low-lying plain. It would prove of little use, however, in removing waters of a global flood. Such a quantity of water could not possibly recede to any location on or around the planet by the means described in just eleven months.”
- Some of the defenses for a global flood include the fact that most pagan cultures have some sort of record of a world flood, that the fossil records support a global flood (which I am not going to cover not because there are not
great insights to the fundamentalist claims about the flood and fossils but because the topic is tedious and would take too long), that the Ark rested on top of Ararat (which is 16000 plus feet high), a thing called flood geology, and the fundamentalist claims that the Ark has actually been found.

• Let’s tap on each of these, recognizing that there are arguments for and against that have merit.
• One claim many fundamentalists will present when discussing the flood is that there are an abundance of proofs which reveal that it was global.
• In the arena of proofs one is the idea that pagan cultures all write of a world-wide flood too.
• Dr. D James Kennedy, in his book Solving Bible Mysteries, wrote:
  • “If there was never a great flood (meaning world-wide) then why is the story of a world-wide flood so indelibly impressed upon the memory of mankind all around the world. It is told in the most ancient documents in Babylonia, Egypt, Greece, India, China, Polynesia, Native America and many other cultures. Could such a universal belief have sprung up in culture after culture without any basis in historical fact? That would be inconceivable.”
• We cannot disagree with Brother Kennedy – most pagan cultures have flood traditions. But first, such cultural traditions have to be considered just that, a tradition, because nobody from any culture survived the biblical flood – only eight souls who then repopulated the earth.
• By the time Noah’s progeny grew to the point where his offspring inhabited China (AS CHINESE PEOPLE) the flood would have been a distant memory and anyone who wrote of it from any pagan culture would be referring to something they had absolutely no clue about.
• Here’s the deal – every country in the world experiences floods – some so big from their pagan eyes it would seem world-wide. In my opinion, the practice of borrowing from pagan cultures histories to support our biblical view can be dangerous ground.

The next argument to support a world-wide flood says that the water was obviously high because the Bible says the Ark rested on top of Mount Ararat (which again is 16000 plus feet high).
Let’s stop for a minute and address the numerous claims that the Ark has been discovered.
Like the Mormons claims on things, despite Fundamentalist claims that the Ark has actually been found there is not one shred of physical evidence for it today.
The purported photographs of it always seem to disappear, pieces of the Ark are always lost, and the men who have found it, are always this doctor friend of that team of people who are related to this uncle OR the military around Ararat knows the Ark is there but won’t let anyone have access to it.
This is not to suggest that the ark couldn’t exist in some degraded form. But we do want to be astute in the acceptance of facts and cannot allow ourselves to embrace myth and hype when faith ought to sustain us.
Additionally, all the claims of the Ark being located suggest that it was found “on top of Ararat.”
But the Bible does not say the Ark rested on the top of Ararat – it says (in Genesis 8:4) that it “rested upon the mountains of Ararat.”
We all know that when we refer to “the mountains of something” that it could mean the top of the mountains, the valley of them, the side of them, and in no way tells us the heights the ark reached due to water levels.

Then there is a theory pushed out that is known as “Flood Geology” and the idea is that the devastation of the flood caused the world to look old.

Ellen G White, founder of the Seventh Day Adventists is the founder of the theory but it was popularized by the kings of the theory Henry Morris and John Whitcomb.
Fundamentalists are actually split over the argument about why the earth looks old.
Some say God “built” age into the creation (the way he made Adam old when He created him) and the other is that the flood caused the earth to look old.
Those who embrace the latter suggest that all of the mountains, valleys, the continental drift, petrified wood, fossils, dinosaur skeletons, and the Grand Canyon were caused by the flood.
The problem is these solutions actually create far more unanswerable questions that they solve.
For example, if the flood caused the existence of the grand Canyon why aren’t there grand canyons of a similar “ilk” all over the world?
• There’s a dry lake here in the state of Utah that has four million sedimentary layers. If all of those layers were created by the flood one would have to have been laid every eight seconds for a year to create that geological record.
• But because evidences like the layers in this dry lake threaten the pet beliefs of the fundamentalist leaders they refuse to allow reason to prevail – and cling to dogma . . . which is a danger to faith.
• Years ago Christians said the idea of a continental drift was “atheistic and supported evolutionary leanings.”
• To the fundamentalist mind the continental drift would have taken billions of years for the America’s to drift as far away from Europe and Africa (as it is today) and that would mean the earth was older than we thought!
• “No go,” said they.
• So they came up with a new twist – the flood caused the continental drift to occur in one year.
• This is a quote from Answers in Genesis:
  “The continents today are the result of Noah’s flood.”
• Remember, if that is the case we have several issues to contend with logically and reasonably.
• First, for the flood to cause the continents to shift a distance that otherwise was thought to have taken a billion years in one year, we are talking about such turmoil on the water, such heat producing frictions that nothing could survive. That Ark would have been tossed, split and destroyed.
• Secondly, we have the distribution of world animals once the ark opened – very problematic.
• Finally, the Bible says nothing about the world being an utterly different place once the land dried – and it would have been.
• Contrary to the days of old, Young Earth Fundamentalists now not only claim continental drift as a reality, they say they authored the premise and even gave a name to how the flood caused it – the very scientific title of “runaway subduction.”
• There is no biblical evidence for this theory NOR scientific evidence to truly support it.

Listen,

• in an effort to defend their dogma that the earth is 6-8 thousand years old, fundamentalists today claim that within a one year period of time
  - eight people were on a wooden ark
they shared space with all the animals ever created (including every insects, bird, reptiles and mammal – in multiples of two and seven! Plus all of their food
- This was while rain fell so hard the water levels rose 30 feet an hour (and in the meanwhile)
- all the mountains shot up – some as high as six miles high – and that all the continents traveled three to six thousand miles.
- that a wind blew to get rid of the water afterward
- and that all the animals on board then traveled back to their new broken up and separated lands (thousands of miles away) and separated by new bodies of water.
- In no time Noah planted a vineyard by which he got drunk.

If all of this happened the way some suggest, can we blame him?

Summary of The Flood

I believe and even accept the biblical story of Noah, the Ark and the flood. I believe there was a flood that took all human life except those on the ark that I do believe Noah built. I accept all the species of animals in the Mesopotamian basin (which was about the size of Iraq) were gathered up in the ark and were saved. I can accept the deluge rose twenty feet above the land, and I believe that afterward God used a wind to blow all the water out to the sea.

I also believe we do a tremendous disservice to future generations when we insist on dogmatic, unreasonable fictions caused by taking the bible literally.

I think we are errantly placing our children in jeopardy when the secular world is able to prove the idiocy of some of our positions. And I think we can do better – as believers in things that are not seen and have to be taken on faith. But let’s make our faith good faith. Faith that truly gives every man an answer for the hope that is in them.

Finally, maybe we need to step off from our positions set in stone. I could be wrong – admittedly – on this flood issue. And anyone who embraces a world-wide flood as a Christian is just fine with me. I just wish this grace would flow both ways and we could unitedly allow for a divergence of opinion among
the body rather than demanding that it is our way . . . or the highway.

**Religious Crooks**

In my estimation some people errantly tie the teaching of a world wide flood to that of being a Good Christian, to being a person of faith and to even being saved. This is the rhetoric of Christian fanatics and zealots who are often found in circles like King James Only movements, ministries that are founded on promoting Orthodoxy in the creation story, and others. When any biblical view is set in stone we run into trouble and love is typically the casualty. Let the zealots wail but consider the source – and just move forward in love and understanding of their need to make people see and believe everything the way they see them.

**Freedom**

- We speak a lot about *why God created Man*. We often say that He created us to have fellowship, or so we would worship or love Him.
- I would suggest that these responses are not only missing the mark but by hitting the mark we will draw close to knowing, and therefore to understanding, God.
- So, while worshipping and loving and having fellowship with God may be a result of His creating us, I suggest that being a Good God He created human beings in His image so that everyone of us could and would . . . *freely choose* how to live our lives. “So that all people would have the Godly right and responsibility to decide how they would exist, and live both here and now, and then hereafter.
- Again, in direct opposition to teachings that there is no free will among men I submit for your consideration the idea that the highest driver behind God creating Man in His image was to give His creations freedom, something I suggest is not only the primary factor in our existence but the most noble principle or characteristic a loving God could bestow upon His creations.
- It is this belief that causes me to utterly shutter at the notions of the Calvinistic God.
Additionally, and in my estimation, to say God created human beings to love Him is again to fall short of His highest and most noble aim.

To love Him (and others as a result of our love for Him) first requires choice, and for the choice to love God and others to be meaningful and real and genuine, the choice must be free of compulsion, force and manipulation.

In other words, genuine love for God cannot exist through compulsory measures or means.

The same holds true when people say that God created us to worship Him.

Has that phrase ever troubled you? It troubles me. It sort of smacks of Him needing and or wanting the human race to sing His praises by design. Again, this may be the result of our freely choosing Him but freely choosing Him must come first, which would make the praising of Him from the unfettered heart all the more true.

To say that the reason God created us was to give the creations made in His image the single most noble gift of freedom may be - and may continue to be - His highest ambition.

And in this light, we can see that truly loving, truly worshipping, and truly having faith in God could only be the result of those who truly choose to have and do such things toward His person - and therefore freedom is primary. And with this characteristic as a primary factor in the relationship between God and Man we might see it as primary in everything that exists in our relationship with Him.

In other words freedom to choose is primary in salvation, in sanctification, in being joint heirs with Christ, in dying to self, in living by the fruit of the Spirit, and in our earthly and eternal position to God Himself.

So where God is the giver of all good gifts to humankind, all of humankind are on a minute to minute basis freely choosing to receive or to reject them.

This never ends, leaving all people fully responsible before God here and now.

The second thing to consider is that no matter how much a person may seek to escape from this freedom to choose (because personal responsibility before God for our decisions is painful and discomforting) each and every one of us are condemned, in some sense, to be free.
• Even if someone has their tongue and eyes gouged out, and are put in a dark cell, fettered and bound, they have the freedom to make choices on how to respond, how to think, how to believe and how to be – PAINFUL as this reality is.
• As the existentialists have long-maintained, and as the biblical narrative illustrate, all human beings are condemned to be free.
  - We are free to believe or to not believe.
  - Then free to act or to not act.
  - Therefore, we are all consummately free to love or to not love.
• Amidst all the religious rhetoric to the contrary, all we have to do is look to the first Man, Adam and Eve, to clearly see this was, and remains, the primary ambition of God.
• Let’s look at Adam and Eve.
• God created them – both – to be free.
• The man Adam was never forced to obey or believe God or his wife and Eve was not forced or even commanded to obey God or her husband . . . in the beginning or anywhere thereafter.
• There was NEVER force of any kind.
• God created Man and instilled in him and her His commutable characteristics one of which is utter freedom to be and do and act.
• It’s the only way that He can be considered a wholly good and truly loving God.
• And along with these communicable attributes God gave Man conditions to his existence.
• First God “gave” (emphasis mine) but first God “GAVE” man dominion over the animals on earth which He created. It says this in Genesis 1:26.
• We do not have God telling Adam what having dominion over the animals looked like, just that man had dominion over them and that it was given to Him by God.
• Adam was free to do as he freely desired among these creations.
• Then after Man was given dominion over all the animals God created, God tells Adam in verse 29:
  - “Behold, I have (also) “given you” every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food.”
• Again, these are all gifts given to Man – dominion and plants to eat – but a total freedom of choice – as much a
freedom to choice to obey or follow the instructions as there in his decision to obey the other instructions God gave them about the forbidden fruit.

• We might suppose that Adam could have decided to eat a rabbit instead of a carrot in the same way that he decided to eat of the forbidden fruit. There was no moral evil in either decision.

• Again, God gave instructions but Man was free to follow them or not.

• The point is the freedom to act was present in all of these things we read about in the creation of Adam and Eve.

• In chapter two of Genesis the story of God creating Man is told again (the scripture repeats the story adding in new elements. This style of recapitulation was a common practice in Hebrew writings).

• But in this version only Adam has been created as God will create Eve a few verses later.

• And when Adam was alone God said to Him:

  - Genesis 2:16 “And the LORD God commanded the man, (Adam) saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

• The man Adam was certainly given commandments and directives (just like he was told that he had dominion over the animals and that God had given herbs and fruit for his food) but Adam was free to choose whether to obey these directives . . . or not.

• There was no flaming sword preventing him to freely act in any way he chose at this point in the story.

• To choose to follow God and his insights and directions would have shown and proven that Adam loved, worshipped and had faith and fellowship for and with God, but freedom of choice was present and the freedom to choose was primary - before desires for love, fellowship or worship could be fulfilled.

• God did not pull any punches here.

• He explained the fall-out from choosing to go against His advice, but the choice before the Man Adam was primary and readily apparent.

• From this model, we can see that freedom to choose in His creations is paramount to God. To me, it - not loving Him, not worshipping Him, not believing in His Son is primary BUT FIRST . . . the internal and then external act of freely choosing to do one thing or another - that is the primary factor in all things related to God and Man.
And it continues to be.

- After giving the Man Adam these instructions we read in the very next verse:
  - 18 “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”
- We then read that God brings all the animals to Adam and gives him the freedom to call them what he wants to call them.
- He leaves it up to Him to name them. To me this illustrates that Adam had the ability to make decisions, to use his mind and creativity prior to the fall.
- It also shows that Adam had an ability to choose based on the contents of his own mind prior to the fall.
- In other words, in this instance Adam could choose to call the elephants “elephant” and the tigers, “tiger” - or the reverse if He so desired. He was free to name them.
- Prior to Adam being given life another being was free to act too - a heavenly being, an angel.
- In the very presence of God this angel freely chose to go a direction that was in opposition to God and His will and ways.
- We call him Satan. The story of created Man is not much different.

Still with me?

- So at this point in Genesis God takes the mans help meet from his side and Adam, again, is freely given the choice on what to name her (which is Eve because, he says, she is the mother of all living - meaning all human beings who would be given life through her).
- Adam could have called her, Rebecca or Julie, but God gave Adam the freedom to think, reason, and the choice to give the first human woman a name.
- There is a lot of freedom that God has given Adam thus far in the Garden story, isn’t there?
- No input from God is implied here. Not even His inspiration is alluded to (although it could have been coursing through Adam’s veins).
- We note that at this point Moses tells us that at this point both Adam and Eve were naked and that they were not ashamed.
- From this insight we learn that knowledge (in this case, of good and evil) influences the reactions and responses human
beings have and make and from this can see that our future freedoms to make choices are INFLUENCED by previous decisions and events.

• In other words, we realize from this little example that there are factors that may influence our freedoms to think and acts.
• I would suggest that they don’t force us to think or act but to some degree or another they greatly influence our freedoms to do so.
• This is key to our understanding of freedom because right here we learn that almost from the beginning the choices of Adam and Eve made begin to alter and effect other choices and decisions they will make later.

Put it this way:

• God told Adam not to eat of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil because in the day that He did he would surely die.
• This was a warning and a promise from God to his creation Adam. Prior to eating the fruit Adam and now Eve were without shame when naked before God and each other.
• Therefore, the choice to remain naked before God (and each other) was unencumbered by any external factors that would affect their behaviors (like shame).
• However, we will later see that their choice to freely eat of the fruit (note that, to FREELY EAT of the fruit) would greatly influence and affect the innate liberty they originally possessed to be naked in each others (and God’s) presence.
• However, even in the face of this shame, Adam and Eve could have freely made the choice to remain naked.
• It would have been more difficult in the face of their newly discovered carnal knowledge and the shame it produced but they were free and the shame could never force them to hide from God, it could only influence the hiding.
• From this we can see that some sort of choice is always present before all human beings while admitting that all choices are influenced and affected by countless factors that may affect or mitigate our free decisions.
• Nevertheless, even in the face of countless influential factors, the greatest gift God has bestowed upon human beings is the power and ability to freely choose in spite of pressures, influences, and persuasions.

Perhaps some examples will aid our comprehension.
• Suppose a man is brought into this world with direct criminal DNA from pops, a horrible family and parental environment from moms and pops, a propensity toward addiction (which he falls prey to and becomes addicted to meth as a teen) along with a very low attention span, intellect, and other learning deficits.
• This poor guy has had the deck stacked against him from birth.
• The question remains, is he free to choose positive, life-enhancing acts over detrimental devastating ones.
• If he was “incapable” of freely choosing then every single human being that has had similar difficult experiences would never rise above their life’s circumstances – and they would be destined for failure.

Destined.

• But this is not always the case, is it?
• Not all fail to overcome. Some of them, for sure, but not all.
• And in the face of at least one exception over the course of human history we have to admit that external factors do not necessarily disable a person’s ability to freely choose something better.
• Likewise and conversely, suppose we have someone born with pristine DNA – that of responsible, intelligent, parents who is then brought up around endless expressions of kindness, love and generosity.
• Suppose all the advantages of life are afforded such a soul, including having a sound work ethic imposed upon them as a means to help them avoid being spoiled.
• If such a background would always create a sound upright citizen – without exception – then we might be able to suggest that choice has nothing to do with the direction a person’s life takes.
• But there are exceptions to such cases, cases where people born with all of the apparent benefits in life choose a more destructive and devious path.

Why?

• Because the primary factor in all human beings life is the freedom to choose good or evil. Bottom line.
So while we are all influenced and swayed by our nature and our nurture, all human beings, even in this day and age, continually have the blessed gift of freedom.

The freedom to choose, to act, to believe and receive or to reject and go accordingly.

With God as judge all mitigating factors will be included in the assessment of our lives, but I suggest we make a giant error in thinking people do not have choices that they freely make.

Going back to the Garden of Eden story we then read in chapter 3:

- Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

Here Satan, an external force of temptation and sway to invoke poor or destructive choices, but incapable of forcing, approaches Eve with an initial open question:

- "Did God say you shall not eat of ANY of the Garden Trees?"

In this, we see the tempter appealing to her reason and her freedom to think and choose through his cunning reason and ability to sway.

Again, though He, as an external factor, could sway her free decision, she was still free to choose. He did not jump in her and force her to act.

She allowed his cunning ways to influence her - but the choice was still hers. She replied to the serpent:

- "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

Now, Eve was not alive when God told Adam not to eat of the forbidden fruit and so the addition here that they would die if they even touched it came from some other source.

We have some choices when it comes to where this addition information came from:

1. That God actually did say it to Adam but it’s just not recorded.
2. That God didn’t say it, but Adam made it up to keep Eve away from the fruit altogether - which would have been a deception.
3. God didn’t say it but Eve added it on her own when speaking to Satan - which would have also been a deception.

It seems like if touching it would have caused or even contributed to death God would have said this to Adam and
it would have been included in the narrative. But it wasn’t so I suggest we eliminate the idea that God said it.

- And because Adam was first on the scene and was the one who named the animals, and because Eve was taken out of him and created (out of more refined material and not directly from the clay of the earth as Adam was) I tend to think that Adam chose to teach Eve a myth, of his own accord, which he freely possessed and that myth was, “if you even touch the fruit you will surely die.”
- He had the freedom to do this and without disobeying God (for God gave no commandment against mythmaking) he did it.
- This was the nature of Man. And it seems to have risen up even before Man disobeyed God!
- Perhaps once Satan got the forbidden fruit into Eve’s curious hands, she, in her mind was convinced that the sin had already occurred and ate the fruit without a care.

Deceptions affect choices as well.

- In any case after her response Satan begins to confront her thinking, and the very promises and the words of God, and he says to the woman:
  - 4 “Ye shall not surely die:”
- This was a flat out lie, spoken from the father of lies, who Jesus said “was a liar from the beginning.”
- But listen, Eve had the freedom to choose to believe him or to trust God and/or her husband.
- But Satan continues his sales job, saying:
  - 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.
- There is so much in this verse. First, Satan speaks for God here, saying, “For God doth know that in the day you eat thereof then shall your eyes be opened.”
- And again, Eve has to decide if the directives of her husband and God are superior to those of the subtle serpent.
- And to freely act accordingly.
- The choice was there to be made. We note that God allowed Eve to choose here. He did not intervene with angels or himself on her behalf. He did not stop her from eating the fruit.
- She had the freedom to choose. As everyone of us continue to have.
Many people say that she was not equipped to choose well because she was not aware (did not have the knowledge of Good and Evil).

And this brings us to an extremely important point in our discussion.

Where Eve did NOT have a knowledge of Good and Evil she did have the information clearly in her possession.

Information that she either heard from God herself or was told God had said from Adam.

But she had the information - one source the truth and another source a lie. She FREELY chose to follow the lie over the truth and the source that gave it to her.

This is the bottom line to it all.

Eve freely chose to embrace one source of information over another - we will see why she did this in the next verse.

We might suggest that from an extremely simplified view God merely wanted Eve and Adam (and the rest of His creations) to choose Him and His ways over all other influences.

And those who are His . . . do.

Those who are not . . . don’t.

Why do those who are His freely choose Him? Because they love, trust and seek to worship Him.

Why do those who don’t choose Him over all the other options?

Because they love, trust and seek to worship other things.

And in this all human beings are responsible before God - from Adam and Eve to this very day.

That this is the basis for His creating humans in His image - to allow all the opportunity (even at times the exhausting opportunity) to freely choose Him over “all the other choices” this world has to offer.

These choices are not a single event, like eating the forbidden fruit or NOT. They are a constant throughout the life of every one of us. What was it that moved Eve to chose the fruit over God?

Satan, of course provided her with some convincing but we read in verse 6 that after Satan did his convincing (with alternative information to God’s) that

- 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.
• Notice that what Eve saw or observed in the promise of the forbidden fruit was seen BEFORE she ate of it.
• In other words, Eve, BEFORE EATING THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT “saw” or understood that the fruit was –
  - “good for food.”
  - That it was “pleasant to the eyes.”
  - And that “eating it” would make one wise.
• She did NOT have to eat the fruit first to realize these things! Have you ever thought about this?
• It proves that Adam and Eve were very knowledgeable and intelligent, and seeing the facts about the fruit was NOT a matter of good or evil – she was able to observe, however, what was beneficial to her – something completely abstracted from the goodness or evilness of the fruit itself.
• In other words, we know that it was NOT morally good to eat of the fruit. But she had no knowledge of moral good or evil. She hadn’t eaten the fruit yet.
• But she was still capable to see and understand that the fruit had value to her person – to herself – BEFORE taking one bite.
• And this lets us in on what motivates all of us to choose alternatives to God and His ways – the self – specifically, the things that feed our lusts and pride.
• This is what Eve (and Adam thereafter) chose when they ate the fruit – themselves – their lusts and their pride over God and His will and ways.
• And they did it will full knowledge of the FACTS though they lacked knowledge of the moral ramifications of their choices.
• Both Adam and Eve could have refused to ignore all the surrounding facts about the fruit – the goodness of it for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and that eating it would make them wise – and freely chosen to follow God and the facts He delivered to them.
• And Adam could have refused to eat the fruit even though Eve ate of it first – but He chose the lust of His flesh to guide his decision too.
• Both of them, throughout the entire process of the temptation were free, at any and every time, before, during and after, to choose differently.
• I mean even after eating the fruit they were free to continue to choose and act without compulsion.
• And they could have taken responsibility for their choices instead of blaming each other (or Satan).
• They also had the choice to stand naked in each other’s presence in spite of their shame. And they could have refused to hide from God but instead could have decided to stand naked before Him, broken and ashamed for their free choices.
• But in their case, which is a type for all of us, the first couple — called Adam and Eve — freely choose a succession of acts that were based not on wanting to choose God and His ways but were based on freely choosing their own.
• And this is story every human being lives today. In and through our free choices we all illustrate what we love most — ourselves, the fruit of this world, Satan, religious pretense, the blame game or God.
• Our love and allegiances can only be seen as genuine in the constant light of our relentless freedoms to choose and hence the freedom to choose is the primary and paramount factor in Man and his relationship to God.
• God has chosen to be the giver in this symbiotic, two-lane relationship. He loved us so much He gave us His Only human Son and He has elected Man to be a free receiver of His life and shed blood.
• Yes, there are blinding counterfeits, and misleading interlopers who promise liberty but only bind the human soul but the those who freely seek will find.
• And those who do not are in fact responsible before God for the choice and the ultimate sin which is idolatry.
• Of choosing to freely consume the forbidden fruit of this world, false gods, money, materialism, and even (or perhaps especially) religion over God and all He openly offers.
• It is the choices that prove who we truly love, worship and with whom we have genuine fellowship.
• So while love (of God) is the first commandment, even love cannot be forced or mandated and must come from the freewill choice of all human beings.
• Those who do not love or care about Him will freely evidence this in their consistent free rejections of Him.
• Finally, when Adam and Eve freely chose to serve themselves and were discovered for having so done, the next thing they freely chose to do was implement religion into the picture by making themselves aprons of fig leaves to hide behind — instead of facing the direct open shameful consequences of their initial decisions.
• This was another choice and one most people choose to make as an intermediary between them and God rather than having an honest open relationship with Him.
• There is little difference between the free will choice of this world over God and the freewill choice of religion between God and Man.
• But again, all of us are constantly free to choose standing shamefully and naked before Him or to make aprons of fig leaves and suppose we are okay.
• Since freedom is paramount to all things of God, we must conclude with some observations.
• In the face of this innate human freedom few will choose God over the things of this world.
• Those who do would be the few that find (and truly love) Him.
• Without freedom to fully choose, the first and greatest command to love God with our all cannot be known or had.
• Not even love (or the command to love) can be mandated or forced. In fact, genuine love for God ESPECIALLY cannot be forced – it must come from the free will choices of all men.
• When anything attempts to introduce or insert itself between the freedom all people have to choose God freely we must see such things for what they are - evil substitutes.
• This is especially true of religions that, like Satan, step in and speak for God as a means to usurp the freedom all people have to decide if and when they want actually love God of their own volition.
• In this we must conclude that even before the two great commandments, to love God and others, even before having faith, even before God himself or His only begotten Son, and before any of the elements of Christianity can be appreciated or implemented, the primary principle which must forever be held in the highest esteem among men is the freedom for people to choose whatever people want to freely choose.
• We can teach, we can inform, we can share and advice and warn others of the facts, but anytime someone, or something, attempts to manipulate, force, or coerce others to think, or act, or believe in a specified manner, God’s primary ambition to allow all men the right to freely pursue or reject Him is lost, and so will be lost the ability for all men to freely love . . . or not.
• Upon these principles we have the essential tenets of Subjective Christianity.
• As God did in the garden of Eden, instructions are offered and insights given. We seek facts and information and knowledge and we work together toward greater and greater spiritual insights.
• But all people are free to decide for themselves what they choose to accept and what they choose to reject in terms of doctrine, beliefs and practice.
• In striving to honor such limitless freedoms among all men, love, the greatest commandment, is able to individually thrive, and all people are left standing before God personally responsible for what they freely decided to accept or reject.

Summary of Freedom

In my estimation God holds freedom and the freedom to choose up equal to His very person. To behold the one is to behold the other. Upon this basis we are able to see firsthand why ugly, dangerous predatory people are allowed to live lives of debauchery without Him striking them dead the minute they harm another person. It’s not that justice will not be meted out perfectly, but the freedom to act is paramount in the human experience. This is especially true in relation to the way people engage with Him as their God and creator. Going all the way back to the garden of Eden freedom was paramount and choice was even provided to underscore His love for our first parents right to choose. Freedom and freedom of choice ought to remain the single top priority of the faith today.

Religious Crooks

In their diabolical efforts to control, force and manipulate people to do their bidding and to live the way they want them to live, Religious Crooks almost always impose something, somehow, and in someway that will steal the freedom of others. In religion such things are often justified in the name of God and the misappropriation of scripture. No matter the area – practice, doctrines and beliefs, opinion, demands, callings and assignments, religious crooks will always attempt to impose something on the unsuspecting.
Free Will
(see Calvinism, Freedom and Eternal Punishment above)

Let’s make this simple:

- If God is and has always been, before all things, and is the creator of heaven and earth; if God is good and just and right and can be trusted, then we have some decisions to make when it comes to free will.
- With God being all things mentioned above, then God knew the results of creating human kind before He ever created us. He knew the beginning and He knew the end – before it happens or has happened.
- If He is good and decided to create human beings, knowing that all but two of us (Adam and Eve) would be effected in our choices by circumstances, nature, nurture, and original sin, then He would be responsible for our existences and salvation.
- If He created us without a solution to redeem us from many things outside of our control He would be a despotic creator.
- Calvinists maintain that God is responsible from His creations – totally responsible – and therefore He mandates all that will occur, choosing to elect some to heaven and others to hell. To them, there is no free-will. God has elected the outcome from among His creations and even though He will discard most, He will save those He desires to save.
- Christian universalists claim God is responsible too – totally responsible – and therefore He mandates that all (whether they want to or not) will go to heaven irrespective of any other factor. That there is no afterlife punishment and God solves the inherent problems in created Man by just saving us all.
- Christian Arminianists suggest that God desires that all will be saved from our choices but that He gave us free-will and it is man’s choices that prevent him from being with God after this life. To them man chooses to go to hell or heaven eternally and in this view, God, knowing that most would fail due to their poor choices and would burn forever in hell, created us anyway and ends up being a frightening and sort of incapable kind of creator.
There is a solution that is seems to almost be wholly ignored in the face of all of these failed systems of soteriology – we call it total reconciliation.

In this view God is good, He is just, He is all knowing, He is all wise and He is love. In this view He gives all people free-will, and takes into account elements of their existence that mitigate our abilities to choose right and well (meaning nature and nurture). And yet in and through all of this He ultimately does take responsibility as our creator and through His foreknowledge of all things, reconciles all men to Himself through the victorious salvivic work of His only Human Son. What does this look like?

First God so loved the world that He gave us His only Human Son to live like we could not, fulfill the Law, and in the end overcome sin, death and the grave for all. Having finished this redemptive work, Jesus ascended, then returned (as promised) with righteous rewards and judgement to the House of Israel (see Eschatology above). Here all things biblical were wrapped up, fulfilled, and redeemed from sin and death – believer and not. Nevertheless, God sent His Spirit to call all people to faith on His Son. And all will confess Him, by faith – some here and some in the hereafter, but every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Those who receive and believe in Jesus sacrifice and resurrection while in this life are regenerated in the spirit, born again, and given new life in Christ. Such are equipped with the Spirit to overcome their fleshly, worldly ways, and by the Spirit learn to die daily to themselves, to take up their cross, and to ostensibly follow Christ to Calvary. In so doing they, like Christ, do the will of God instead of living according to their own will in the flesh. Such are truly not of this world; they belong to His kingdom which is not of this world, and are partakers of His Spirit and not their flesh. These, in their lives, build their future houses (resurrected bodies) upon the Rock (Jesus Christ).

Those who reject receiving and believing Him by faith here never have an opportunity to build upon truly eternal spiritual things and therefore are building their houses (resurrected bodies) on sand.

At death, with Christ having paid for the sins of all – believer and unbeliever alike – all people die, are raised (raptured into the heavens) judged by the works of their
human lives, and given a resurrected heavenly body according to the will and ways of God.

- Apparently there will be differences between the resurrected bodies of those who built upon material houses of sand and those who by the spirit built upon spiritual things above.
- In the end, all people will be reconciled to God, but some will suffer great loss (of things they built and trusted when they were alive on earth) while others, who suffered materially here, will enjoy tremendous reward for having built upon the eternal things of the Spirit.

**Summary of Free Will**

God would be a monstrous puppeteer if He created us without freewill then decided out fate for us. He is not a monster. He is a good and loving father who will have His way and work all things to good in the lives of those who love Him. For those who do not, He will take all things into account when He assigns them a resurrected body as their reward.

**Religious Crooks**

Are constantly trying to steal the free-will God has given every human being. They support their views through a series of contextually misapplied passages as a means to form a seamless diabolical system to impose upon others.

**Fruit**

In the arena of Christian nomenclature believers are prone to hear other believers ask, “Is it bearing fruit?” The question is often leveled at ministries and outreaches, or the external efforts of groups of believers to do things for Christ. To beat fruit for Him and the gospel.

Many people equate fruit in the faith with things like growth, souls won, increase in donations or book sales – you know, typical corporate stuff, generally focused on material increases of one thing or another.
What does it mean when we speak of Christian efforts producing fruit? What does it mean when Jesus said:

“By their fruits you would know them,”

Or

“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

Or

Luke 6:43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Or

John 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Or

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

Or

John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

What did Paul mean when he wrote:

Romans 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

We might begin by differentiating between the types of fruits scripture talks about. Of course, there are actual literal fruits that trees bear. These are mentioned in the Bible. And offspring of a creature is called the fruit of his or her loins. So from these examples we can see that fruit is the product of the thing bearing it. Humans bear human fruit through reproduction and trees do the same causing Jesus to point out
that a bad tree cannot produce good fruit and a good tree cannot produce bad.

When it comes to Christians, followers of Christ Jesus, the fruit we are speaking of would be the products that come out of us as followers that resemble Him and His will. And since He bore the will of His Father perfectly, we could justifiably say that the fruit Christians are expected and anticipated to bear is the fruit of God. And since God is a Spirit, then we know that when we speak of Christian fruit we are talking about spiritual fruit – not material.

Scripture calls this fruit, “the fruit of the Spirit,” and Paul describes for us what this actually looks like, saying:

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

We note that in this passage the King James inserts a comma after the word, “love.” But I strongly suggest there should be a colon there and the passage should read like this:

Galatians 5:22 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love: joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

In other words, since God is Spirit, and God is love, the product He seeks to produce through those who are His by grace through faith on His Son is not only spiritually based it is love – His kind of love – agape love, unconditional love, a love that “never fails.”

When Jesus walked the earth He was asked by a scribe (Matthew 22:36-40):

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said unto him, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

We note that both the first great commandment and the second, which was like unto the first, was to love – love God and love neighbor. Add in the fact that the fruit of the Spirit is love,
and we begin to see clearly that the fruit Christian are to bear can be summed up as love – loving God and loving others as God loves, unconditionally, with patience, and longsuffering, and in accordance to how Paul describes agape love in 1st Corinthians 13.

But do we have any other New Testament supports for the claim that the fruit Christians are to bear is agape love? There are a number of them and perhaps before they can be best understood the topic of faith (above) ought to be read and considered. The reason for this will be self-evident as we move forward in scripture because when it comes to the two Christian commandments they are summarized as having faith and acting in love.

John summarizes this for us when he wrote:

1st John 3:22-23 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

This was given to those who already loved God, the first Great Commandment.

What is rather fascinating is that in almost all the introductory passages found in the epistles, these two commandments are mentioned. Consider:

2nd Corinthians 8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

Galatians 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Ephesians 1:15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

Ephesians 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

Ephesians 6:23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Col 1:4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

1st Thessalonians 1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

1st Thessalonians 5:8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

1st Timothy 1:14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

1st Timothy 6:11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

2nd Timothy 1:13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Titus 3:15 All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Philemon 1:5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;

James 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

1st Timothy 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: Where we might conclude, in the face of these passages, that the fruit of a Christian life is faith and love (and not be necessarily wrong), the relationship between the two shows that the ultimate goal is love - which never ends in the eternal existences of a believer - whereas faith will.

But perhaps we get the greatest explanation of the importance of Christian love in the Epistle of James. Unfortunately, the message is presented therein is almost always lost on the reader for an assortment of reasons.

James Chapter 2
This chapter represents one of the most controversial, debated, I think abused and misunderstood sections of the entire New Testament. The topic of faith and works by James.

Start off and read it. It’s well worth the five minutes of your life.

Let’s suggest right off the bat that this topic is synonymous with faith and fruit - the works or fruit Christians bare.

It goes without saying that as human beings we like things tidy, simple, and easy to comprehend and live. We have a tendency - especially in matters of faith to reduce everything down to some basic elements rather than include all the nuanced issues that are part of the total recipe.

The recipe we are speaking about here is salvation. Because of Paul’s teachings we are rather inclined to say that we are saved by grace through faith (and this is entirely true).

But it is extremely important to see that the Holy Spirit, working on different men, moved them to teach certain principles independent of others - in this case, James.

So when we read them, having the proclivity to simmer things down to the lowest common denominator, we will often glom onto, say, “Paul’s core message” of salvation by grace through faith” while ignoring the message James presents about works or Christian fruit.

Let’s not ever forget that James is speaking of faith here. He’s talking about the type of faith (the quality or level of faith here) that has the capacity to bring a person into the gift of salvation by and through God’s grace.

He launches us into the topic by asking:

James 2:14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can (such a faith - such a type or level of faith) save him?

We note that almost everything in this life demands faith to some extent or another. For example, we care for, and feed and teach our children with the faith that our efforts will produce something in them (unseen when they are young) in terms of a responsible future.

We exercise and eat well trusting we will extend our health and we will save money by placing our faith in the financial institutions where it is held.

The examples go on and on and on. All are expressions of faith.

When it comes to those involved in religion we take our faith and choose where and what we will focus it upon -
Mohammed and the Quaran, the Revelations of Joseph Smith and Mormonism, on Christ and biblical Christianity?

- In Christianity, James seems to be saying that while we are indeed saved by faith – and his subject (AGAIN) is faith – can we be saved by the type of faith that does not work (or bare Christian fruit (with the fruit being Godly love)?

The question is NOT, “are we saved by faith and love?” No, we are saved by faith, period. But the real question is, “Can a faith that does not produce the fruit of love in its possessor be a faith that can save a person?”

- In the Christian sense, James concludes rather emphatically that such a faith is dead, which I would interpret as “such a faith is not living and therefore is incapable of giving new life.” But more on this later.

Now prior to addressing the issue of faith and Christian works, James has addressed an issue these converted Jews were having among each other – they were respecting the rich while disrespecting the poor. And in so doing they were failing to live the Royal Law, which he pointed is “to love neighbor as self.” So after asking his question about “faith that does not love” lacking the capacity to save, he gives a very fitting example and asks:

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.
24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.
25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?
26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

- James epistle is very practical. Because of this it has been esteemed by some as being too Jewish and not Christian enough – giving appearances that Christians have duties and these duties must be fulfilled.
- Perhaps this is not the best way to see the epistle. Remember, James is speaking of faith here – the kind of faith that arrives hand in hand with – or at least brings – Christian love.
- If it doesn’t, James purpose is to show there is a problem with such a faith instead of trying to make people fulfill religious duties through obligation.
- In Christianity there are no duties. In the New Covenant, the rule of action is not duty but the kind of type of love that moves people to action.
- Formerly the Law (written in stone) carried with it obligation, debt, duty. But we read In John 1:17
  - John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
- The Law, written in stone, while perfect, had a problem in its relation to human beings – where it was quite capable of bringing death (because it always produces disobedience) it could NOT produce or bring life.
- So while it “promised” life and was given to give life, in the end (because of Man and his disobedient ways) it only produced death.
- This is why Paul wrote
  - Roman 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.
- The reason for this (as we’ve learned from James 2:10 and Galatians 3:10) is that the Law comes as a whole and must be kept perfectly and entirely – throughout the entirety of a human life!
- In other words, break one bit of it and the whole of it has been broken. A lawbreaker is someone who has EVER broken a law, sort of thing.
- Therefore, under the Law, there is always an abiding sentence of death. Always. As a result anyone who attempts to justify themselves (in any way) by obedience to
it – whether in its entirety or just part of it – the conviction is lawbreaking and the sentence is death.

• Therefore, we cannot mix grace and law – in fact Paul says in Galatians 5:1-5
  - 1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.
  - 2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.
  - 3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.
  - 4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.
  - 5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

• Romans 11:6 makes it even more plain, saying:
  - ”And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

• It is really important to realize that one legal system did not replace another.
• Again, John 1:17 said:
  - ”For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”
• Grace and truth are not a system that replace the Old – again, God did not send another set of laws and rules, He sent His Son.
• So we look to Him in faith – on Him entirely and not of ourselves.
• Under the Law the relationship was one of legal obligation and duty. In Christ, it is one of personal relationship of love.
• All of this is made possible by the Spirit (granted by God’s grace through faith) which makes us new creatures in Christ.
• Romans 7:5-6 says:
  - ”For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”
• We enter into this relationship (which again is NOT legal and all that legal relationships demand – but is spiritual)
the moment we are born from above or as the King James puts it, born-again.

- Listen now – this is a covenantal relationship but not in the way some see covenants.
- God made a covenant with Abraham and sealed it by physical circumcision.
- The term seal, in Hebrew is khotham and refers to a “signet ring.”
- Later the law was given to guide God’s covenant people but this was not the covenant of promise neither did the Law written in stone make the Nation of Israel a covenant people.
- A new covenant was given and it was sealed by the Holy Spirit. Paul writes in Ephesians 1, speaking to believers, says
  - “after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”
- But remember, this new covenant is not a written code (though people often try to make the tenets of the New Testament a new written code). Neither is it a law written in stone.
- Paul said in 2nd Corinthians 3:6 that God
  - “hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”
- Of course Hebrews 8:7-11 makes this position clear, saying:
  - 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.
- Romans 5:5 supports this by saying
- “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

• So, now, how can law be written on our hearts if we are not under the Law?

• First of all, to say that we are not under law is not to say that we are not under the Lordship of Jesus and the Sovereignty of God. We are.

• Law has a number of applications and meanings in life. It certainly refers to rules and regulations of any legal system—civil or religious.

• Law can also mean a universal order—like gravity. Law could relate to the way something has always been done, similar to a cultural tradition. There are also unwritten, even unspoken principles that all have rules of action associated with them.

• For instance in healthy marriages the rules of action might be trust, respect, and love.

• Under the Law written in stone we might say that the Rule of Actions is obedience.

• Under the New Covenant of salvation by grace through faith what is the rule of Action then?

• Love.

• So if we were Jews under the Law James might have written

  • “The law of Moses, without obedience, is dead (or leads to death, right?).

• But since He is speaking to justified believers who are under the covenant of grace through faith” he says, “Faith without love is dead.”

• Grace by faith is the New Covenant with the seal of the Holy Spirit and the New Commandment and the New Testament Rule of Action is love.

• As a means to ensure that this love does not just become another mandate and therefore another appeal to dutiful law, scripture lets us know that the only reason we possess any love is because of Christ—and, like faith, it is not of ourselves.

• 1st John 4:19 then makes sense as it says:

  - “We love Him because He first loved us.”

• Romans 5:5 says:

  - “And hope maketh not ashamed (listen); because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

• So at this point before wandering more deeply into the text, let’s look at several reasons why we have to see the works James is speaking of as love and as no other thing, demand, or activity.
• First, look at the context of all he has said thus far. Look into the Royal Law (which is love your neighbor as yourself) that he has mentioned.
• Don’t treat others preferentially (which would not be loving) he has taught. And now He has asked:
• “Can a faith that does not work or labor save.”
• And remember that the context prior to this part in chapter 2 has been all about love.
• Secondly, in the New Testament we have references that speak to the works and labors of the Christian as being love. For example, in Galatians 5:6 Paul says:
  - "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”
• Here Paul clearly describes the type of faith that James wants us to have – “Faith which worketh (labors) by love.”
• To the church at Thessalonica Paul wrote:
  - 1st Thessalonians 1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.
• Notice the three pillars in that verse that are mentioned in 1st Corinthians 13 – Faith, Hope and Love?
• Romans 13:8 says:
  - “Owe no man any thing, but except to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”
• Galatians 5:13
  - For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
• Listen – throughout the ages God has sought to get human beings to love Him and to love each other. That is the purpose of the Law and the Prophets. He has shown us how to express this love through warnings, commands, instructions and numerous examples.
• Human beings have taken all these things and interpreted them as law and requirements but from the beginning they all pointed to God just trying to get us to love Him and others.
• When we fight, and argue, and divide we defeat His purposed. And here’s the deal – to refrain from such things requires labor. Effort. Work.
• This is why James asks:
“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?”

- The works He is speaking of is unquestionably love, but agape love, in the presence of fleshly human beings, requires work, labor, toil to employ. People have asked, “Why didn’t James say:”

- “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not love?”

- But instead he uses the Greek term for work here (which is ERGON) and which means a toil, labor, effort, doing.”

- I would suggest that if He had written, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not love,” then LOVE would have been used as a new law and James meaning could be translated by some to say that a person must love perfectly in order for their faith to merit salvation. This is not possible while we remain in the flesh.

- By saying, “faith without works,” (meaning faith that is lacking at least the labor or toiling toward love) believers are then permitted to fail in love (the same way we might work on a math problem but fail to reach a correct answer) and the willingness to labor in and for love escapes becoming law.

- Again – and by the time we are done with this segment, you will know that the labors James says that come with saving faith are labors in the fields of love – but more on this later.

- Let’s get back to love requiring toil, effort and labor.

- Where faith requires some acquiescence of the human will (a death to what we think we know, what we want to believe, the benefits of believing what we have always believed, real agape love – which is best defined as selfless, unconditional love often requires the total sacrifice of self on behalf of God and others.

- Feelings and emotions and love pangs for God and Man are irrelevant if they are not supported by acts as love is a verb.

- It is a verb that includes “the giving of.”

- “For God so loved the World He gave . . .”

- Our love for God and Man includes the same – giving of our bread, giving of our time, giving of our attentions, giving encouragement, giving whatever the other requires (in the case of God) or needs (in the case of neighbor).

- Giving almost always involves what we perceive as a “losing.”

- When we give bread, we lose some of the bread we have.
• When we give time we lose some of the life we’ve been blessed with. etc., etc.
• From these examples we can see that the love that comes through faith is selfless, is not opportunistic, and is always based in action (of some sort or another).
• At this point James provides a living example for us to consider and says:
  
  - 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
  - 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?
• Then he ties the example to his question in verse 14 and says:
  - 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

When James says:

  - 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
• He, in my opinion, seems to be tapping back into the complaint he hit them with at the beginning of the chapter which was their choice to give preference to the rich while ignoring the poor.
• In this way we can actually see that chapters one and two are really one long idea being fleshed out.
• Anyway, the sense seems to be (from what He says in verse 15) that instead of looking at people who are in need and setting them aside, treating others who are not in need preferentially, the Christian, from the heart would see the needy as needing the MOST attention not the least.
• When we allow ourselves to really think about it we typically see the world around us as cool and hip and with it and benefiting us or we see it as failing and hurting and lacking and it needing us.
• We seem to have these attitudes in us to some degree at a very young age.
• We are in grade school or better yet junior high and its lunch time. Most of us are (or long to be) in the popular group that seems to have it all together. We want to sit at the table with the group that will benefit us most – and fear being at the table that is noticeably lower on the food chain.
• But every now and again there are people who, fully qualified to sit at the best table, seek out the ones who
are totally alienated and shunned and sit with them instead.

- The situation carries out into adult life as well – and more to the point into the Christian life.
- This is the point James is making – if you are a Christian and you say you believe and follow the King of the lost and alienated and broken but prefer to associate and give attention to those that benefit you (instead of giving time and attention to those who truly need you) does your profession carry weight?
- Remember these are insights on the heart NOT mandates for the hands. We cannot ever legislate love. The real question he is getting to is does the faith we express translate into a view for others that seeks to serve (act) on behalf of those who need.
- Why? Because this is the heart of Christ – reaching, serving and loving those who need it most.
- Anyone can hobnob with the healthy and wealthy and whole. And this is not a prohibition against it.
- Yet such associations typically benefit us rather than benefit others.
- It’s really fun and enjoyable to get invited to the playboy mansion (in terms to the pool and the food and seeing all the stars – who wouldn’t enjoy and evening being totally catered to).
- We can even have friends and associates and a social life that includes those who are accomplished or well to do.
- But does our faith reflect His love – with His LOVE being a verb – when it comes to the rest of the world and in day to day life?
- The way James presents his scenario brings the point back to the things we say verses the things we do.
- 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
- 16 And one of you say (there’s that word again) And one of you SAY unto them, “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?”
- Again we have James telling us – illustrating for us – that what we say is meaningless in the Christian walk (“I love Jesus, I love Jesus, I love Jesus”) if what we do does not reflect our professions.
- There will be continuity, in other words, between our professions of faith in the Lord who came to save sinners, and the lost, and the evil, and the fallen, and our actions toward the same.
• Our actions toward the popular or healthy or wealthy or wise do NOT reflect our faith because such interactions tend to benefit our social, political, standing and lifestyles far more than we benefit them.
• But when we give life – time, attention, money, support, encouragement – to the people and things that do not benefit us, better yet, might even hurt us socially or politically or in stature – that is the type of action that reflects someone who truly has faith in Jesus.
• James is pointing out that to say to a person in need of food or clothing: “Be filled or be warm,” and doing nothing about filling them or warming them is akin to saying we believe and follow Jesus but do nothing to reflect these claims.
• Quite frankly, and at the end of the day, what people say (and I think James supports this in his argument) doesn’t mean a whole lot in the scheme of things – it’s what they actually do that proves their professions.
• In some ways this has been lost in our day and age because of the myopic focus we place on the single line:
  - “If we confess with our mouths Jesus is Lord we will be saved.”
• Because of the human tendency to discover and implement systems and formulas – in other words, to systematize matters in such a way that we can uniformly administer things like salvation – we create processes that will take care of the business of salvation in the lives of people. It makes it so much more convenient and easy to demand. “Say the sinners prayer and you, sir, will be saved.”
• James here takes the time to explain that true salvation is not so lock-step. Certainly, we believe in our heart and certainly we admit with our mouths our faith and devotion and allegiance.
• But on the other side of that coin is real love that exudes hand in hand with real faith and it is not romanticized love, or eros love, or philos love, or stogay love – its agape love and it acts – as much as God acted in his love for the World in giving us His Son. As much as the Son acted in His love for the Father by refusing to embrace the principles of this world, and sin, and self and acted out His love for others.
• It’s the love that drove the apostles to give up their nets and spend all the rest of their days sharing their witness (an act) with a world that was so hostile it would stone them and beat them and ultimately take their lives, and is the kind of faith that produces a kind of love that has
existed in the hearts of all true believers that says, “my hands do what my mouth says.”

• This is that type of faith that James is speaking about in verse 14.
• We might flip the coin around on ourselves and say it this way:
  • Show me a person who tells a brother or sister in need that they do not have the time, or inclination to serve them and from their little expression of love we readily discover little faith.
  • James wants to know if such a faith has the ability to save a person. Again, his point is not that the love or the loving actions save a person. Paul makes it clear that this is not the case. But James is asking if a faith is so weak that those who possess it fail in love can that weak faith save them. Actually, he goes further and says:

- 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

In James’ estimation, a faith that does not move a person to “work their love,” to “labor in love,” to exert an effort to die to the self and to serve others in need, is not just weak or failing faith, it’s actually “dead” he adds, “being alone.”

• This is really one of the most important elements of James propositions (relative to Paul):
  • Real faith never ever arrives alone. Genuine saving faith, in essence, is more like a conjoined twin rather than a single standing individual.
  • We might go so far as to say that Faith is not even faith unless love is present whenever it is expressed.
  • This view can admittedly get dicey, but lets move forward.

Paul is clear that it is faith alone - no works (lest any man should boast) by which we are saved.

• God’s grace (free gift) is granted by faith alone. We cannot work or add works of any kind to please or appease God.

But James is saying that where this faith is, love is or will follow in thereafter. Simple as that. We might put it this way:

• Where God is, love is. Where Jesus is, love is. Where the Holy Spirit is, love is.
• We can talk all we want about God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we can deliver grand theologies regarding them, we can praise them – shout to the Lord! – we can say, say, say all there is to say about them, but in the end IF LOVE is absent from any of these events or discussions or persons of God, then they are dead.
• Then we might say, “God is dead where love is dead.” “Jesus is dead where love is absent.” “The Holy Spirit is dead when love is not manifested.”
• We might say, because they are love, faith in them IS love.
• Looking back at verse 14 James asked:
  - “If a man SAY he has faith” – if he makes a verbal profession of faith – if he says:
  - “I believe.” I trust in Jesus.” I follow Jesus.”
• But he does nothing to substantiate his expression but only SAYS to him,
  - “be warmed or be filled,”
• that this type of response profits nobody – neither the speaker nor the receiver. It does “not profit” (“ofelos” in the Greek) therefore James wants to know what advantage it produces, what gain?

In large part, due to the Protestant Reformation and Luther’s focus on grace (which really stopped short in my estimation of putting grace ahead of religious ritual – but that’s another matter) but since the Reformation Sola Gratia (grace alone) has been a strong standard in Christian circles. And for good reason. Paul said clearly, plainly and succinctly:

- Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”
- Romans 11:6 “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

• We’ve mentioned (under the topic of faith above) how important understanding the role that faith plays in the development of love and that when we approach James 2 that we remember that he is speaking of faith here – and what saving faith looks like.
• According to James it looks no more like a guy claiming to follow Jesus but never showing it which would be similar to a person saying that he really cares for the poor but never does anything to actually help them.
• In other words, the coin of salvation, which is granted by God by His grace according to our faith has another side - what James calls works.
• If a person claims to have received the coin of salvation by God’s grace through faith all James is saying that hand in hand with His professed faith there would be works! It’s printed right there on the other side of the coin of salvation, for goodness sakes.
• This is why James asks, “what would the faith profit?”
• Sometimes get the idea that God is not a God who cares about improvements, or profits, or fixing things.
• On the contrary, that is all that He is about – saving, redeeming, fixing, reconciling . . . and therefore improving or profiting.
• We can safely say that Christianity is all about such things, and it’s not just centered on the fact that we have individually been redeemed.
• Perhaps an illustration would help.
• Within the body of Christ there is an awful lot of focus on being born-again. This is understandable as the work of the Holy Spirit upon an unregenerate person is a miracle - especially if they come out from a life steeped in spiritual bondage.
• Unfortunately, this miracle often trumps the larger miracle which is the progressive sanctification of the Christian life by the same Spirit.
• Looking to the natural birth of a man, let’s suppose that a baby is born into the world and from that point forward all anyone ever did - especially that baby – was speak and think and honor that day of his natural birth.
• Certainly, the birth is a wonder and miracle and without it there would be no true life and perhaps one day out of 365 merits celebration of that wonder, but there are another 364 days in the year where life is celebrated in the living, in the growth, in the steps forward taken, and the maturity had.
• Imagine the innate shame of a normal healthy person that minute upon minute, day after day, year after year focused and spoke only of their birthday! Never doing anything else! It would be like a fully grown man laying in a crib in diapers.
• The first birth is vital to all life, but it is only the first step in the maturation of Man.
• Once a person has been born from above there is a heavenly, even a natural call, upon his or her life to mature in the
faith which is seem through the death of the natural flesh and life unto the Spirit.

- Scripture is clear that God wants all redemptions to produce fruit . . . to profit . . . to increase.
- The focus on Sola Gratia, if not taught contextually, has led some toward the tendency to think that Christianity is all about them, when frankly it is really all about others.
- In some ways, I think Paul is speaking of “faith saving” while James is talking about the lives of those who have been “saved by faith.”
- Paul is speaking about why God grants the coin of salvation to an individual and James is talking about the lives of believers once they have been given the coin.

Moving on . . .

- James says now some really important words (at verses 18-26):
  - 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”
- So after saying: (at verse 17)
  - 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.
- He adds:
  - 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.
- Let’s be honest, the way this passage comes out in the King James can be troubling. Let’s consult some other translations. They put it this way:
- (BBE) “But a man may say, You have faith and I have works; let me see your faith without your works, and I will make my faith clear to you by my works.”
- (TCNT) “Someone, indeed, may say--"You are a man of faith, and I am a man of action." "Then show me your faith," I reply, "apart from any actions, and I will show you my faith by my actions."
- (WNT) “Nay, some one will say, "You have faith, I have actions: prove to me your faith apart from corresponding actions and I will prove mine to you by my actions."

• In other words, James is presenting a theoretical discussion for us. And he says, suppose a guy makes an observation and looking at another guys says (to him)
  
  "You are a man of faith and I am a man of action," and then he throws down the challenge: “You show me your faith — display it — without any actions at all, without any works, or without displaying any activity and I will prove my faith by my activities, my labor, and the works you see me do.”

• Because of this passage many people have suggested that Paul, when he wrote about faith saving us, that he was referring to what God sees in the heart of a person — their belief, their faith in Christ — and seeing this God grants a person salvation, therefore it is by grace that we are saved through faith and not of works.

• Such will often go on to suggest that James here is writing to what men see — that because the faith of a person is invisible (we cannot ever really know what a person believes in their heart) that men look upon the works of another to determine the existence of their faith in Christ.

• In other words, Paul’s faith speaks to how God determines our Christianity and James works speaks to how men view the same.

• While there may be truth to the fact that God sees the heart and men see the hands I don’t think we can use the literal works of literal hands to prove a person has faith in Jesus.

• Often the opposite is the case — meaning that there are those who trust so little in the finished work of Christ they work themselves to death as a means to try and earn their place in heaven.

• Additionally, it doesn’t seem that Paul was addressing God’s view of people (by looking at the faith in their hearts) and James was speaking of “how men see us as Christians” because the initial premise posed by James was:
“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can (such a faith) save him?”

- So the question remains - **Is a faith that arrives alone and never moves a person to work love able to save?**
- While we have to say, “No, that type of faith could and would never save anyone,” we have to add (paradoxically) that “such a faith could never be considered Christian faith in the first place, which is a type of faith that, ALONE, does save.”
- We could appeal to a number of analogies to support this.
- Saving faith is like a genuine living acorn – small and self-contained at first but in the end it will (not it must, but it will because of its nature) grow into an enormous tree of loving works.
- It is in this context that we begin to understand Jesus words when He says in Matthew 25 beginning at verse 34
- 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
- 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:
- 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.
- 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?
- 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?
- 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?
- 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.
- These passages seem to describe those who, possessing acorn faith naturally grew into magnificent trees of love and served without any mandate . . . to the point they had to ask the Lord when they ever served Him?
- In the parable of the sower Jesus uses similar analogies (to the acorn) likening the word to seed cast on four types of ground with only one landing on good earth and therefore producing abundant fruit.
- In this parable we note that the failure of the seed to grow is not the type or level of faith but the quality of the heart-ground upon which the good seed (being the Word of God) falls.
• We also note that the reasons Jesus gave for the seed NOT bearing fruit (not working, not profiting) was that the ground upon which it fell was either too shallow, was rocky, or was among thorns.
• Bringing James comments into play, we remember that he has told them that what people say must be in harmony with what they do.
• He has also pointed out that the recipients of his epistle were giving honor to the rich but ignoring the poor.
• When Jesus explains the parable of the Sower he explains that the stony ground represented persecutions due to the Word and that the Thorny ground represented the cares and riches of the World choking the fruit out I think we can find parallels to James admonition.
• Possibly, the believers he was writing to were claiming to have faith in Jesus (the seed was planted in their hearts) but they were being persecuted, or they were showing partiality to the rich and not the poor because that is where their hearts were and James was plainly telling them that the end-result of such faith was, as Jesus described, they would be gathered up and burned.

James moves on now and sort of assails belief that arrives alone, saying:

- 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.
• It’s almost like James took one of the single most important and distinguished beliefs in all of Judaism and Christianity – monotheism – which is reiterated in the first of the Ten Commandments – and says:
• “Good for you. You do well. But even the devils accept or believe this, in fact they tremble over the fact.”
• This statement is an important reiteration from James: even something as important as a monotheistic view of God, which implies they have no other God but Him, is hollow if it arrives alone.
• In other words doctrine alone cannot save a person – even the demons know correct doctrine. Their failure comes down to practice.
• They love the self so much that their correct understanding or belief in the One God is irrelevant – they’re still demons.
• Paul touches on the principle when he reminds us in 1st Corinthians 13:2
- “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”

• Again, James works are speaking of works of love so there is perfect harmony here.

• The Word tremble here (frisso) is interesting because it is rarely used in the New Testament and also it basically describes the experience of having our hair stand up on end or to shutter with fright.

• So essentially James compares the empty belief a person could have in the One true God to a demon who has the same belief - to the extent that they are terrified of Him - but that knowledge of Him does not move them to acquiescence to His ultimate will - which is love, the works of love, Loving God and Loving our fellowman.

James adds

- 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

• The way this is written its sort of hard to get what he is asking but what he is saying is:

• Do you want to understand better, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

• “Will you have a full demonstration of my insight? Will you accept the clearest proofs that what I am saying is true?” he seems to ask.

• And he asks this in preparation to give two examples from scripture of faith and works - one of Abraham and one of Rahab - which- we will get to in a minute.

• But note the somewhat caustic pejorative James uses, referring to his reader as: “O vain man.”

• The King James translates this vain and other translations use “foolish” but the Greek word is Kenos and it really means “empty.”

• I like this definition better because someone who had said faith but no love would certainly be empty wouldn’t they?

• Apparently James felt that of all the evidences of faith and works in scripture that he could use to bolster his stance by citing Abraham and Rahab as prime examples.

That’s initially intriguing, isn’t it?

• Well, there’s a grand purpose to his choosing these two.

• And so he says:
- 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Remember, he was writing to the converts from the House of Israel that had been scattered (into places not mentioned).

And so he appeals to two old Testament examples – the first being Father Abraham – the Father of Faith, right?

The illustration is pretty radical when we think about it. I mean Paul uses Abraham as the pillar of faith and as the example of being made righteous by faith alone and yet James uses this same person to prove faith that produces works. Pretty cool, in my opinion. Wow. And so he says:

- 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Remember now, the sense that James is appealing to this example of Abraham is in the sense that a person who professes faith in God proves/illustrates/shows the existence of this faith which they claim to have by labors.

It’s not that Abrahams actions justified Him before God – James couldn’t be saying this otherwise we would have a conflict with Paul who makes it clear in Romans 4:3 that

- "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

This Pauline principle was true in Abraham’s day and it remains the same with us unto salvation.

But James point is to say it was the actions Abraham took that justified the faith that saved him (or put him in favor with God) and it was his actions or labors that proved (fulfilled, made perfect) he really had placed his faith and trust in God.

He is not suggesting that the ground upon which we are accepted by God is that we keep the law, or are perfect, or that our good works make an atonement for our sins, and that it is on their account that we are pardoned of sin.

Not at all.

Nor does he ever deny that it is necessary that a man should believe in order to be saved.

But James does clearly teach (and it is a teaching that cannot be ignored) that where there are no good works in the life of a professor then professions of faith are in fact empty and that such a faith is dead.

Now, let’s stop here because it is at this point where everyone with an opinion jumps in the ring and gives their definition of what “Works” in the Christian life consist.

This is the point of this section – what are Christian fruits. Most of the opinions revolve around concepts like living holy lives or
• Doing something for the poor OR
• Serving people in the Church OR
• . . . well you know, obeying ALL of God’s commandments.
• It is on this point that we are faced with the greatest frustration.
• Remember, back when we talked about how even the devils believe, that I cited 1st Corinthians 13 as a means to show that knowledge and faith cannot save, which said:
  - “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”
• Well after that Paul addresses all action (or works) and says:
  - 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.
• Verse 2 tells us that knowledge and faith aren’t sufficient without love - that even the devils believe.
• But verse 3 then takes us to outward expressions of devotion and labors aren’t enough, saying:
  - “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”
• With knowledge and faith and giving to the poor failing UNLESS we have love then it only makes sense that the works James is talking about is the work of love.
• Loving what? Loving whom?
• When Jesus was approached by a lawyer in Matthew, he asked Jesus, tempting him:
  - 36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?
  - 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment.
  - 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
  - 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.
• So the labor, the work, the good we do is summarized by these two commands -

Love God.
Love Neighbor.
A faith that says it believes in God (as even the devils believe) but does not love him and his neighbor (as the devils love neither) is dead faith. Empty.

In other words, faith without love for God and Neighbor is dead. Empty and is not the type or level of faith that can save.

It is at this point where James supplies us with two primary examples of Old Testament characters who showed ultimate love for God and ultimate love for neighbor.

The first, Abraham, who believe God and his promises that he would have a son and that that son would be the source of progeny numbering in heights to that of the stars.

But having believed that God would grant him such a son, his faith was made perfect when God told Abraham to go and sacrifice the same.

It was one thing for Abraham to believe God (and God imputed righteousness to Abraham for believing) but it was quite another thing for Abraham to prove that faith by illustrating love for God above all other things on earth.

Wild.

By acting, Abraham proved his faith and trust in the living God and the actions made his said faith complete, full, perfect.

What were the actions? James uses Abraham’s actions of completing the first commandment of Loving God . . . even more than His own son.

God commanded Abraham and Abraham who claimed to love and believe in God went and acted proving his utmost for God over all other things.

In respect to this James adds:

- 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

The word, “wrought” in the Greek is SOON ER GAYO and it means: “co-operate with.”

It is used in scripture when two people or agents co-operate to produce a result.

Some would suggest that Abraham was made righteous by first trusting in God and His promises but it was only once his faith was tested that his place with God was assured or when he was really saved.

We would suggest that Abraham was justified by God when he first believed and that his faith cooperated later to help Abraham show, in this case God, an ultimate love for Him.
• This is the case with each of us. God will allow us to express faith. To claim Him as our God and King. And then He slowly places us in positions where our said faith is proven not to be a dead faith.
• How? By and through our love. First for Him then for each other – the two great commandments.
• In this we see a reciprocity, a co-operation, between faith and love. (Verse 23)
  - 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.
• That is, in Abraham’s case, the said faith was proven genuine by the act of obedience to God and illustrated that Abraham loved the Lord above all other things – the first great commandment.
• And so James then reiterates his point, saying:
  - 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.
• Again, James isn’t saying that we are justified before God by faith and love but he says:
  - 24 Ye see then how that by works or actions a man is justified, and not by faith only.
• The line, “a man” may allude to the fact that our professed faith cannot possibly justify us (as HUMANS in the audience of HUMANS) without actions that prove our inward faith outwardly).
• He is obviously warning believers against a cold, abstract, inoperative faith. He is pushing for a faith that performs acts of love and again, in his first example given shows how Abraham proved his faith by showing love for the Lord God with all his heart, the first great commandment.
• Then he moves on to the second commandment which is like unto the first and is, “To love neighbor as self,” and he appeals to another Old Testament example – the actions of a whore named Rahab.
• And so he says:
  - 25 Likewise (with the second great commandment being like unto the first, I think James use of likewise is important here. Anyway) “Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?”
• In the same sense in which Abraham proved his faith by an act of utter love for God alone James uses the story of Rahab to illustrate the second great commandment – to love neighbor as self.
• Hers was not just a stated faith - it acted, proving her faith in God.
• There are a number of things about the story of Rahab that I love. First of all, she was a harlot. Actually living as a harlot when she exercised both faith and love.
• Secondly, it was faith first that made Rahab great in the eyes of God and which granted her a place in the Hebrews Eleven Hall of Fame of faith which says:
  - (Hebrews 11:31) “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”
• Third, what proved Rahab’s faith was action that fulfilled the second great commandment of loving neighbor as self. You recall the story. It’s found in Joshua chapter 2.
• Let’s work through it quickly.
  - 1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, “Go view the land, even Jericho.” And they went, and came into an harlot’s house, named Rahab, and lodged there. 2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, “Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country.” 3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, “Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.” 4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, “There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were:” 5 And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. 6 But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. 7 And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate. 8 And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; 9 And she said unto the men, (a statement of faith) “I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.
  10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven
above, and in earth beneath. (Statement of faith) 12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kind­ness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: 13 And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”  

14 And the men answered her, “Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. 15 Then . . . she . . . let . . . them . . . down (an action of love for her neighbor) by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. 16 And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. 17 And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.”

• Rahab believed – actually before the men even arrived in need of her help. And when they did arrive (why they went to her house remains a mystery but I would guess they were led of the Spirit) she proved her faith in the living God by her actions of love for neighbor. James wraps the point up with another reiteration, saying:

- 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

• I think the meaning here is obvious – just as the body is animated or kept alive by the presence of the soul, and that when the soul or spirit leaves the body dies so faith without love is equally dead.

• In other words, there is as much necessity that faith and works should be united to constitute the true Christian as there is that the spirit and body must co-exist.

• Remove either we don’t have a human being. Remove faith or love we don’t have a Christian.

Summary of Fruit

Christian love, as described in scripture. Period.
Religious Crooks

The Religious Crook has a relentless need to exchange or transform simple Christian love into actions that will benefit him or his ambitions. Almost always in the name of God. He will therefore label an action he wants completed as “a loving action.” He or she may even suggest that the church is a place where people are given opportunities to serve (which is synonymously linked to loving others). What is often lost in these appeals is the freedom to act benevolently for others on one’s own accord – to see a need and to then carry it out as lead of the Spirit rather than according to the ideas of Man. When total liberty and freedom is missing acts of genuine love are legitimimized and made corporate and obligatory. For the left hand to not know what the right hand hand is doing acts of love must be done by the individual, from the heart, and for their love for God and Man and not because they were assigned or made to feel obligated to act.
We can talk for years about God and never agree. Understand this right off the bat. Of course, men and women over the ages have stepped in and tried their best to capture God through a series of explanations and some of those explanations thrive in the heart of religious people today. Strongly. Oppressively.

Typically speaking human beings not only do not thrive in uncertainty they blossom in certainty. Because God and the descriptions of Him are somewhat limited (and even vague all things considered—especially when it comes to Jesus and the Holy Spirit) religious men and women found it necessary to capture God in terms that provide certainty with the Trinity being one of them.

Of late there seems to be a resurgence of claims that the earth is flat. People convinced of this stance ardently suggest that we have been duped into believing that the world is round or spherical and get quite zealous in their promotion and defense of a flat earth.

I recently had a devotee of the flat earth model approach me through social media in an effort to convert me to this new revelation and the proofs that support it. Of course, I was immediately scoffing at the facts presented, and vehemently challenged the proofs supplied.

After a few days of back and forth, I lay in bed early one morning trying to fall back asleep and the thoughts sort of rolled out onto my pillow. First, I wondered:

“How can I prove that the earth is actually flat?”
I answered my own question by thinking I could appeal to science, astronomy, astronaut testimonies, physics, and even photographs taken from space that prove a flat earth ridiculous."

But then I remembered that my flat earth friend suggested that these resources were fabricated and manipulated and were not trustworthy.

“So how can I, Shawn McCraney, prove that the earth is a sphere and not flat?” It took some time for me to realize that no matter what I appealed to for proofs the only way I could be certain that the world was flat would be for me personally to get up and outside of the earth, and to personally see its shape from that perspective. I realized that just going up in space would not accomplish this but I would have to get outside of the earth, set a trajectory, then travel around the world all the while making observations of what I was passing over, and then upon coming back to my starting point personally witnessing the fact that I had made a huge circle around the globe while watching the continents and countries passing by.

Not being a scientist, I realize that a number of other things not mentioned here would be required to fully satisfy my own needs to prove the world a globe, but it would only be through such a personal witness that I could, actually, know that the world was a globe.

When we think about God and His make-up, the God who not only created the earth but the entire universe, we might begin to realize that in order for ANY person to actually understand Him (or her or it) that they would have to get outside of Him and to them look back in at Him to decipher who and what He is.

Such thoughts are wholly repugnant to those who have certainty about God and His make-up, to those who say He is one but three, and some of the other phrases they use to give them certainty. Understand, we do, in fact, trust the Word of God and what it says of God, but at the same time, we have to be careful when we try to take what it says and then compartmentalize it all into a self-certain term like Trinity.

This is not to say that God is not one. Scripture tends to make this a certainty. But how He is one cannot be mandated by a
majority vote taken some 1800 years back by politically motivated individuals.

However, this is not to say that elements of the trinitarian description lack merit. But instead of turning to human absolutes, and humanly created certainties that we can all securely rally behind, why not let up a bit on dogmatic representations, especially when they pertain to the make-up of God, and simply let there be one God, and allow for a lot of mystery to remain?

The following information has caused many sound followers of Christ to at least question what we might call creedal Trinitarianism. Take all of it for what it is worth and let the Spirit guide.

• There is one God – on this all Judeo/Christianity agrees.

• The question then becomes what is the make-up or ontology of this one God that all Jews, Christians and Muslims worship?

• In the Old Testament, the emphasis of One God is reiterated over and over among the Nation of Israel.

• The Hebrew word for "hear" is Shema. "Hear," is the first word of the most important prayer in Judaism. It is found in Deuteronomy 6:4 and the whole of the prayer, said daily and known as Great Shema, says:

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

• As time passed the Jewish tradition grew to a three-part Shema prayer that also included Deuteronomy 11:13-29 and Numbers 15:37-41. Tradition states these three parts cover all aspects of the Ten Commandments.
So important was this prayer that when Jesus was asked about the "greatest commandment" He cited the Great Shema. We read about this in the following New Testament account:

- And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And 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.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.

When Jesus began His answer with the Shema prayer, He acknowledged the Lord God as most important and that complete devotion to Him is the most important of the commandments.

The scribe who posed the question replied:

- You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

All the way back to Deuteronomy Christians today are reminded that since the beginning of God working in and through the Nation of Israel He wanted them to know, without any variation, that He was One God.

In fact, we might say that there was no sin greater in the Old Covenant than the sin of idolatry.

When we get to the New Testament, Jesus’ apostles reiterated this fact among the people when they spoke and taught.

- Romans 3:30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

- 1st Corinthians 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.
- Ephesians 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

- James 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

- In Acts chapter 24 Paul is brought to trial before Felix the Governor of Judea. He is confronted by a prosecutor of sorts (named Tertullus) who accuses him of a number of things, including being a plague, and a rabble-rouser, and a ringleader of a heretical sect of Nazarenes.

- He says a number of things in his defense but one of them is remarkable in the face of understanding the One God to whom he (as a Christian) relied upon. This is what Paul says in verse 14:

  - “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.”

- This was a direct response to the last charge leveled at him by Tertullus – that he was “the ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.” We will address his willingness to be openly associated with this group in a minute. But take note again of what the actual verse says. It says:

  - “But THIS I confess to you . . . that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.”

- Did you catch it? Paul says that he worships the God of his Fathers.

- Who was that God? He is called Jehovah. That is his personal pronoun name, articulated in scripture only by the consonants YHWH – also known as the Tetragrammaton.

- Going all the way back to the book of Deuteronomy the Jews have a most important verse – one which they recited daily.

- It is called the Shema (or the Great Shema). The word Shema means to hear in English.

  Hear.
Can you hear how the Jews, whom Paul says He still believes, understood God over all the centuries? Their “great hearing” says it plainly:
- Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:
  - 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Translating the key words in the Shema it reads (in Hebrew):
- Hear, o Israel, the Yahway our Elohim is one Yahway. Thou shalt Love Yahway Elohim with all of thine heart, and with all of thy soul and with all thy might.

Paul, a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ who was the only human (begotten) Son of Yahway, tells Felix right here that He still, still worships the God that His fathers worshipped!

Paul didn’t try and explain a new vision or form or reconstruction of that God. He did not to triangulate the Son and the Holy Spirit into the mix and call all three individuals co-eternal, co-equal persons the “God that His forefathers.”

He admitted right here what the Jews had always believed - that Paul's God was truly one and was the father of Jesus the Lord and Savior. With the great Shema without any alteration at all!

Paul repeat this allegiance to the God of the Old Testament when he says in 2nd Timothy 1:3
- "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience."

Right here before Felix, after having been visited by Jesus, taught by Jesus, and after he has preached Jesus as the only way to having access to God the Father, that he still worships the God of His Fathers.

Let’s be honest. Let’s be perfectly clear.

The God Paul’s Fathers worshipped wasn’t some constructed amalgamated incomprehensible notion called, the Trinity that men created as a means to unite all believers under one roof and in response to some difficult teachings that popped up back in the day.

He does not take the time to illuminate us here (or anywhere else) about the new way to understand the God of His forefathers.

Nor does he anywhere else in scripture describe Jesus nor the Holy Spirit as the second co-equal, co-eternal persons of three-in-one Trinitarian God.
• He calls Jesus "the Lord," "the Savior," "God's only begotten Son," and "the man," through his epistles and purposely distinguishes between the One True God (whom His forefathers worshipped) and God's only human Son, the Lord, and Savior Jesus Christ. How about some examples where this is clear and evident from the New Testament.

• Romans
  - Romans 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - Romans 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.
  - Romans 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.
  - Romans 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:
  - Roman 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
  - Romans 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.
  - Romans 5:15 But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.
  - Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
  - Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
  - Romans 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
  - Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
  - Romans 15:6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - Romans 15:17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.
  - Romans 15:30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;
Romans 16:27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

- Already in just the Epistle to Rome we clearly see a delineation between the One and Only God and Jesus His one and only Son. Let’s look at some more.
  - 1st Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,
  - 1st Corinthians 1:3 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - 1st Corinthians 1:4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;
  - 1st Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
  - 1st Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

• By the way, when we read the passage above we see that the Spirit is synonymous with "the Spirit of our God." The Holy Spirit is simply God's Spirit, not the third separate and distinct, co-eternal, co-equal person of the man-made holy trinity. Remember who all the gospel writers said sired Jesus? The Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit was the third and separate person of the Trinity then Jesus is the Son of the Holy Spirit and not of the Father! But since the Holy Spirit IS the spirit of the Father and not some separate co-equal being, Jesus remains the only begotten Son of God!
  - 1st Corinthians 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.
  - 1st Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - 2nd Corinthians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God . . .
  - 2nd Corinthians 1:2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - 2nd Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;
  - 2nd Corinthians 1:19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

• We cannot help but note that all through the New Testament Jesus is referred to as the Son of God or the Son of Man
but never, ever as God the Son, as the man-made Trinitarian notions tend to describe Him.

- 2nd Corinthians 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- 2nd Corinthians 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.
- 2nd Corinthians 11:31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

• Galatians
  - Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)
  - Galatians 1:3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,
  - Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

• Ephesians
  - Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.
  - Ephesians 1:2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:
  - Ephesians 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:
  - Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
  - Ephesians 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

Often in the face of this biblical truth, that God created all things by Jesus Christ, Trinitarians maintain that the co-eternal, co-equal Jesus was with the Father and the Holy
Spirit from the foundation of the world like three men at a bar. The imagery suggests that these three (that make up the One God) worked in unison together to bring about all things and that God the Father employed (so to speak) Jesus to create the worlds. Perhaps scripture best describes what this idea really means. We read in Genesis that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. After this initial verse, we read a series of descriptions that all include the following: "And God said . . ." followed by whatever He said happening. "And God said, let there be light, and there was light."

From this, we can see that by and through His Word, His commands, God created all things. One God who spoke words. Because God is a spirit, and eternal, and living, His words are also spirit, and eternal and living. Then in the Gospel of John, the apostle opens up with the following revelation:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.”

Dropping down to verse fourteen of the same chapter, we then read: “And the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us.” Because this refers to Jesus Christ, and in verse one it refers to the Word as “He,” it is assumed that the male man, Jesus Christ, was with God in the beginning. Sort of like an actual figure of the man. What is often forgotten is the fact that the masculine “He” used in verse one is gender neutral in the Greek, and is considered masculine only by context. In other words, if “it” was used it would be closer to the original Greek.

Taking all of this into account we might suggest, with all reasonability, that by His own Words (which in the Greek term logos means His heart, his ideas, His goodness, His spoken words (which are spirit and truth) created everything, and then those eternal, uncreated powerful of God Words because flesh, filling the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and loving Him through a life of perfect obedience to His Father.

- Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;
- Ephesians 6:23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that in all of these expressions that the Holy Spirit, whom the Trinitarians call the third person of the Godhead, is absent? You would think as a co-equal, co-eternal member of the Trinity that He would get equal billing and mention in scripture. Not so. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is merely the Spirit of God, not a person as different as Manny is to Moe is to Jack.

- Philippians
  - Philippians 1:2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - Philippians 1:8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.
  - Philippians 1:11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.
  - Philippians 2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Not God), to the glory of God the Father.
  - Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.
  - Philippians 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
  - Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
  - Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

- Colossians
  - Colossians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,
  - Colossians 1:2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - Colossians 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,
  - Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Notice that at no time does Paul (or any other) call Jesus God but it is always "the Lord Jesus" and "God the
Father." Always. Why isn't Jesus ever referred to as "Jesus God" or "God Jesus" or "the God Jesus Christ?"
Because to the Apostles, it was clear Jesus was Lord and Savior whom the only true God, the Father, had lovingly sent.

- **1st Thessalonians**
  1st Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in **God the Father** and in **the Lord Jesus Christ**: Grace be unto you, and peace, **from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ**.
  1st Thessalonians 1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope **in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father**;
  1st Thessalonians 3:11 **Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ**, direct our way unto you.
  1st Thessalonians 3:13 **To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ** with all his saints.
  1st Thessalonians 4:1 **Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God**, so ye would abound more and more.
  1st Thessalonians 4:14 **For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him**.
  1st Thessalonians 5:9 **For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,**
  1st Thessalonians 5:18 **In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.**
  1st Thessalonians 5:23 **And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

- **2nd Thessalonians**
  2nd Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians **in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:**
  2nd Thessalonians 1:2 **Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**
  2nd Thessalonians 1:8 **In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:**
- 2nd Thessalonians 1:12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2nd Thessalonians 2:16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

- 1st Timothy
  - 1st Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;
  - 1st Timothy 1:2 Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.
  - 1st Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;
  - 1st Timothy 5:21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.
  - 1st Timothy 6:13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

- Second Timothy
  - 2nd Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,
  - 2nd Timothy 1:2 To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
  - 2nd Timothy 4:1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

- Titus
  - Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;
  - Titus 1:4 To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.
  - Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

- Philemon
  - Philemon 1:3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Hebrews
- Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.
- Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.
- Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, James

James
- James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

1st Peter
- 1st Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

This is one of the passages that Trinitarians use to endorse the fact that three (apparent) persons are mentioned in one scripture and they suggest this proves Creedal Trinitarianism. (We refer to it as Creedal Trinitarianism because it was men and their creeds that formulated the idolatrous description of God). Without question, God has reached to humankind through His Son and through the Spirit, which together makes three. No dispute on this. And these three certainly represented God to human beings – Jesus in the flesh and the Spirit by itself as Spirit. But to say that the three are "co-eternal, and co-created, and co-equal, and that they are separate and distinct persons who are NOT in any way each other but are all combined the one true God" creates something nothing short of a Golden Calf for the faith. Interestingly enough, the most disputed passages in scripture (in terms of apparent manipulation) all deal specifically with promoting creedal Trinitarianism. These include 1st John 5:7-8, which most scholars admit has been corrupted. The other main verse – Matthew 28:19 – the "great commission" has Jesus telling His disciples to "go forth baptizing in
the name (singular) of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Trouble is some manuscripts and references to this passage by early church leaders only have this passage say, "baptizing in the name of the Lord." Perhaps the greatest indictment against the validity of the passages is the fact that after Jesus is said to have explicitly given this instruction not one of his disciples is every described as having fulfilled it! Instead, all the baptizing reported in the book of Acts was simply done "in the name of the Lord." Between the instructions of the great commission and the actions of the book of Acts, there is a major disconnect. We might suppose that some scribe, in an effort to have scripture support the Trinitarian view, inserted Father Son and Holy Spirit into the Latin text - and there it remains to this day.

- 1st Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- 1st Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.
- 1st Peter 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- 1st Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

• 2nd Peter
- 2nd Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:
- 2nd Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

• 1st John
- 1st John 4:2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God:
- 1st John 4:15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.
Note that the confession is that Jesus Christ is the SON of God and that it is not that Jesus Christ is God, which is the mandate given by Trinitarians everywhere. Never does scripture demand that believers embrace that Jesus is God. Truly there is an inference to Him being worshipped and having the power of God on earth, but having the power of God and being the Son of God is different than being God Himself.

- 1st John 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.
- 1st John 5:5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?
- 1st John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

This passage is quite revealing. Let’s break it up:

- And we know that the Son of God (Jesus) is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him (God) that is true, and we are in him (God) that is true, even in (and through) his Son Jesus Christ. This (God, not the Son) is the true God and eternal life.

2nd John
- 2nd John 1:3 Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Jude
- Jude 1:1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:
- Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

We see here that the writer of Jude calls God the Father, "the ONLY Lord God" and then adds, "and our Lord Jesus Christ." He does not call Jesus Christ our only Lord God but reserves this for the Father, the only God with which we have to do.
- Jude 1:21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.
• Revelation
  - Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servant's things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.
  - We are reminded of the verse of the content of information under "Eschatology" above. In describing the end times to Peter, James, John, and Andrew on the Mount of Olives, Jesus tells them that neither the angels of heaven nor the Son of Man knew the day nor the hour. Why would a co-equal member of the Trinity say such a thing. Because Jesus did NOT know the day nor the hour of the end of that age. However, in Revelation
    - Revelation 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.
    - Revelation 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.
    - Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.
    - Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.
    - Revelation 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Summary of God

The best we can do is quote scripture:

1st Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. All the rest is conjecture.

Religious Crookery
The problem isn't so much with there being differing views of God out there in the world of Christianity, the real problem
seems to occur when Religious Crooks demand that people accept their version of Him and His make-up – or be cast out of fellowship. While I am personally not a Trinitarian but stand much closer to the non-Sabellian perspective of modalism, I understand that my views are not superior to others. Nevertheless, because God Himself decided to never clearly explain His make-up relative to His only human Son and the Holy Spirit, it seems reasonable that all believers professing Christ have the leeway in how they personally see and understand Him and His make-up and relation to His Son. Religious Crooks want to control. They want perfect order. They want the ability to establish other-worldly unity and know that exacting definitions are necessary to accomplish these desires. The make-up of God is, unfortunately, one of these exacting topics.

GOOD NEWS

• What is the Good news, anyway?
• The Greek word translated gospel is YOO-ANGEL-EE-ON and it was taken from the Greek term, YOO-AN-GHEL-ID-ZO which is a compound term derived by “eu” (which means “well or good”) and angellos, which means “messenger.”
• From this word for “messenger bearing good we get, yoo-anghel-ee-on which simply means, “a good message or good news.”
• Many denominations and religious folks claim to preach the Good Message – but what is it? How is it defined?
• The Mormons claim a corner on the Good News and their version says something to the effect that Jesus came and suffered for sin and you can take advantage of his suffering by believing that Joseph Smith restored Jesus' church back to the earth. By receiving their baptism, their Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands, membership in their church, the opportunity to pay tithes, receive the priesthood, serve the church, follow their prophet, attend their temple, wear their garments is how they define good news in the life of a person.
• The Presbyterians take the good news and filter it through a lens created by guys like John Calvin. Their good news says that God sent his son to only suffer for the few whom God elects to eternal life – and the rest are elected to
eternal suffering. That only sounds like good news to a few – so how could it be “good” . . . news to the world?

- From what I can tell in scripture, the good news was delivered to the world. So we have to ask ourselves, “What news would truly be good news to all the world?”

- Of course, the biggest living caveat relative to the Good News is that it can only be good if it is received and accepted.

- If it’s not received then the supposed Good News becomes very very bad news for people who reject it are said to suffer an eternity in the eternal fires of hell.

- This is the standard, non-theological view of God’s Good News in the world of Christianity – God so love the World that whomsoever would receive His Son received Good News while those who reject Him are the recipients of the Good News gone bad.

- Perhaps the New Testament offers a different perspective other than this twisted Good News presentation.

- We know that the Good News was first to the Jews who had been promised a Messiah. What wonderful news for them to receive! A material actual living breathing Messiah, God with them, who brought the Nation of Israel emancipation from bondage and sin.

- Of course, this news was not received by them - in fact, they killed the messenger. But the GOOD NEWS for Israel was that their promised Messiah came, He did what He said He would do, and as a result - all of Israel would be saved.

- Huh? What?

- That’s what both God in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament claim! Of course some would suffer, but in the end, God would redeem all of Israel, and that is Good News that can never be bad - that Jesus came and did what God said He would do, and having the victory, ALL of ISRAEL would be saved. God promised it.

- This caused Paul to write to the Gentile believers in Rome:
  - Romans 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.
  - 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:
  - 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.
28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

• Now, the question. Was all of Israel saved from destruction in 70 AD when that nation was wiped out completely for all intents and purposes? Hardly. In fact, more than a million Jews were slaughtered - but BECAUSE of the GOOD NEWS all of Israel was saved to God - and went to God, according to His promise to them. Every last one of them - those in sheol, those in Jerusalem that rejected Jesus, those that died between the time Jesus was born and the time he returned - ALL OF ISRAEL - saved to God - but just not from physical loss. That they suffered because of their earthly choices. But in the end, God saved them, reconciled them, to Himself.

• That is good news, right? All who were truly Israel were saved as God promised.

• It was the Good News that Jesus’ chosen Apostles were sharing throughout Judea and Asia Minor. “We have Good News - you have been saved as our Messiah has come! Receive it and you will even escape the coming destruction that is headed our way.” (See Eschatology above)

• So . . . to the Jews . . . of that age and day . . . the Good News was, the Messiah has had the victory. He has done it all. Receive Him and escape the coming destruction.

• We note that this Good News did have a caveat - if they received it they would not suffer losses in the utter destruction of that age and of their entire nation. If not, they would still be saved to God after their life - this was God's promise to them and God's promises are all good. But to reject the good news in this life meant loss that they could have escaped . . . if they had just believed and received.

• In the Long run, the Good News was still good for the House of Israel. God promised a Messiah, He came, He was victorious, and He redeemed them to God even though most rejected all the benefits receiving Him by faith would bare.

• So, that application is over and done. Today there is no difference between Jew and Greek - we are all the same - in fact, we might even wonder about the claim many “Jews” make to being of the true House of Israel as their genealogies were all torched.
But the Good News, first through Peter and then through Paul, has been extended out to the world. All Nations, all Kindred, all Tongues all people – equally.

But what is it? Is it that God has saved some? Did he save my neighbor but not me? That doesn't sound like very good news, does it? That sounds like news God created to make me hate Him.

Or is it that God has saved all but only if THEY do EVERYTHING EVERYTHING their respective Bishop, prophet, pastor tells them they MUST do?

Perhaps we have missed the mark on defining the Good News, folks?

In other words, what would make the victory of Christ really, really good news for the whole wide world?

First of all, it would really be good news if Jesus really did it all, right? I mean if He left nothing on the table for us to bear? All of it, done by Him. That’s good news to me. Even the onus for me that I have to believe in order for the Good news to take effect, I’m not so sure of that because doesn’t scripture clearly say that He saved us while we were yet sinners? Didn’t Isaiah say:

- “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

- Doesn’t Romans 5:10, "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

- Eight verses later don’t we read Romans 5:18

- “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.”

- Doesn’t Romans 6:8 say, “For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.”

- Didn’t He become our righteousness too as 2nd Corinthians 5:21 says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

- Didn’t He reconciled all things as Colossians 1:20 says, "and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself,"
having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven."

- Didn’t He Defeat the Devil as Hebrews 2:14 says, "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."

- Didn’t he do this for the whole world as 1st John 2:2 says, "and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

- Doesn’t Paul say in 1st Timothy 4:10 “For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.”

- So, wouldn’t the Good News be Good to all the world, especially those who believe?
- Wouldn’t it be good news to those who do not believe? If He did it all for us and on our behalf, we would think so.
- So like it was to the Jews He came to save, the Good News is Good News to all of us – every single person who has lived or whoever will live. And this is one of the first ways I suggest it be seen – that Jesus came and saved everyone – to God – but not necessarily from suffering.
- Remember, Jesus came and all of Israel was saved to God – but they could have benefited more by what He did for them IF they had received the Good News while living.
- Most didn’t, so they suffered physical death by the millions. But those who did not only escaped the death and carnage at the hands of the Romans, but they were also saved to God, as His elect!
- And the very same principles remain today. Jesus has done EVERYTHING and has redeemed the world to God. This is the Good News we share, that “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”
- That . . . “we (believers here) therefore both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.”
- Is this the message you hear today? That Jesus has saved the world for and on behalf of the Living God who is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe?

- And yet most hear and share “another type of Good News – another form that says, “Welllllll, yeah, Jesus paid for
sin BUT YOU, YOU, YOU have to do this, and YOU have to do that,” OR “Weeeelll, He paid for the sin of those who would believe,” OR “he paid for the sins of the elect only or those who join the church only.”

• See, none of that tripe is Good News. It’s man’s version of the Good News. But God’s version is

“God so LOVED the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

• Now, we tend to focus on the perishing part in the preaching of the Good News of God’s love – and it is part of the message, just like part of the apostolic message to the Jews was receive Christ before the coming destruction. But this did NOT negate the fact that all of Israel was saved to God as He had promised.

• And so it is with us to the world. The message of the Gospel is this – Jesus loved you and saved you from your sins. Did you know this? All of your failures are over, done with and forgiven on your behalf. He has done it all for you. Believe on this and you will escape reaping what you have sown in your life, you will get new life here and now, and life with God hereafter – because of what He has done.

• That is good news.

Summary of the Good News

Either the Good News is really good or it is not. Either Jesus really saved the world or He didn’t. Either God was victorious over sin and death and hell . . . or He wasn’t. The Good News is that He was victorious, that Jesus did save the world from the judgment of sin and death, and that all people will be recipients of His goodness toward us. It includes the fact that all people will reap after this life the things they sowed to the Spirit here. That is really Good News for those who love Him.
Religious Crookery

The religious crook will always take the Good News and somehow make it bad. They will add qualifications, exceptions, and/or exemptions to it. They will suggest that it is good for some but not good for others or they will use the premise to put people wanting to receive it in bondage.
Holy Spirit, The

- The Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost of you're a King James fan) is considered the 3rd member of the Holy Trinity within much of Christianity.
- In the Old Testament, we read that the Spirit (capital S) was at work in the creation "brooding" over the waters and that throughout the Old Testament this same Spirit moved or "inspired" men to write and speak (prophecy).
- The Old Testament never uses the term Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit but instead appeals to the phrase, "the spirit of the Lord" to describe what seems to be more of the influence of God rather than a personage or conscious entity with a mind of its own.
- It is also of interest that in the Old Testament the word for Spirit (Ruach) is feminine and in the Greek (pneuma) the term is neuter (not masculine).
- In both places, the terms mean, "breath," "breath of life," "wind," "inspiration," and/or "divine inspiration."
- So in the Old Testament, the term Spirit is a way of expressing God's activity and His revelation to the World.
- No person of the Holy Spirit or Ghost is ever described.

LA Bushinski, a Catholics Scholar says:

“The Old Testament clearly does not envisage God’s spirit as a person . . . God’s spirit (in the Old Testament) is simply God’s power."

- All apologies on the table to my Trinitarian brothers and sisters, but can we truly justify seeing the Holy Spirit differently today?
Bushinski adds:

“If it (meaning the Holy Spirit) is sometimes represented as being distinct from God it is because the breath of God acts exteriorly.”

- Additionally, nowhere in the Old Testament do we read of gifts of the Spirit or read of receiving eternal truths by the Spirit (with the exception of the Spirit of the Lord falling on prophets and giving them divine inspiration).
- The most obvious presence of the Holy Spirit engaged with Man in the Old Testament was when it would rest upon some and provide what we call, "God-breathed," words of inspiration.
- It seems that the idea of the Holy Spirit is God's influence rather than the third person of a Trinity was still around into New Testament times.

James Dunn, in his book, Christology in the Making,” says:

“At the time of Jesus, the divine spirit or Spirit was not yet thought of in Judaism even as a semi-independent divine agent.”

- In the New Testament narrative we begin to see the Holy Spirit, in passages like Luke 24:29 and Acts 2:33 as a representative of God that was sent to encourage and teach and fortify the Saints.
- However, and based on the Greek, the Holy Spirit (which was still the same “Spirit of the Lord”) doesn’t appear to have been seen as a third person of a Trinity.

Bushinski continues and says:

“The New Testament text reveal God’s spirit as something NOT someone; this is especially seen in the parallelism between the Spirit and the Power of God.”

- It is in the Gospel of John, which was one of the later NT books composed, that the Holy Spirit is described in more, shall we say, personal terms.
- There is a reason for this.
- Remember, in the Hebrew the Spirit of the Lord is always in the feminine gender and in the Greek the Holy Spirit is always neuter - except in places where this neuter gender is either ignored and the Holy Spirit is referred to in the
masculine OR if a masculine noun is used in the description of the Spirit.

- This occurs in the Gospel of John
  - 14:16-17
  - 15:26
  - 16:7
  - 16:13-16

- Why is this? Because here Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the Comforter (paraklete in the Greek) and since comforter or paraklete is a masculine pronoun it must be met by masculine gender, in other words, the term "he" rather than "it" which is the most common way Holy Spirit is referred in scripture.

- In other words, as Charles Harrell succinctly points out,
  - "What is lost in translation is the fact that the masculine pronoun in these instances is necessitated because the Greek word paraklete, which is usually translated as comforter happens to be a masculine noun."

- In other words, it is the term comforter that is masculine and NOT necessarily the Holy Spirit itself.

- In the several dozens of times, the word "Spirit" is used in the NT it is always in the gender-neutral pneuma, which is always combined with the gender-neutral pronoun "it" rather than "he."

- Because of this non-gender specific way the Spirit is described in the Greek it seems fairly obvious that to the early believers the Holy Spirit was still NOT considered a person.

- Key to Trinitarianism is the idea that the Holy Spirit be seen as a third separate and distinct being, essence, person or personality of the Godhead. In light of the information just provided we must wonder about the Creedal definition of the Spirit in Evangelical Christianity and Catholicism.

- In his book, *Theology for the Community of God*, Stanely Grenz, a Baptist theologian writes that:
  - "the personhood of the Holy Ghost didn’t become official church dogma unto the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD."

- Today it has become quite necessary for Christians to fully embrace this man-made assessment of God with its man-made definitions and it man-made terms, but prior to 381 and going back to Moses, it seems that the Spirit of the Lord was seen as exactly that - the Spirit of the Lord.

- Moving out to the 1800's Christians, laboring under the weight of Creedal Trinitarianism, continued to see the Holy Spirit as the divine influence of God and through a person,
never seemed to describe it (or Him) as "a ghost in human form."

- To Trinitarian Christians then (and even today) the Holy Spirit was more of a center of consciousness or will or essence than a personage.
- However, to binitarian and Unitarian Christians the Holy Spirit was simply a manifestation of God’s power or as God’s divine influence upon Man.
- It was the Unitarian minister Noah Worcester in 1812 who said that
  
  "If God is represented by a metaphor of the natural sun . . . then the rays . . . which emanate or proceed from the sun, are an emblem of the Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the Father. Like the rays of the sun, these divine emanations . . . illuminate, quicken, invigorate and fructify."

- Binitarian David Millard also called the Holy Ghost, "a divine emanation of God," and to be honest, even Trinitarians (who even today maintain the same things) regarded the Holy Spirit as an emanation flowing from the Father and Son, but not as an actual being or person himself.

- (as a reference see Charles Spurgeon Sermons, Sermons of C.H Spurgeon London, page 46)
- As a means to systematize the faith into a uniform body of beliefs, a number of debates were formalized into creeds – and then over time enforced – even brutally – upon all people.
- Today it has become quite necessary for Christians to fully embrace this man-made assessment of God and His spirit but prior to the fourth century (and going back to Moses) it seems that the Spirit of the Lord was seen as exactly that – “the Spirit of the Lord.”

Let’s take a brief New Testament survey of the Holy Spirit:

- After reading Matthew we can conclude:
- That God is a spirit that is holy. His spirit is synonymously called –
  - Hagias pneuma
  - Pneuma Theos
  - Pneuma
  - Pneuma hoomane pater
  - Moo pneuma
- We also learn that
Man has a spirit that is not necessarily holy (but apparently can be) and that it is also called pneuma.

- From Mark, we conclude that Christ has a spirit. It is also called Pneuma.
- From Luke, we read that God has a spirit that is holy. This spirit is synonymously called spirit kurios.
  - that Men and women have a spirit called ow-tos pneuma.
  - And that there are also other spirits out there called pneuma.
- When Luke writes that Jesus “gave up the Ghost” he was NOT saying He gave up the Spirit within Him or the soul. He was saying that He “expired His last breath” as the Greek word used is different from straight up pneuma (it’s ekpneo).
- Nevertheless, it is related to spirit, which in our world might best be defined as wind or breath.
- Thus far we see from scripture that:

  God is ONE.
  That God is SPIRIT.
  That from His spiritual mouth He “breathes” and with the same breath with which He speaks and that these things - His Words and His breath - actually engage with Man as Jesus (in flesh) and as His Holy Spirit or motivating invisible force.

- We might also see that as God has always existed so have His “Words and breath” always existed.
- That God’s Words and Breath are equal to Him because they are Him.
- That Words are different than Breath but they are related to each other - inextricably linked to each other.
- So again God, His Words, and His Breath, are all Him.
- Because He and His breath and words are all Spirit it is very hard for us to comprehend their make-up or ontology - though people have tried.
- To capture them as “beings” or persons may or may not be correct - might be, because who knows how the very words of God relate to us or even exist.
- However, to assign them separate personhood with expressed personalities of their own, where God’s words and breath have ideas or personalities that are different than His, or they have a lack of knowledge that He does not, is a fail.
• Again, they ARE Him – His Words and His breath cannot be teased apart from His person any more than we can tease our words and breath apart from our persons.
• Let’s move on with our survey from the New Testament.
• John presents us with an important summary passage I believe is very important. It’s found in John 3:6 which says:
  - That which is born of the flesh <sarx> is <esti> flesh <sarx>; and <kai> that which is born of the Spirit <pneuma> is <esti> spirit <pneuma>.
• From this, we might say that there appears to be a world of flesh and there appears to be a world of spirit.
• Therefore we have seen that

God is pneuma
He is a Holy Spirit
There is a pneuma in Jesus
There is a pneuma in humans
There is evil and good pneuma.

• We find a remarkable increase in the use of the terms related to the Holy Spirit, Spirit and/or Holy Ghost in the Book of Acts (compared to all of the four Gospels combined). In the Gospels combined the Holy Spirit is mentioned twenty-six times but in Acts alone, the Holy Spirit is mentioned on forty-one occasions.
• This illustrates the import of the Spirit in the Body of Christ post ascension.
• Certainly, there was an ebb and flow between the material church and the Spiritual – which is what the book of Acts (and actually all of the New Testament typifies) – but Acts shows that the church is in the hands of the Holy Spirit moving in and through people.
• Additionally, we are again reminded that in the Greek there is no differentiation between the Spirit in Jesus, Paul, evil beings and even God.
• There is only one word to prove that they are spirit – pneuma – and it is used across the board in referring to all of them.
• We only know the differences that exist in the Spirit by words that are added to it – like hagias for Holy – etc.
• Through this means we easily see that scripture is either talking about material things or it is speaking about spiritual things but the spirit (or spiritual things) can be as black as night or as bright as the Sun.
• When scripture speaks of human beings “following or walking in the Spirit” it is tacitly understood to be speaking of the Holy Spirit of God.
• But all things have spiritual sides (remember, even demons are all spiritual) so we have to recall that all warfare and all division and all differences in the flesh are spiritually divided, and not a fleshly situation.
• What this means is all differences, all wars, all antagonisms, all evil, all lust (as drivers that we say are of the flesh) are truly driven by spiritual forces which work on and through the flesh of human beings.
• Therefore, there must be spirits of this world, spirits that abide in the flesh of things, spirits that reign in murder, rape, lust, greed, stealing, lying, gossip, control, and all the things that separate us from God.
• They are all – ALL – under the influence of spiritual forces from on high (or below) – therefore our war is not flesh to flesh (there must also be a spirit that tempts us in this area) but it is always a spiritual battle fought by and through spiritual means!
• In other words, in the realms that we do not see there is a battle between light and dark spirits – so dark and so bright that we cannot fathom what drives their evil nor their beauty.
• But this is where the war wages – not in the penis, or the aggravated mind, or the violent oppressor nor the mean-spirited gossip.
• It lies in “all the is in the world” (of dark spirits and black spiritual forces) which move upon us (human beings, animals, people groups, systems, societies, mass-movements, art forms, governments, cultures) to do evil and be evil!
• Again, all of it is driven in and through the spiritual powers from invisible positions!

There are spirits of adultery.
Spirits of gluttony
Spirits of laziness
Spirits of lust.
Spirits of theft
Selfishness
Pride
Anger
Depression
Angst
Addiction
Spirits of capitalism
Communism
Fascism
Murder
Division

Just as there are is a spirit of

Love
Joy
Peace
Forgiveness
Kindness
Mercy
Generosity
Longsuffering
Humility
Temperance
Unity

• It is said that there is no such thing as darkness, there is only the absence of light. Similarly, it is said that there is no such thing as cold, only the absence of heat. Perhaps the spirit or spirits of dark are merely spirits that lack God to some degree or another, and that there is nothing that actually and truly opposes God (since He is creator of all things) but there are only quantities of Him present in good spirits of light and an absence of Him present in evil spirits of darkness.
• Since God is . . .

Light
A Consuming Fire
Love
Truth
Goodness
Holiness

Then we can see what Spirit is out there fighting or resisting the Dark.

• See, it is by and through . . . Him and His Spiritual light and love that we overcome ourselves, our inclinations, our predilections, our flesh

AND
• It is by and through . . . Him that we overcome ourselves in working and learning to live and love others!

• We, therefore, do not war against flesh and blood. The war is not against the flesh nor blood. The war is Light overcoming the absence of light. The war is warmth overcoming the absence of warmth (or what we call cold). It is God overcoming Godlessness.
• Since believers are propagators of Him and His Spirit we war using Him and His methods and not methods that are based and founded in the flesh (or in the absence of Him!)
• Whenever we come across a man who is mean, we recognize that such a man has been invaded (to some extent or another) by the spirit of meanness which again, is merely a lacking of the Spirit of God.
• In other words, the man who is mean, in and of himself, is not a mean or bad person, he has (for whatever reason) allowed or been consumed by the dark spirit (meaning the absence of God) which causes him (in his flesh) to be mean.
• Perhaps it is his background, it may be his desires, it may be the way he gets by in life, but he has invited or allowed that spirit (again, the absence of God) to thrive and move him to mean behaviors.
• And this is just a singular example.
• Most of all allow our flesh (influenced by dark spirits which AGAIN are just the absence of God’s presence) to reign in a number of areas that are all interconnected and related.
• In the face of this, we can say that there are spirits that play to evil and spirits that play to light – and we decide which stage or fields we will house in our bodies and minds.
• In the end, we will all serve the invisible motivating forces we have chosen to house, and feed, and nourish and coddle.
• We may think that we are coddling our flesh but in reality, we are coddling spirits that reign in the realms of our flesh which in reality is just not coddling the things of God.
• The rewards for sowing such spiritual seeds are commensurate with the fruit such seeds bear.
• In the flesh, in the material world, sowing to the flesh and the material reaps benefits here and now. To sow in realms where material results are produced (here on earth) we will only reap here in the material harvest.
To sow in the things of the spirit - God’s light and things relative to Him - will produce a harvest only in those places where a spiritual harvest can be rewarded - after this life.

Because God has had the victory over sin and death by and through His Son, those who live by the Spirit here will continue to live there through what they sowed while in the flesh. But those who thrive by dark forces (which abide in the flesh through the absence of God) will ONLY harvest in those areas where they allowed spiritual light to thrive. The rest will be lost!

From Romans

- Consider all of Chapter 8!
- Fifteen times (15) Spirit is used in one way or another - and the another ways are vast - as Paul opens us up to the concept of Spirit vastly in this chapter. Compare this to:
  - 1st Corinthians as chapter 12 speaks of the Spirit 7 times.
  - Galatians 5 speaks of Spirit 6 times.
  - 1st John 4 speaks of Spirit 5 times.
  - And Revelations only 2 four times.
- Nothing speaks more to the Spirit than Romans chapter 8! It introduces us to a number of unique descriptions of the Spirit (and even spirits), including:

  8:2 For the law of the **Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus
  8:6 speaks of being **spiritually minded**
  8:9 the **Spirit of God** dwell in you.
  AND the **Spirit of Christ**.
  8:11 the **Spirit of him** AND his **Spirit**
  8:15 the **spirit of bondage** AND the **Spirit of adoption**
  8:16 our **spirit**
  8:27 mind of the **Spirit**

- In the Book of Romans Paul also introduces us to a number of concepts relative to these unique statements related to the Spirit, including:
  - That Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the **spirit of holiness**, by the resurrection from the dead” (in other words it was at His resurrection that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power)
  - That Paul refers to his own spirit in Romans 1:9 saying:
- “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;”
- That people are inwardly Jews today (Romans 2:29) when the heart is circumcised “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.
- That the Holy Spirit brings love to our hearts (Romans 5:5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.
- Believers, freed from the Law ought to now serve “in newness of Spirit” (Romans 7:6) “and not in the oldness of the letter.”
- That “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”
- That it’s “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2)
- That the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us when we walk by the Spirit (Romans 8:4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
- That what we place on our minds, and think about, and talk about and serve tell us whether we are about the flesh or the spirit: Romans 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.
- That (Romans 8:6) “to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.
- That the spirit of Christ is synonymous with the Spirit of God
- (Romans 8:9) But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,” and if we do NOT possess the “spirit of Christ” God has nothing to do with us.
- That there is a way to tell if Christ is in us:
- Romans 8:10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
- That by the same spirit God raised Jesus from the dead He will “quicken us.”
- (Romans 8:11) But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.
- That . . . if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Romans 8:13
- That the Sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. (Romans 8:14 “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”)
- That there are spirits that adopt us and spirits that free us:
- Romans 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.
- That spirit speaks to speak and in this way tell us all that we are His:
- Romans 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
- That we have the first-fruits of the Spirit in us as we wait to be fully adopted by God at the redemption of our bodies.
- Romans 8:23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

The Spirit also helps us pray.

- Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

* So much so that He that searches our hearts and knows “the mind of the Spirit” is able to make intercession for us according to the will of God. (This is WILD)
* Romans 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.
* That there appears to be a spirit of slumber which God delivers to accomplish His purposes.
- Romans 11:8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

* We are to be fervent in Spirit.
- Romans 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
- That the Kingdom of God is all spirit.
- Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.
- We are to abound in Hope by and through the Holy Spirit.
- Romans 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.
- We, of course, are sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- Romans 15:16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.
- We do things for God by the Spirit of God, which is synonymous with God Himself, who is Spirit.
- Romans 15:19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.
- We ought to have a love for God, which is a love for His Son and a Love for the Spirit.
- Romans 15:30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

And some conclusions from 1st Corinthians.

- One thing that stands out in the study of Spirit and 1st Corinthians is the unique ways which Paul speaks of things of the Spirit, spirit, spirits.
- He speaks of . . .

The Spirit of our God
The Spirit of the World
The Spirit which is of God
Quickening Spirit

- It is difficult to explain spirit and spirits after having gone this far in this study. The closest thing we can liken it to is water, where there is really pure water and there is really polluted water - but all of it is H2O.
- We cannot believe that there are spirit persons engaging with other spirit persons - though it seems and sounds like this is the case.
Instead, after this study, it seems that there is light and the absence of light as a force - with God the ultimate source of the former and non-God the form of the latter.

Let’s wrap up our discussion up about the Holy Spirit with some insights from the Word of God. First some interesting facts:

- Romans 8 is the chapter that speaks most of the Holy Spirit.
- The Book of Ephesians mentions (something about) the Spirit in every chapter.
- 2nd and 3rd John do not mention the Spirit
- II Peter, Titus, and Philemon mention Spirit only once
- James mentions it only twice

The Word Spirit - along with any added terms - is always "pneuma" in the Greek and "ruach" in the Hebrew. And each of them means "a current of air, breath (blast) or a breeze; by analogy or figuratively, a spirit . . ."

Additionally, consider the content of these charts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOST NT REF TO SPIRIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1   Acts (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2   1st Corinthians  (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3   Romans (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4   Luke (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5   John (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6   Galatians (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7   Ephesians (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8   Revelation (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9   Matthew (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10  1st John (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11  II Corinthians (13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapters with the biggest focus on Spirit

| 1   Romans 8 - 15 mentions |
| 2   1st Corinthians 12 - 8 mentions |
| 3   Acts 19 - 7 mentions |
So again, perhaps we can divide spirit into one of three categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God, Good, Light, Life</th>
<th>Evil, Dark, Death</th>
<th>Neuter or human</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holy Ghost</td>
<td>The evil spirit</td>
<td>Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>The spirit of slumber</td>
<td>Her Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
<td>The spirit of bondage</td>
<td>Manner of Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Spirit</td>
<td>The spirit of the World</td>
<td>The Ghost (KJV) Luke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit of your Father</td>
<td>Another spirit</td>
<td>His Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His Spirit</td>
<td>All filthiness of the . . .</td>
<td>Nor spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of Wisdom and of</td>
<td>The spirit that works in the children of disobedience</td>
<td>A spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Spirit</td>
<td>Seducing spirits</td>
<td>Our spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Spirit</td>
<td>The spirit of fear</td>
<td>Spiritually Minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of Truth</td>
<td>Every foul spirit</td>
<td>My spirit (Paul)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind of the Spirit</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Spirit of Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit of Adoption</td>
<td></td>
<td>One Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of Him</td>
<td></td>
<td>Your Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of God</td>
<td></td>
<td>Same Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of Christ</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Spirit of your mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of Life</td>
<td></td>
<td>Your whole Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of Holiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thy Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of Our God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit which is of God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Spirit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of meekness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quickening Spirit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of the Living God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord is that Spirit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit is the Lord</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, I received an email from one “John P.” who shared some really good insights, saying:

“We are in complete agreement with the Holy Spirit being the breath of God. Some points that were not covered:

1. The example of Jesus breathing on the apostles and saying, “receive the Holy Ghost.” (by breathing on them)
2. The day of Pentecost, the mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire and the Old Testament prophets speaking of the Messiah coming with the refiner's fire.
3. John the Baptist analogy of the Savior using a fan to blow the chaff (hard shell of us) off the grain, so he could put us in the barn (the Kingdom of God.)
4. The Savior coming to baptize us “with spirit and fire.”
5. Paul's statement of delivering one to the buffeting of Satan, so his spirit could be saved by fire.
6. And John the revelator's lake of fire.

John adds, “there are probably many more.”

- Finally, let's conclude with a few of the "many more."
- In First John 2:1 (John the Beloved) wrote:
  - “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.”
- In the walk of a Christian "saved by grace through faith," all failures (sins, transgressions, evil) can probably be categorized as either failing to believe or trust in God and/or failing to love.
- We understand this in the context of reading 1st John 3:22-23 which says:
  - 1st John 3:22-23 “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”
- Understanding this helps us to see when we as believers in Christ Jesus fail to meet the expectations of God all hope ought not be lost but only a need to bolster our faith and ability to love. Then John adds, referring to these failures:
  - “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.”
- This is the point I want to make about the Holy Spirit. There’s something really interesting about this added line from John.
- Where he writes "that we have an advocate with the Father" the word for an advocate in Greek is paraklete.
- Why is this interesting? For starters, the term is used by Jesus Himself four times in scripture – and this is the only time the word is used in the New Testament – with all of them found in the Gospel of John.
- And how does Jesus use the term?
- In John 14:26 He says:
  - “But the Comforter (parakletos), which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”
- This is one instance (of four) where (because paraklete is masculine) the Holy Spirit is assigned the masculine gender “He” instead of its typical neuter gender, “it.”
- But also note that Jesus says:
- “But the parakletos, which is the Holy Ghost . . .”

• Who did Jesus say this to? The apostles, right? Of whom John was one. He was there and heard Jesus say this. But here in His first Epistle who does John call the paraklete?

Listen again –

- “And if any man sin, we have an advocate (paraklete) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He (Christ Jesus) is the propitiation for our sins . . .”

• In other words, in the Gospel of John Jesus calls the paraclete the Holy Spirit and yet here in John’s own Epistle John calls the paraclete Jesus the Righteous. What gives?
• I would put it this way – Lord forgive me if I’m wrong.
• Prior to his passion and ascension and overcoming sin and death, Jesus was operating (if you will) by God’s spirit or pneuma in Him.
• Once He overcame His flesh by hearkening to the Spirit of God in Him, the Spirit of Jesus – which we might consider as the spirit of God that has been filtered in and through Him and His flesh – abides and works in and through us, allowing Christ to, as Paul says in Galatians 2:20, live in us. Consider this passage:
  - “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
• Of course, Paul also said in Ephesians 3 beginning at verse 14 (listen carefully to these words):
  - 14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
  - 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
  - 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man

(Got that? Now listen):
  - 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
  - 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
  - 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.
In my estimation, John has assigned the term paraklete (which Jesus called the Holy Spirit) to Christ – or the Spirit of Christ.

- In one heck of a passage, Paul says in Romans 8:9-10
  - “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”
- Philippians 1:19 speaks of “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,”
- And Peter writes in 1st Peter 1:11 “Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify . . .”
- In 2nd Corinthians 3:17 Paul clearly assigns the Spirit to Jesus when he says:
  - “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”
- All of these things cause me to see the Spirit or Holy Spirit much more in terms of the motivating force from God, which having (for lack of a better word) “passed through the perfect mortal flesh of Jesus” is able to abide in human beings by faith on Him.
- The fact that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit and the Spirit of God and synonymously applied to the Spirit of Christ, is yet more evidence that the personhood of the Holy Spirit is a Trinitarian fiction.
- One more thing before we move on. We have a tendency to teach and reiterate that Jesus is presently up in heaven advocating on behalf of all believers before the Father.
- We make some really nice stories up that appeals to this belief – you know:

  Satan the accuser approaches God every day and points a gnarled finger at us and screams that we are guilty, guilty – but Jesus, our advocate, stands up and says, “Father, that one is mine.”

- It is certainly dramatic and does pull at the heart strings but there are a number of problems with it if you allow yourself to think a minute.
- First of all, God is all-knowing, and so the drama is off base. It's not like there is an ongoing drama in the heavens. Jesus finished the drama and those who are His are His – and God knows His sheep.
• Second, Jesus said even before He went to the cross (in John 12:31)
  - “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”
• The word translated “now” used twice in this verse, refers to “the Primary particle of present time” - then (when Jesus said it) and then from henceforth.
• If Jesus could say that the Prince of this world would NOW be cast out then I suggest that all the accusatory actions on His part are over.
• He might still be able to tempt (as the Lord allows) but he has been rendered powerless as Jesus has once and for all time have the victory.
• Finally, I would suggest that John’s assigning the term paraclete or advocate does NOT refer to a defense attorney standing before God and wrangling with Him over whether a believer is His or not but the term, translated “advocate” is better understood as our having a friend, a comforter who has access to the Father, who by the Spirit, abides with us, showing that we have not lost ground but are His - and this comforter or Spirit of Christ confirms this to all who are His.

**Summary of Holy Spirit**

Contrary to the trinitarian teachings that take the Spirit of God – the Holy Spirit – and turn it into an actual uncreated, co-eternal being co-equal with God, the Holy Spirit, while certainly God, is his power among men on earth. What the Spirit discerns, God discerns. This Spirit is synonymous with what scripture calls, “the Spirit of Christ.” They are one and the same and this spirit serves to draw all people to God through Christ His Son.

**Religious Crooks**

The simple gesture of making the Holy Spirit a personage worthy of worship as a separate entity from the true and living God is a form of robbery – and the robbery is of the Truth – of worshipping God in Spirit and Truth. Of course, responding to the Spirit as if it were God or Christ is in harmony with who they are, but to separate the Holy Spirit out from the Oneness that is God, and make it a person somewhat smacks of idolatry.
Homosexuality (also see, Marriage)

It goes without saying that an awful lot of things have been said about homosexuality in Christianity today. Interestingly enough, not too much is said in the Bible about it and even more interesting is the fact that our Lord and Savior never addressed it. That’s sort of remarkable, isn’t it? We’ll explain why in a minute but first let’s investigate why homosexuality is such the hot topic not only in Christian circles today but in the world at large.

- Homosexuality (either gay or lesbian applications thereunto) is a frightening aspect of human existence because it is out of the norm (with the norm being heterosexual relations) and therefore being out of the norm it is often misunderstood.
- Generally speaking, when human beings are faced with things they don’t understand (whether it be the influx of a new culture or race, an alien invasion, or a person who possesses characteristics that stand out as odd from the rest) they want to capture it, control it, and kill or erase it.
- This is primarily based on fear – the fear that the odd or strange invader will hurt, harm or infect the standard of living to which the fearful have grown accustomed.
- When a male, who is attracted to females, is confronted by another male who is attracted to him, uncertainty, misunderstanding, and fear is typically the response – and anger, resistance, hatred and the instincts to capture, control or kill the homosexual is often the result.
- All people who are seen as different – from every race, gender, socio-economic division, and lifestyle – will experience some sort of rejection from communities who do not fully understand them.
- So that is the first thing to consider.
- Then we have to add in the fact that the Bible clearly describes homosexuality as a sin. In some ways, it is described egregiously, which contributes to negative responses many religious people might have to those who live, promote or even give a pass to the homosexual lifestyle.
- Finally, when a practice is deemed sinful and it is combined with it being an act that is misunderstood (which causes it to be greatly feared) the act of homosexuality is elevated from sins that are “understandable” to some people
to the type of sins that are incomprehensible, unnatural and therefore more abhorrent and evil than other sins more common to human beings (like lying, meanness, or evil speaking).

So how are believers to see and understand homosexuality in this day and age and how are we to approach this lifestyle or way as followers of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let’s build a reasonable, even a biblical case.

• In the Book of Genesis, we are given the model or way God intended human sexual relationships to be – one male to one female.
• God did not create two males, nor two females, nor did He create one male and two females or two males and one female.
• Neither did God create on male and an animal or beast.
• Species to species, singularly male and female.
• Through this means the human race is propagated.
• The human race cannot continue, grow, or advance without God’s way in place – male and female sexual relationships.
• All people seeking the truth, irrespective of their opinions, must accept these biblical facts.
• To suggest that there are viable alternatives to this narrative is to speak not only against scripture it is to speak against logic – two males in the garden of Eden would have remained childless and therefore the world unpopulated.
• In this sense to justify homosexuality as of God is to deny the purposes of God in the first place.
• However, what God intended and desired is a very different thing than what was, is, and will be.
• For example, God did not command Adam nor Eve to slay one another. But their first Son did, in fact, slay their second. In this, we can see that human beings are imperfect and are subject to doing things that are anathematic to God and His ways.
• We call these things sin, which really means missing the mark, in this case, missing the mark of God.
• He has a bullseye, to be in his will we are to strike true to that bullseye, but no man ever born of Man has ever been able to achieve such obedience.
• We all miss the mark – every last one of us.
• And so God, loving us so greatly, gave us His only begotten Son, Jesus, who would take on human flesh, strike true on
God’s bullseye without exception, and then offer His life up for the world.

• By looking to Him human beings are equipped with an ability to processionally overcome their flesh (the nature that naturally disobeys God and lands outside the bullseye) by the indwelling of His Spirit, and in the areas where they fail God’s grace administered through the faith people have on His Son covers them.

• So while the Bible makes it clear that homosexuality misses the mark, the Bible makes it clear that almost everything all human beings naturally do misses the mark too!

• These things include greed, avarice, violence, unwarranted anger, theft, lust, envy, worldliness, hate, lies, deceptions, arrogance, pride, disingenuousness, condemnation, and the list goes on and on.

• So why is homosexuality such a major focus in the Christian community?

• Perhaps it’s because some people are trying to justify it by suggesting that it is NOT a sin (or that it does not miss the mark) or perhaps it’s because Bible readers are clearly informed that it is and when others disagree they know this is not in harmony with the ancient text.

• Maybe it’s because they don’t understand what it’s like to be attracted to members of the same sex while having zero attraction to the opposite?

• Perhaps it’s just a case of Christians malignantly choosing a whipping boy to represent the world and homosexuals conveniently fit the bill.

• What do we do?

• How should Christians approach this growing subject of debate and division not just within the homosexual community but when dealing with the whole LGBT community?

Perhaps the following would support the best practices in the faith on the subject:

1. All Christians admit that whatever sexual variances and variables exist outside of a contextual understanding of the Word are biblically “sinful.”

2. That all Christians also admit that sexual sin is only one type of sin among human beings and relative to what Jesus seemed to rail on most it is not nearly as egregious a sin as sins of the heart like arrogance, pride, hate, injustice, and the like.

3. That all human beings are guilty of sin and fall short of the mark.
4. That all human beings in their flesh continue to practice sinful ways even when attempting to put an end to them in their lives.
5. That Jesus came and paid – once and for all – for all sins, past, present, and future.
6. That the only sin that remains on earth is the sin of faithlessness toward Him and His person and the sin of failing to love both God and Man.
7. (Again) that every and all “sins of the flesh” biblically described have been fully paid for all – past, present and future – hetero and homosexuals alike.
8. That the call is not for homosexuals to repent of their sins of homosexuality but to repent for failing to believe.
9. And that once ANYONE chooses to believe in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ the sins of their flesh are completely between them and God. And nobody else.
10. That the faith is wholly and entirely subjective and therefore nobody on earth has the right to condemn anyone else but especially those who have come to God by faith on His only begotten Son.

Summary of Homosexuality

God’s demands and the human ability to meet them have forever been at odds. God so loving the world gave us His only begotten Son to save us in and from our sin – which seems to infiltrate, even saturate, everything about our human existence. The solution to the sinful nature and state for all human beings is faith in Christ and then loving others as He loved us. The specific acts or lifestyles of homosexuals are not above nor below the fallen human condition of all people and the answer or response to it is no different either. The message to gays, straights, bi’s, transgenders, and every other predilection on earth is the same – faith in Christ Jesus. Period.

Religious Crooks

For some reason, and in what appears to be an attempt to carve out an us verse them situation, many Religious Crooks focus on the sin of homosexuality as though it is special or they treat it as if the homosexuals themselves are special. Neither is true. God is God and Man is Man and between the two is Jesus. For a religious leader or Christian congregate to distinguish between the homosexual and anyone else is to miss the point of Christ and His atonement.
Humility

- In addition to agape love for God and others, with agape love being defined and described by scripture and not Man, perhaps the greatest evidence of a true follower of Jesus Christ is their humility.
- We might define Christian humility in ways that are often overlooked when traditionally considering the trait.
- Many people believe humility is a facial expression, a mode of dress, a way of living one's material life.
- And while all of these traits may have a place of expression in the truly humble, perhaps the best working descriptions of humility could be something like it is:

“A state of mind that is well pleasing to God.”

- In this, we are able to see that true humility
  - begins or exists first in the mind and heart of the bearer.
  - that it is genuine and therefore pleasing to God who reads the contents of the human heart and mind.
  - Those outward expressions of apparent humility are not always indicative of an individual's humility.
- Of course, Jesus, God with us, was the consummate example of the humble pleaser of God.
- We might ask, what evidence of His humility was present in His earthly life? And in response reply:

1. He relied and trusted completely on His Father and not on His own strength or abilities.
2. He did what His father commanded Him.
3. He did not retaliate when treated wrongly.
4. He had a heart for the lost, the poor, and the sinful.
5. He was not a lover of His own flesh or the things of this world.
6. His kingdom was not of this world.
7. He sought and taught the bread and water that never perish.
8. He forgave, loved, and was not a respecter of persons.
9. He did not try and serve God and Mammon (money).
10. He allowed Himself to be stripped, beaten and hung naked on a cross out of love for God and Man.
Summary

Outside of exhibiting agape love for God and Man there are few characteristics that reveal a human heart for God more than those who walk humbly with God. It is certainly a personal trait to desire and express unfeigned and comes by and through a clear understanding of who a person is before God and who God is in relation to that person. When this relationship is understood, unabashed humility is the result.

Religious Crooks

Religious crooks often provide the appearance of humility from themselves (while demanding it of others) while ignoring the reality of what constitutes genuine humility before God. In their eyes, a person is considered "not humble" if they refuse to take their instructions or advice. Yet looking to our Master we rarely read of Him ever taking the advice of others - only the advice of His Father. Perhaps this helps us to define biblical humility: "when a person exhibits total reliance on God - and NOT Man."
Jesus
Joint Heirs with Christ
Judgment, the
Justification

Jesus

• Stripping all the Roman Catholic implications away from the celebration of Christmas, “Christ’s Mass” in its original Latin form, best means, “Christ being sent,” though this meaning is all but lost today.
• Later “Christ’s Mass” came to symbolize all that God sent to us in Jesus Christ, which included salvation, true worship, new commandments – the Good News.
• After this all the rites and rituals (that are supposed to represent Christ – the eucharist, etc.) were included in the “Christ Mass.”
• As time wore on we know that the term was sort of welded together and “Christ’s Mass” became “Christmas” which was soon tied to winter snows, festivals, lights, gift-giving and the laughing merriment of a fictional character named Santa Claus.
• Today some of the world’s most ardent atheists celebrate Christmas without any religious connection to the day whatsoever.
• Pagans feel they have the right to recognized Christmas in its original form which tied the festival to winter and snow and lights and trees – well before such items were hijacked by the Christians and meshed-in with the Birth of Jesus.
• From a religious sense however, and in the end, without the original Christ and all He did, was (and now is), we ought not be surprised that the festival today has all but returned to its pagan origins and for most it is absent of “all things Christ” but is instead full of “all that is in the world.”
• The elements of Christian communion represent the main physical elements of Jesus human body - unleavened bread typifying his untainted flesh and the wine, a symbol of His pure blood which He shed to make propitiation for sin.
• We note that Jesus was certainly flesh and blood but that an element of His person is often overlooked in communion - His Spirit. Romans 8:9 speaks of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ being one in the same, saying:
  - “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”
  - Philippians 1:19 calls the Spirit “the Spirit of Jesus Christ,”
• And speaking of Jesus, Paul also said:
  - 2nd Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
• In the face of this I would suggest that while we remember or memorialize Him through physical representations of His body (in unleavened bread and wine) that it is the Spirit of Christ, or “Christ living in us” which moves us to remember Him, as Paul says us in Galatians 2:20:
  - “But Christ lives in me.”
• And it is in this that believers have communion with Him.
• Suppose for a moment that you possessed an actual photograph of Jesus. It was in living color but came with no frame. If I were to make you a truly “hand-made picture frame” I would go and hack down a tree, shape and cut the wood, take ore and melt it down, shape some of it into nails, put the frame together and present it to you from my heart as something to benefit your life.
• Such a gift would come from me (and the inspiration that moved me to create it) but in reality the material the gift was made of - the wood, the ore - would have come from God. And though I would have gone to some extremes to make it “from scratch” I merely would have just taken “scratch” that God has given us and put it all together for your benefit.
• This is what we are going to do here offer you the reader a gift I have put together out of the “scratch” provided by God.
• But instead of forming a frame for a picture you possess I am going to attempt to provide you with the picture itself . . . a biblical picture of Jesus Christ extracted and formed by pre-existing materials given to us by God - His Words.
Again, I have not originated the material. I am just presenting to you in a gift I’m titling, *An Illustration of Jesus.*

Notice that I have not called it, *The Illustration of Jesus.* There are a number of them out there so this is just “An” Illustration of the Lord and King of humankind.

Some other illustrations picture Him as a ghost or apparition. Those who say He never existed. And there are those who call Him a “good man” or even “a prophet.”

There are some who paint Him as the first created spirit-son of Heavenly parents (with us coming in thereafter as his spiritual siblings).

But the vast majority of Christian-based faiths refer to Him as the second person of the Holy Trinity – meaning there is one God who is composed of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Finally, there are those who say that He was not God, others who say that say He was actually the Father (who became the holy Spirit) and the illustrations go on and on and on.

Anywhere we look in the religious swap meets of life we can find these illustrations being sold having been drawn and replicated for hundreds, and even thousands, of years.

For just as many years seeking people have taken these illustrations and hung them on the walls of their minds and hearts.

I do not suggest that my views are in any way superior to others but I can say I have searched to know His identity for nearly fifty years – and from a very early age – and I do try and take all I have learned about Him from the material provided in God’s Word to help contextually and honestly recreate Him here.

Why?

In part because having the right picture of God and His Son is beyond vital to true worship. Jesus Himself said in John 17:3:

- “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

We note that Jesus Himself makes a distinction between “the Only True God” and Himself, “whom God sent.”

Some propositions:

- First, there is One God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ.
- What does the Bible have to say about this?
- 2nd Corinthians 1:2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1st Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;
- 1st Corinthians 1:3 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1st Corinthians 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.
- 2nd Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;
- 1st Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

• Have you ever been confused by the interpretations of Men when you read passages like this? I have. But so far the scripture plainly explains that there is One God and there is one mediator between God and man . . . “the Man Jesus Christ.”
• Just who was this Man Jesus Christ? Where did He come from? Is and was He any different than the rest of us?
• Very much so. So let’s examine the Word contextually and see if we can better illustrate Him.
• Second proposition:
• The One God spoke all things into existence.
• All through the Genesis account of Creation we read that the One God spoke . . . and then what the One God said, happened. For instance
  - Genesis 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
• There are many, many more like this – the One God said, and what He said came to be.
• Perhaps when we think of God speaking we think of vocal cords vibrating and sound passing though a throat and over a tongue and through lips forming Words.
• In this anthropomorphic view we fail to understand that God is Spirit and His “Words” are Spirit. Proverbs 1:23 says:
  - “Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.”
• Unlike our words, all of God’s words are living, they have power, they never die or go away. They have the very power of life in them.
• Because God is Spirit and His Words are spirit God Words ARE Him. They are truly an extension of Himself.
• John makes this plain when he says at the introduction of His Gospel
  - John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
• As you all know thirteen verses later in this very same chapter we read . . .
  - John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.
• “And the Word was made flesh.” John doesn’t say the “pre-existent spirit of the Man Jesus” was made flesh. He does not say that Jesus was a man out of a woman like all other people that was made flesh.
• He says plainly that 1) the Word of God 2) was MADE flesh and dwelled among us. In the Christmas carol of Old, What Child Is This, we sing:

  Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The Cross be born, for me, for you,
Hail hail, the Word made flesh
The babe, the Son of Mary.

• There is One God.
• He spoke all things into creation.
• His Words are the One God.
• Those Words were made flesh.
• Which dwelled among us.
• In the Man, Jesus of Nazareth, God’s only human Son.
• The Son of Mary

• While walking upon this earth, how was the “Word made flesh” known? Did they call Him, God? Listen to how Peter speaks of Him to the gathering on the day of Pentecost:
  - Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:
• From all of this, we now understand how “the One God, created all things by Jesus Christ!”
• God spoke and His living Words created all things – and His Living Words were made flesh in the Man Jesus Christ.
• From this we better comprehend Colossians 1:16-17:
  - Colossians 1:16-17 For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by
Him, and for Him: and he is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

- We know that at birth, The Word of God (made flesh) was given the earthly name of Jesus and an earthly title of Christ (for Messiah). The One God (named Yehovah) did NOT have a person with Him named Jesus Christ in the beginning. These were earthly titles. There was not a little son of God named Jesus running around heaven.

- Nevertheless, Jesus the man, born of a woman, the Nazarene, was filled with the Words of God which were with God and were God from the Beginning. God’s words are Spirit, they are life, they are powerful and they are truth. His words are LIVING – and so what was in Jesus was uncreated, eternal, the truth, light, life and God. And they were from God and they were God.

- And they were made flesh.

- Listen to what Galatians 4:4 says:
  - Galatians 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,
  - 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

- Jesus of Nazareth was a man who was made – Paul says it twice here – God’s Only Begotten Son was made of a woman, His Only Begotten Son was made under the law. His Only Begotten Son breathed oxygen – chest heaving up and down, and was a human who felt pain, and man who had a mind, will and emotions.

- While this man, this Only Begotten Son of God was human – (READY) He was constructed in a way that was forever different from all other human beings to ever exist.

- How? This human Son of God had the One God as His Father. Jesus was His Only Begotten (made of a woman) Son. In other words, God made a human being His actual, literal only begotten Son. He made us creations But in Jesus He made an actual Son.

- Nobody before or after was or will ever be like Him. But the key to this is to remember that Jesus of Nazareth was made. The Writer of Hebrews puts it this way:
  - Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

- Now, how was He made? This is so important. He was made of God and of Man. God’s spirit (not the Father but the
impersonal Spirit of God) overshadowed Mary and she conceived, by the Power of God, and the Babe (ready) had a DNA unlike ANY other because His Father bestowed in Him His fullness and His Mother bestowed hers.

- Next Proposition: The One God, who had promised redemption to the Nation of Israel through a Messiah, sent Jesus of Nazareth to them.

- Listen closely to the Word of Luke in Acts 10:36
  - The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

- Then (in Acts 13:23 and speaking of king David) we read
  - “Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus:

Remember the first Proposal now:

- “There is One God” – and according to His promise He raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus of Nazareth.

- Is the forest starting to clear? Is the illustration starting to take shape and form and in a light maybe you have not seen Him before? If so, we begin to understand why Jesus would distinguish so clearly in John 17 when He said:
  - And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

- What else did the One God do in and through Jesus of Nazareth? Again, in Acts 2:36, Peter says:
  - Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

- Ever wonder why scripture refers to the One God and then distinguishes between the One God and Jesus by calling Him “the Lord and Savior?” all the time?

- I would humbly suggest that this is because the One God so loved the World He merged (His living Word by the Spirit) with human flesh, creating the Man, Jesus of Nazareth, His ONLY begotten (human made Son) to act as an intermediary that could and would save the World – thereby coming to the world as our Savior and our Lord and then becoming our Lord and Savior only after passing through mortality.

- What else did the One God do with Jesus of Nazareth? While on Earth Jesus was a man “appointed and anointed” by God. (That is what “Christ” means “anointed one”). Acts 10:38 says it well.
“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

This is from Peter in preaching to Cornelius. He could have said God the Son came and saved us. Nothing doing! He clearly delineates between God and Jesus of Nazareth, whom God appointed, and gave Him the Holy Spirit and Power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil . . . ( “for God – the One True God) was with Him.

He wasn’t Him. But He was with the Man Jesus of Nazareth in His very DNA! In this way He was truly God with us!

Going back to Acts 2:22 what did Peter say there?
- Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

"Which God did by Him."

What else did the One God do in and through His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ? He, the One and Only God, raised the One and Only Jesus up from the grave!
- Acts 2:32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
- Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.
- Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.
- Acts 3:26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.
- Acts 4:10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.
- Acts 13:33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.
- Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
Now this is all taking us somewhere important. We would fully expect the Son of God to walk a perfect life, would we not? Nothing less, after all, He was the Son of God, right?

We would expect the Son of God to perform miracles and signs – like walking on water – nothing less. The Son of God would do such things.

We would fully expect the grave to have no power over the God’s human Son, right? It did not.

But as a Man, God’s first and only begotten Son out and from the Human Race, He had to choose, had to learn, had to overcome all things as a means to reconcile us to His Father and then assume His rightful place at His right hand as Lord and Savior.

Some people are uncomfortable with Jesus being God’s Only Human Son, they say things like “Jesus had an advantage over the rest of the Human race because God was His Father,” or they say, “He was fully human – fully, and therefore just like us!”

Has that ever bothered you intellectually? This hyperbole of Jesus being “fully God” and “fully man?” Or maybe have you wondered about Him having an “advantage over the rest of us” and therefore able to do what He did?

Did Jesus the Man have an advantage to the rest of the human race! Of COURSE HE DID! He is Our Lord and Savior, God’s Only Begotten Son! We are not in competition with Jesus. God made and gave Him to save us, not compete with us. And save us He did.

Having done so . . .

Jesus of Nazareth fully redeemed humankind from the Fall. He has done what the One God from on high could not accomplish (listen) either by relying on the goodness of Man (meaning Adam) nor by bestowing His Law upon us – (meaning the Nation of Israel).

Loving us so much He took His very living Word, and with the Seed of a woman MADE His only begotten Son by the Holy Spirit, and God with us – saved us.

Having had the victory Jesus BECAME – listen – Jesus became both the author and the finisher of the faith!

He merited the title Lord and our Savior of the World. As a result we look directly to Him – and no other, as Hebrews 12:2 says

- “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the
right hand of the throne of God.” (of the One God – we now have a righteous mediator, a Lord and Savior, a King of Kings and Lord of Lords! – to the One True God.)

- Since this victory, the One True God and His Only Begotten Son, OUR Lord, Savior and King work in tandem to redeem humankind.
  - *1st Thessalonians 3:11* Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.
  - *2nd Thessalonians 2:16* Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.
  - *Titus 1:4* To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

Not God the Father and God the Son.

God the Father and the Lord – the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- Forty six times Jesus is called “the Son of God” in the New Testament.
- Nearly double that (87 times) Jesus is called “the Son of Man.”
- How many times is Jesus called “God the Son?” after the traditions of Man?
- Never. Ever. (Ready?) Because that is NOT what he entered the world being. What? Huh?
- Many Christian scholars (and otherwise) insisted on saying that Jesus was “fully man” and “fully God.” Ever hear that?
- Theologians call this the hypostatic union which speaks of the combined natures of God and humanity in one being. No problem. Jesus was obviously God and Man in His DNA. That’s a hypostatic union.
- But it’s the 100% claim that is troubling.
- Not having a solution I’ve echoed the sentiment over and over not knowing any better.
- But there are problems with this as no “God is not human” and humans, while made in His image, are not God”.
- What I mean by this is there has never been any human being alive (other than Jesus) whose Father is God.
- Because of this I suggest that it is a stretch to call Him fully Man (again, since no Man on earth has ever had the
spiritual genetics of God) or Fully God as no part of God has ever become human either! (before Christ, that is)

- As difficult this will be for some, I tend to illustrate Jesus, instead of being “fully man” and “fully God” I see Jesus the Man as less than God (due to the presence of His flesh) and also less than Man, (due to the presence of God in Him).
- Again, “less than God” because from the mouth of Jesus “God is Spirit” (and Jesus was flesh) and “less than man” because no other human has had God as their Father from birth!
- So when I say “less than God” I mean “handicapped by the flesh” and when I say “less than human” I mean “empowered from birth by the DNA of God.”
- It’s not that the fullness of God wasn’t in Him nor that He was less than human in flesh - he had the fullness of each – but it was the presence of the “other” that marginalized the fullness of the former. Get it?
- When the fullness of purity is woven together with threads of carnality the result is not improvement or the containment of purity but a legitimizing of such.
- And if something fallen and evil is met and matched with something glorious it becomes less fallen and less evil and therefore NOT more human (but less). In this way we understand how Jesus:
  
  Condescended below all things.
  How He learned obedience by the things He suffered.
  How He did not know certain things.
  How He Bled, suffered and even asked “God why He had forsaken Him.”
  In this we understand how He died.

- God the Son does not die. The Son of God and the Son of Man can and did.
- We are also able to understand how the anointed one was ultimately made “Lord and King” fully warranting a position at the right hand of His Father - as a glorified man, who allowed “the deity in Him” to reign over “the flesh surrounding Him” and God reconciling the fallen fleshly world to Himself through His only Begotten Son.

A couple more propositions:

- As a result everything we do (in relation to God) is now “by or through” Christ Jesus.
He is our mediator, our Lord, our Savior and our King. Hence from scripture:

- Romans 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.
- Romans 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.
- Romans 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:
- Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
- Romans 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.
- Romans 5:15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.
- Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Romans 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.
- Romans 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Romans 15:17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.
- Romans 16:27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.
- 1st Corinthians 1:4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;
- 1st Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 1st Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2nd Corinthians 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- 2nd Corinthians 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

- Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;

- Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

- Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

- Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

- 1st Thessalonians 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

- 1st Thessalonians 4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

- 1st Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

• We also know that all that we are and all that we do “by and through Jesus Christ” is for the Glory of the One God.

- Philippians 1:11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

- Philippians 2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- 1st Peter 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

• Finally, we discover something really interesting in the Book of Revelation. All through the synoptic Gospels – Matthew Mark and Luke – Jesus is described in very human terms. If we were left with the synoptic Gospels alone we would have very very little evidence of the deity in Jesus.

• His deity is really only realized by and through the Gospel of John – who also received and wrote the Book of Revelation.
• In the first chapter John describes a vision He had of Jesus in heaven, one that was VERY different from the Jesus even He knew. He records:
  - Revelation 1:13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.
  - 14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;
  - 15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.
  - 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.
  - 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:
  - 18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

• This is NOT the description of a human. John clearly did not know this vision of the Jesus He knew on earth. It is plainly a description of a Man – with hair and eyes, and a voice of roaring waves – who reached what scholars call Apotheosis – divinity.

• So while He entered life made of a woman, made under the Law, the Word made flesh, He overwhelmed His flesh by the Spirit and the Son of God inherited all that His Father had to give Him – everything, including full and absolute deity – something He did NOT possess while on earth due to His human nature.

• To worship Him is to worship the One True God – there is no difference. We fall at His feet as if dead – for by and through Him God has reconciled the fallen human World to Himself.

And therefore . . .

“this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.”
Joint Heirs with Christ

• Under the topic of Jesus, we proposed the following:

1. That there is One God and One Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
2. That God spoke all things into existence and that His Word is alive, eternal, and Spirit (and therefore Him.)
3. That God’s Word was made flesh and Jesus, the Man from Nazareth, was created with a most unusual DNA - that of God and that of Mary.

4. That Jesus was God’s literal human son, His ONLY begotten.
5. I suggested that Jesus “learned obedience by the things He suffered” and having perfectly submitted His flesh to the will of His Father, this ONLY BEGOTTEN SON of God had victory over sin and death and took His rightful place next to the glory of His Father.

• Upon reflection we might see Jesus, at birth, like we would see the seed of a giant Redwood tree - possessing from birth all things necessary to become a Giant Redwood - but having to grow to the full stature expected and anticipated until the day He towered to the height of His Father, the One True God, a day reflected in what John saw and described in Revelation.

• The topic above, Jesus, was all about Him.
• Here we apply Him to those who look to Him in faith, hope and love.
• In the book of Revelation chapter one we receive a description of God’s Only Begotten Son. It says:

  - Revelation 1:13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.
  - 14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;
  - 15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.
  - 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.
  - 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:
- 18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

- In this description we find a VERY different Jesus than the one born in a manger, than the one who wept, than the one who died on a cross and who (before so doing) cried, “My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?”

- Here we find the Son of Man, a Nazarene from birth, in a state of having not only overcome all things but exalted to the status of God where He even calls Himself “the First and the Last” and adds “I am alive forever more.”

- Jesus was not alive forevermore when He walked the earth. He died like all human beings die - I mean Jesus even says to John (here in Revelation), “I was dead.”

- But at this point He had received all that His Father - the only True God - had for Him. All that He had. And His Son, at this point in Revelation, held even the keys to hades and death.

- This is the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. This is the only human being who had God as His Father. This was the only human being to overcome sin and death, the first human being to rise from the grave, and the only Human being to become the Lord and Savior of the entire human race.

Jesus, the only begotten Son of God.

- In addition to His atonement and sacrifice for sin, in addition to His resurrection (and His saving all of us from death and sin) what other purpose did and does Jesus play in the plan of the One God, His Father?

So proposition number One

- All human beings become Children of God in one way (and one way alone) - by having faith in His Only Begotten Son. Galatians 3:26 make this plain, saying: - Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

- Where there is little dispute about the need to believe on Jesus to be saved we might ask, Is this all God cares to do in and through the giving us His Son - to save the human race from Sin and death?
• Scripture suggests that there is far more - for those who are willing to hear. For those who care and seek.
• Let me say something at this point that I believe is important:
• Coming from forty years of active Mormonism some of what I am going to share sounds very LDS - and in many ways, it does reflect some of their teachings.
• But note - all that I will say I take from the Word of God (the Bible) and not from my LDS upbringing or teachings. So while the LDS do certainly teach “the exaltation of Man” (to the point where they suggest that worthy individuals are going to become gods of their own worlds and universes) I am going to strongly suggest that while Jesus did come forth to make us joint heirs with Him, there is a great difference between the extremes the LDS have taken the idea and the manner in which the Bible describes as “the apotheosis of Man.”
• Let’s continue.
• We agree that we become children of God by faith in His Only begotten Son. Scripture says this.
• We also know that upon belief, all of us are given the power to become the Son’s and Daughters of God by Christ through faith. As that familiar passage in John reads:
  - John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Remember this line, “the power to become the Sons and Daughters of God.”

Again! The power...to become...the Son’s and Daughters of God!

• We often ignore this line. We pay it no mind. Consider it today.

So...
• Looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, we see someone born of a woman – as we are all born of women.
• We discover a biblical picture of Him growing, learning, choosing, even setting His will aside to do the will of His Father.
• And we find Him not only setting His will aside but His very life aside for others, dying to self, being taken outside the city walls, allowing Himself to be crucified,
and going from “a seed in the manger to a towering Redwood in the book of Revelation.”

- This growth was neither easy nor painless. And while He was on earth He was not seen nor recognized (except by the Devils) as the towering finished product Redwood.
- His own apostles didn’t really understand who He was and what He was ultimately going to do – until after He did it!
- Here’s the key – what Jesus did perfectly, “all who look to Him in faith are invited and empowered to do the same.” By Him and His indwelling Spirit.
- We are then enabled to go from having just the Seed of God in us to becoming towering Redwoods of some sort or another AFTER this life.
- Listen to what John wrote in His epistle - 1st John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, (talking about Jesus here) we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.
- This was written before John saw the exalted Jesus in Revelation. Since believers, who are given the power to become Sons and Daughters shall be as He is, we know that there is a great deal of change that is going to occur between how we are known here and how we will be known . . . there.
- How does this occur? Herein lies one of the big differences between the LDS teachings and the biblical.
- As a means to make men heirs of God and to bring about “the exaltation of Man” the LDS have imposed – superimposed – resurrected elements of the Law (including temple rites and rituals, a false priesthood, Laws and Ordinances, and a litany of outward demands for righteousness.)
- The Bible makes it clear what the path to human apotheosis looks like.
- Let’s work this out.
- First, let’s consider some passages that speak to apotheosis which might be defined (in our case) as “the taking of something or someone to it or their highest possible status.”
- First, we’ve shown we become the children of God by faith and are saved.
- Then we are told that as believers we are given “the Power to become Sons and Daughters.”
- Are there other passages to add to those we’ve already discussed? Peter says - 2nd Peter 1:2-4 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,
3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through . . . the knowledge of him . . . that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

- He has given “unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness”. . . through KNOWLEDGE of Him and has called us to “GLORY AND VIRTUE” “whereby we are given exceeding great and precious promises THAT BY THESE (great and precious promises) we MIGHT BE PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE . . having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Whoa and wow.

- The word translated "partakers" (as in partakers of the divine nature”) might be familiar to some of you as the Greek is koinonia – and means "a sharing, a communion with" – so it's NOT becoming God's but sharing in His glory and virtue and righteousness.

- God has given His Only Begotten Son all that He has – all. Being the only human with God’s DNA from birth, all that the Father is (and has) is rightfully His and was received as the first resurrected Human after He showed He was truly a Son and causing God to say AFTER His resurrection, “this day I have begotten you.”

- We are not in the same boat as Jesus as none of us were born with God as our literal Father.

- However, we are adopted and can become joint-heirs by and through Christ.

- It all begins by faith in Him, then we are empowered to become the Son’s and Daughters of God, to be partakers (Sharers) in His Glory and Virtue and Light and Righteousness. 1st Corinthians 1:30 makes a clear statement, saying:
  - "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:
  - that, as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."
• So we know that this is what is happens but how does it happen?
• Let's be honest here - the idea of the apotheosis of Man has existed in nearly every walk of human existence, perhaps as the result of our being made in God's image - And so it's natural to surmise and postulate that we ought to be reaching for our most full potential.
• So well before the LDS and their rituals, laws, and ordinances came down the pike, the ancient Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans have all appealed to some way (or means) whereby men become gods (with a lower case g).
• Apotheosis is found throughout Hinduism, Judaism, and Buddhism. The Japanese raise their Imperialist leaders to the heights of Deity and watching a recent series called "The Crown" even the King's and Queen's of England, through the Coronation, are anointed in a form resembling the LDS temple rituals - but in a form that predated Smith by 800 years.
• Even the godless Nietzsche described the rare human being he named "the Ubermench" (the Superman) and many atheists today are actually under the impression that they have an ability to transcend their natural human state and to elevate into a status of deity through reason and rationality.
• Lots and lots of counterfeits. But just because there are counterfeits does not mean the entire principle is false.
• Yet God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son that whosoever should believe on Him would first, be saved, and second, be given “the power to become Sons and Daughters of God, joint heirs with Christ.”
• This notion was touched upon by even some of the early church leaders. And while some of what these church leaders suggested has been proven heretical they seemed to have tapped into something about Christian Apotheosis in their conjectures. For example
• Irenaeus famously said:
  - "If the Word has been made Man, it is so that men may be made gods.'(lower case g).
• Also
  - "For this is why the Word became Man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God."
• In the fourth century, Athanasius repeats Irenaeus pretty much word for word, saying
  - "For He was made Man that we might be made God."
And then in the fifth century Cyril of Alexandria says that we shall become sons 'by participation' (that term, “by participation” comes from a Greek word, “methexis,” which originates with Plato and his forms and relates to "apart sharing in the form of something" - again, a VERY different concept than the LDS but something that does contain similarities).

Deification was also the central idea in the spirituality of Maximus the Confessor, an orthodox Christian monk living in the Sixth Century AD. To him the doctrine of apotheosis is the corollary of the Incarnation: 'Deification, briefly, is the encompassing and fulfillment of all times and ages.’

Symeon, at the end of the tenth century, wrote, 'He who is God by nature converses with those whom he has made gods by grace, as a friend converses with his friends, face to face.’

Finally, Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic Priest of great mental capacity, said back in the thirteenth century:

"The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made Man, might make men gods." (lower case g)

Interestingly enough, the Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology (pretty much Catholic) contains the following in an article titled "Deification":

Deification (Greek theosis) is for Orthodoxy the goal of every Christian. Man, according to the Bible, is 'made in the image and likeness of God.' . . It is possible for a man to become like God, to become deified, to become a god (lower case g here) by grace. This doctrine is based on many passages of both OT and NT (e.g. Ps. 82 (81).6; II Peter 1.4), and it is essentially the teaching both of St Paul, though he tends to use the language of filial adoption (cf. Rom. 8.9–17; Gal. 4.5–7), and the Fourth Gospel (cf. 17.21–23).

So that’s plenty of insight from what men have said on the subject before us - and while they were capable of mistakes, where there’s smoke there’s fire and all they alluded to was not . . . at odds . . . with the written word.

What else does scripture say?

2nd Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.
2nd Corinthians 6:16-18 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

And then there’s Hebrews 12:10 which says “For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”

- When we think of "Jesus as the Only-begotten Son of God," when we examine Him - His makeup and His life - we get an idea of what this should mean, how this should look, what He would have been empowered to be and do.
- And how do we find Him in the scriptural descriptions of Him? “Truthful,” “loving,” “gentle, selfless, holy, “willing to suffer,” “willing to give” His life for others,” “not of this world.”
- If we are to be (shall be) Sons and Daughters of the Almighty we have to seek out how this way, this mind, this heart, and hands can be genuinely obtained and secured in our nature.
- It must come to us as it came to Him and cannot come by way of ritual or religion as these things are verboten throughout the New Testament narrative.
- So, we have a historical precedence for apotheosis. We have an idea of it mentioned in the early church and thereafter. We have seen that there are numerous counterfeits, approaches, and attempts toward it throughout world history.
- Finally, there is some strong scriptural evidence that this is a desire of God and a major purpose for the life of Jesus Christ - to make us partakers with Him in glory.
- But again, how?
- First, we must agree with scripture that we have been given the Power (to become Sons and Daughters) when we believed.
- So perhaps we can begin by saying that “the road to Son and Daughtership” is traveled in and by and through . . . the Spirit . . . and not the flesh.
- This was a constant in the life and ways of Jesus, right, who reminded us (in John 3:6)
"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

And so we know that in our dual natures - natures similar to Christ from His birth (which are given to us when we are born from above) that it is the Spirit that must reign and not the flesh.

This is what was in Christ, this is what it will be with those who are joint heirs with Him.

At this juncture we have another important principle to consider - there is a vital link between the Words of God and the operation and power of His Spirit.

Jesus said something really interesting about this in John 6:63. He said:

John 6:63 “It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

Did you get the connection? Jesus said: "The Words that I speak unto you, THEY ARE SPIRIT (and) THEY ARE LIFE!

We started this two-part series off citing Jesus who said: - “And this is life eternal, to know thee, the Only True God AND Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.”

Here Jesus says that “the Words that He speaks are Spirit and they are Life!”

So we have some logical conclusions being presented here in somewhat of a syllogism:

1. It is life eternal to KNOW God and Jesus.
2. The flesh is nothing but the Words that Jesus spake and Spirit and they ARE LIFE!

So “Words, which are spirit,” let us “Know the One God and His Only Son,” which is “eternal life!”

Go back in your mind to the topic above called, Jesus.”

We said the following:

Perhaps when we think of God speaking we think of vocal cords vibrating and sound passing through a throat and over a tongue and through lips forming the words.

In this anthropomorphic view, we fail to understand that God is Spirit and His "Words" are Spirit.

Unlike our words, God’s words are living, they have power, they never die or go away. And they have the very power of life in them. Frankly, because God is Spirit and His Words are spirit God Words ARE Him. They are an extension of Him Himself.

His Words are Spirit and they are life. Eternal Life. To know Him then is to know His Words, which we know by the
Spirit and not the flesh, which comes to us and abides in us by the Spirit because they are Spirit!

- When the Man Jesus was made, He was the Word made flesh. His DNA was that of His Father (by the Spirit) which overshadowed Mary His fleshly mother.
- I think we can reasonably say that what allowed or enabled Jesus of Nazareth to overcome His human flesh (and to live to the will of His Father) was the fact that God’s very Words dwelled in Him - so much so that when He spoke to His disciples He said that His “Words were Spirit, and His Words were life!”
- So with the Word of God and the Spirit really and actually being almost synonymous, and with the fact before us that Jesus was the Word made flesh, and that He said Himself that His Words are Spirit (which give life), and since He overcame the World (as the Word made flesh), the absolute Key to our apotheosis is . . . having the Word (by the Spirit) in us too.
- Without God, as His Father (the Word made flesh) Jesus would have been just another good guy or philosopher or prophet.
- But He was far more. He was the Word of God made flesh.

Hang with me now.

- Being empowered by God to become His Son’s and Daughters we to overcome our flesh in the very same manner that Jesus overcame His - by and through the Word abiding in us!
- There is no ritual in the flesh or observance through the flesh that will raise us up as Sons - there is the death of the flesh by and through the presence of the Spirit - and since Jesus has clearly stated that His Words are Spirit . . . every single believer today has a clear map laid before them that is key to their sanctification and ultimate apotheosis - the Bible, the Word (which is Spirit), the living Word, which leads to life, which leads to knowing the Only True God and His Son whom He has sent, entering us, just as it became flesh in God’s Son but now entering us by the Spirit of them and abiding.
- 1st Peter 1:23 takes us to the beginning of the Word in our walk, saying - "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."
- James adds
- James 1:18 “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.”

- And the Psalmist adds (in Psalm 119:89) "Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."
- Isaiah 40:8 says "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever."
- Job 23:12 states: “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.”
- Jeremiah 15:16 wrote: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts."
- Peter quipped: 1st Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.
- 2nd Timothy 3:16 gives us the all-familiar, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
  - 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
- Psalm 119:11 reiterates “ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”
- Deuteronomy 11:18 explains the devotion the Jews had to the Word of God saying:
  - “Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.”
- And Paul says to the believers at Colosse (3:16)
  - “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
- Psalm 119:11 reiterates “ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”
- Deuteronomy 11:18 explains the devotion the Jews had to the Word of God saying:
  - “Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.”
- Psalms 119:105 reads “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”
- And again (Psalm 119:130) “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”
• Peter wrote some significant passages relative to the Word
and apotheosis, saying:
  - 2nd Peter 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy;
    whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light
    that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the
day star arise in your hearts:
  - 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture
    is of any private interpretation.
  - 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of
    man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the
    Holy Ghost.
• And Jeremiah said
  - Jeremiah 5:14 Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts,
    Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words
    in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall
    devour them.
• Again, from Jeremiah 23:29:
  - "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like
    a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"
• Paul adds in Ephesians 6:17 “And take the helmet of
  salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word
  of God.”
• And of course Hebrews 4:12 really makes the value and
  import of the Word clear saying:
  - "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper
    than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing
    asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,
    and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the
    heart."
• Ephesians emphasizes the fact that it is the Word that
  washes us, using the line:
  - Ephesians 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse the
    church with the washing of water by the word,
• Romans 15:4 proclaims:
  - “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were
    written for our learning, that we through patience and
    comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”
• We know from the Parable of the Sower that all the external
  forces or enemies mentioned (the birds, thorns, stones)
  were at odds against the Seed (which Jesus says is “the
  Word of God”) and were all aimed at either taking it way,
  not allowing it to take root, or choking it out. Why?
• Because it is the key to personal spiritual growth. It is
  the key to overcoming our flesh — again when they are
  ingested and understood by the Spirit.
• The key is to get the Word in our hearts - just as it was in the very DNA of our Lord. Words in the head are fine but they have to be planted in the hearts by the Spirit.

• The Psalmist says:
  - Psalm 37:31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

• David later wrote:
  - Psalm 40:8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

• And we remember what God said to Jeremiah (and how these words were echoed by the writer of Hebrews) that in our day God said:
  - Jeremiah 31:33 I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.
  - 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

• This state leads Paul to say in 2nd Corinthians 3:3
  - “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

So . . .

• Filled with His Word by the Spirit (and His Spirit by the Word), we move in - lean in, push in - toward Christ.

• Paul, as an apostle, said:
  - Philippians 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

• And this pressing “in” “toward Him,” “toward His will,” “by the Spirit,” the Word, written on our hearts, we are lead, moved, empowered to actually LIVE by the tenets of our proclaimed faith.

Here we go - this choice, this day to day decision, is uncomfortable. Not easy. Even insufferable.

• But not one whit more torturous than what our Lord, the Word made flesh, experience in the warfare of His soul.

• Because the Word of God in flesh creates difficulty, and conflict, and tension, we read the following of all who are His by faith:
- Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.
- 1st Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.
- Philippians 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

- It is the first of the year. We wrapped 2016 up examining both the nature of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and have now discussed the purpose He served beyond that of redeeming the world.
- He came to take us from being creations to becoming children; from being babes to becoming Sons and Daughters, and as Sons and Daughters, joint heirs, that we all may share in the glory that His Father has bestowed upon Him.
- This does not occur in and or through the flesh. It all occurs by and through the Spirit, by the ”washing of the Word," which ingested and written on our hearts, as it was written on His from birth, we too will begin to honestly and heartfeltly suffer . . . the death of our flesh . . . because we are choosing to live by the Spirit, which IS to live by His Word and to then enter into life eternal once our days here are done.
- You may tire of the Word. It is a diet that weighs heavy on the human heart, and so we seek for the more superfluous.
- A pastor’s main job is to feed all who hunger one thing – the Word of God by the Spirit thereby helping to equip the flock in their becoming Sons and Daughters of God and joint heirs with Christ.

**Summary of Joint Heirs with Christ**

All who are truly followers of Christ will suffer with Him and therefore be joint-heirs with Him after this life. This suffering is manifested in dying to the flesh while living to the Spirit
Religious Crooks

When it comes to human beings becoming Joint-Heirs with Christ there tend to be _ways that this concept is manipulated and bastardized:

1. The concept is ignored all-together – never taught, never mentioned.
2. The concept is used to beat people into a submission to holiness – which is possible only by the Spirit and never through the flesh.
3. The concept is somehow used to bring Christ down to the human level completely and to bring humans up to Christ (again, completely). Here the fact that He WAS different from all of us is lost.

Judgement

• In sections above we have associated the “last days,” and “the end of the world” (or age) with the Second Coming of Jesus. This is a correct association – it’s what scripture itself does.
• In other words when we are able to identify the last days spoken of in scripture, and when we are able to identify the end of the age (errantly translated world in the King James) spoken of in scripture we discover the Second Coming of Jesus Christ – and vice versa.
• We have more than proved that the two events (the end of the age and therefore the Resurrection) occurred in the first century between 66 AD and 70 AD.
• But in addition to the wrapping up of that age and the commencement of the Resurrection, there are a few other things that we naturally associate with the return of Jesus – and judgment is one of them.
• Scripture associates His second coming with judgment. Flipping it around, if we can say when scripture says judgment will occur we can then say when Jesus Second Coming would be. Get it?
• Of course most churches today teach that the Second Coming is out in our future so this means that they also are teaching that judgment is out there in the same place – the future.
• Many Christians suggest that at that time (when Jesus returns and all have been ultimately resurrected) that all of humanity will be judged then – with the goods name being in the Lambs Book of Life and the bad not.

• Then at that time, all whose names are not written in the Lambs Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire (which was prepared for Satan and his angels) and the eternities are set.

• There are some variations on this view in the faith with some saying that Christians are judged at the cross of Christ upon belief and escape the Great White Throne judgment but this is neither here nor there in light of sound biblical eschatology. (see Eschatology above).

• There's something off about this story, however, even without getting into scripture.

• Apparently, the way most Christian see it, men and women have been dying and going either to heaven or to hell for 2000 years.

• Those who have gone to heaven are waiting to come back with Jesus for His return which will give them their resurrected body and those who have gone to hell are waiting there for Jesus to return at which point hell will give up its dead.

• At this point all inhabitants of heaven and hell will stand before the Great White Throne judgement to see if their names are written in the Lambs Book of Life, and apparently there will be some whose name is NOT written in the book – they will be cast into the lake of fire – and apparently some names will be written in it and they will go to heaven.

• This thinking suggests that there are some in heaven awaiting the resurrection who may discover their names not written in the Lambs book of life and others in hell whose names are. If this is not the case WHY take the inhabitants of heaven and hell and have them stand before a judge to even see? We would automatically believe that if, at death, a soul goes to heaven or hell that it's pretty certain they belong there, right?

• But according to most Christians everyone who has ever lived – past, present, and future – will be gathered and will wait for their case to be found, read, and judgment passed down – eternal life or an eternal visit to the house of pain (otherwise known as the Lake of Fire). But the story doesn’t end here.

• Christianity also generally teaches that at each one of our individual deaths the “immortal soul” (not a biblical term) of believers goes to heaven and the soul of unbelievers go
to hell. But then, everyone who has ever died, once Jesus actually comes back to earth, they will have their long decayed natural bodies rise from the grave, they will then enter these resurrected "natural" bodies again, and then that massive meeting for judgment begins.

• Ever thought how nonsensical all this is? Have you fumbled around for decades (like most) sort of mumbling when people want to know the specifics of these murky events?

• Think about this – just for a minute, okay? A man one thousand four hundred years ago dies as a sold-out believer in Christ. Got that? Pastors would tell you he went directly to heaven, right? So he goes to heaven, and has been waiting there for 1400 years (don't appeal to the time/space argument about time here to rationalize your views) only to have to leave heaven once Jesus returns to earth again, join His body that comes back up out of the dirt, only to stand before God and THEN be judged?

• Was the man sent to heaven in error in the first place 1400 years ago? The chronology makes no sense whatsoever, folks. It's all implausible. So what do we do with the judgment we have all been waiting for?

• First of all, I would suggest that when we read of judgment and the judgment in scripture it clearly means Jesus passed judgment on Jerusalem in 70 AD. To not see judgment as having taken place at that time makes all the passages that speak of judgment unintelligible.

• When we see them in their correct context, that Jesus and the Apostles were warning and speaking of a judgment to fall on Jerusalem the light will begin to break over our minds.

• And since judgment is always associated with "the last days," and "the end of the World or age" in scripture, and we can see that those are passed, we can also see that universal idea of judgment is passed. Over. History. Let's discuss this for a minute.

• Jesus – as the Messiah to the House of Israel to whom He came in His earthly ministry – came both in the role as Savior and as Judge. These roles of His are reiterated over and over again toward the House of Israel – Savior (Messiah) and Judge.

• To some of the House of Israel He was Savior but to others He was Judge. We know the utter frustration God had with the House of Israel all through the Old Testament. There
was continued disobedience, following after other gods, and forsaking Him.

• Jesus tells parables about this; about how God sent prophets into the vineyard whom they ignored and abused and even killed. Jesus then says, “then last of all God sent His Son.”

• Hundreds of years before Christ God sent most of His people (ten tribes) into Assyrian bondage from where they never returned as a people. Right? Then the remainder called Judah and Benjamin lived in all sorts of captivity and foreign rule. When the promised Messiah came to them they were under Roman rule. But therein Judea God kept Judah together until their Messiah, born of that tribe, came. In other words, “Last of all He sent His Son.”

• And what did they do to Him? They rejected and killed Him — and God’s patience was exhausted — judgment was now about to come upon them. I mean what else was God going to do, send MORE prophets (like the LDS suggest) or send Himself again and again?

• The arrival and rejection and death of His only begotten was the end of the line of a long history of God dealing with a recalcitrant people.

• Judgment was coming and it was a judgment on them — they had the law, they had the promises, they had the prophets, they had the actual Messiah, they had apostles and they had forty years since the death of the Messiah to receive Him and then God's outreach was exhausted. Judgment would fall His Son returned — and the only remaining portion of the House of Israel — Judah, gathered there in Judea, was wiped out — their temple, their priesthood, their genealogies, their city of David, all of it — destroyed and if not destroyed — scattered.

• Doesn't this judgment make sense? I mean, Jesus was promised and prophesied to THEM, Jesus was born to THEM, He lived among THEM. He was killed by THEM. He resurrected in and around THEM. And He promised that He would return to THEM — with reward and judgment! It only makes sense that this Messiah would complete EVERYTHING then and there and that the Bible has been materially completed in every way! (see Bible above)

• The destruction of Judah in Judea by the Romans was the coming judgment described in the Old and New Testaments. How can I prove this? By a reasonable, non-manipulated reading of the Bible.

• The last book of the Old Testament is Malachi. He was a prophet of doom. 400 years before the birth of Christ God
(through Malachi) was accusing His people of great evil and rebellion.

- What was their response to God's accusations as given through Malachi? They asked:
  - “Wherein have we wearied God?” and “When did we rob Him?”
- So Malachi ends his short book with a prophecy — and He says:
  - “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” (Malachi 4:1)

- I would suggest that when God says, “that it shall leave them neither root nor branch,” speaks to the utter destruction of all the genealogies that burned up in the temple destruction — and the nation was left without any genealogical tree from which to prove heritage. But as we also know, God is merciful and always reaching, and in the very next verse He says (to those who are faithful):
  - “But unto you, that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.” (Malachi 4:2)

- This “Sun of Righteousness” speaks to the Son of God coming and healing and saving those who received Him. Now stay with me. In verse four of Malachi God adds a message to the faithful who, four hundred years later would be looking for the Messiah, and so He says to them (as a means to keep them prepared to receive the promised Messiah):
  - “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.” (Malachi 4:4)

- And then He says in verse five:
  - “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:”

- What is this “great and dreadful day of the Lord?” It’s the same day as when the Lord would “leave the house of Israel without root or branch.” This is a horrible way to end the Old Testament, with God — fed up with the sins and rebellious hearts of His people — warning them that the end of the line is coming.

- Then we have 400 years between Malachi and the opening of the Book of Matthew.

- And with what does Matthew open up in one his first narratives? The story of a man named John the Baptist.
And what does the Baptist come preaching? The same message that Malachi left off with, saying:
- “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”
  (in the Greek, “the wrath that is about to come”)
- John appealed to more of Malachi’s words, and said in Matthew 3:10:
  - “And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”
- And then in verse 12:
  - “Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”
- These are all words included in Malachi’s warning!
- Now, Malachi said that merciful God would send Elijah the prophet to them before the dreadful day of the Lord. Did He do this or are we still waiting for Elijah to return?
- In Matthew 11:12-15 Jesus said these revealing, prophecy fulfilling words of Malachi:
  - “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias (that’s the Greek way to say, Elijah), which was about to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”
- And John the Baptist, the promised Elijah, came, preaching “the wrath to (shortly) come,” asking how the religious rulers would escape becoming burned stubble, and chaff. These words are the very same words Jesus used in His parable of the wheat and the tares - “fire, stubble, chaff.”
- Peter describes the event as fervent heat and melting elements - all verses depicting the judgment day approaching them which was the utter desolation of Judah in the land of Judea.
- Now, we can take all of this and see it reasonably and applicable to the context and people to whom it was given OR we can say utterly unreasonable things like:
- “Well, John the Baptist was the promised Elijah (cannot be disputed by the Bible) but we are still waiting for judgment to come - knowing that the best straight-forward application of all these facts deals with the destruction of Jerusalem. What kind of sign is it that Malachi gave
saying “that God would send Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord” if Elijah came 2000 years ago but we are still waiting for the great and terrible day of the Lord?

• The Prophet Joel also prophesied of the great and terrible day of the Lord. This is what the Lord said to him:
  - “I will pour my spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28) then in verse 31 adds, “Before the great and terrible day of the Lord.”

• Of course, Peter, on the day of Pentecost used the text of Joel and said in Acts 2:16:
  - “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. So the outpouring of His spirit upon all flesh (as prophesied by Joel) was fulfilled there and then, (and once again this was before, “the great and terrible “day” of the Lord which was the day Jesus described in Matthew 24).

• Again, God promised that before the great and dreadful day He would send Elijah. And Elijah came and within forty years fell the Great and Terrible day of the Lord.

• And yet again, God promised through Joel to pour His spirit out on all flesh – which He did at Pentecost (according to Peter) before the great and terrible day of the Lord, which again, came within that generation.

• And then again! If these were the signs given by God to show the people that judgment was coming what good were they if we are still waiting on the judgment? But if we read them in context, and see how vitally important they were as signs to those Jews who received Christ then, we can see what tremendous signs they were at that time before the destruction of Jerusalem.

• Now, let's revisit a word from the Greek – Mello. As stated (in Eschatology above), the word does not mean a long way off – and the use of it would and could never pertain to our day and age. Unfortunately, the King James Translators were not consistent in their translation of the word and when we read it in this version we are led to believe that things are not about to happen. But the Word Mello means "about to happen," or "shortly will happen."

For example:

• In Luke 7:2 where it says:
  - “And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.”
• “Ready to” in this passage is Mello.
  - John 4:47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death."
• “At the point of” is Mello
• Where it says in Acts 18:14 that
  - Paul was about to open his mouth,”
• “about to” is – Mello.
• Acts 20:3 “and he was “about to” sail . . .” Mello.
• Acts 20:7 “ready to” depart” – mello.
• And “when the seven days were “almost” ended” in Acts 21:27 . . . that's right, Mello.

Got all that?

• So let's look at some passages where writers are speaking of coming judgment. The word in all of these examples is "Mello" but because the King James was translated many years later by people who believed that judgment was still to come, the quickness of the Greek "Mello" was discarded and exchanged for English words that conveyed a longer period of time. For example:
  - Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (Mello would say “from the APPROACHING vengeance,” not “the wrath to come.”)
  - Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (Mello would say, “he has appointed a day in which He is about to judge the inhabitants”).
  - Acts 23:3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, (Mello would say, God, is "about to" smite you) thou whitened wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?
  - Acts 24:25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Mello – about to come), Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.
  - 2nd Timothy 4:1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge (Mello – who is “about to” judge) the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.
- Hebrews 10:27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall (MELLO – which is “about to”) devour the adversaries.

- All of these verses put Judgment in the proper real time frame of the original language of the Bible. And all of them undermine the stance that judgment is still headed our way but all of them read contrary to the meaning of the word Mello.

- Let's step away from the Mello argument and just give you some plain old straight up English? Ready? James said this plainly to believers alive in His day:
  - James 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.
  - 8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.
  - 9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.”

- Can we get more emphatic than this?
- Is the judge still drawing nigh? 2000 years later?
- Listen to what Peter said in 1st Peter chapter four. First, speaking of he said in verse 5:
  - 1st Peter 4:5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.
- And then in verse 7 adds:
  - “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

- Did you hear this? The words of Peter the apostle to those living in HIS DAY and HIS AGE?
  - “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

- How do Christians take these words and apply them to our day in a physical sense? It's sheer nonsense. But Peter is not done! He adds in verse 17:
  - “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”

- And here we have ONLY been talking about what scripture means when it speaks of judgment.

- We now know that all of these verses speak to Israel, their time, the end of the age (or world) and their Judge coming back to render to everyone either blessing or curse.
The Question remains: How do these passages apply to us today? Do they apply at all? If not why read them? If so, how?

• We cannot possibly believe that all of these things apply to people materially today. All of that is done. But we can suggest that the principles described in the Bible that were played out materially upon them have spiritual application to all people ever since.

• In other words, where the believers at Jerusalem were challenged to receive and believe Jesus so as to avoid the coming judgment and destruction that was about to fall upon them . . .

LISTEN!

• Every single individual to ever live ever since will too experience their own personal “great and/or terrible day of the Lord” when they die.

• Like the Jews in Judea, we too will be respectively judged at the time of our deaths – and those who are found faithful (judged) will be blessed by being taken up and those found (judged) unfaithful will suffer loss.

• At this time our world will come to an end, just as their “age” or world came to an end for them.

• The time for us individually is “always at hand” for all of us because none of know the day nor the hour of when we will be caught up to meet Him. Hebrews 9:27 says it well: - “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”

• Where do the rewards or the destructions come in for every individual? By and through each person’s resurrection (see Resurrection in Volume II)

Summary of Judgement

When scripture speaks of judgment it is almost always talking to the members of the House of Israel. This judgment has happened. Today there is no difference (in Christ) between Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave or freeman and all people will receive an immediate judgment upon physical death when they receive their resurrected body from God which they will bear with them through eternity.
Religious Crooks

Denying the total finished work of Christ Jesus for the well-being of the world, Religious Crooks often appeal to an eminent coming judgment of wrath to keep congregates in line with what they want them to do and be, ignoring the biblical fact that sin has been paid for in total and that all people ever since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD will reap at death what they have sown to their spirit.

JUSTIFICATION

• In Christianity justification speaks to people standing justified (forgiven and right) before God. There is only one way or means for a human being to stand before God justified - by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way.
• Since Jesus has paid for all the sins of the world once and for all - past, present, and future - He has done the justifying and all that remains is for human beings to believe and receive the awesome gift of His shed blood.
• As every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord, all people will stand justified before God for their sin. In this God will have the total victory over sin and death through the perfect work of His Son.
• In this, the Good News is truly Good.
• But justification is not the end game of God for the human race. God seeks far more in working in and with the redemption of human beings while on this earth. (see Joint Heirs above).

Summary of Justification

Human justification before God comes by faith in Jesus Christ's finished work. At the point of justification, people are forgiven and made righteous through the imputation of Jesus' good works bestowed upon them by God.

Religious Crooks

There always seems to be people out there who attempt to either take from the wonderful fact of justification by faith or to add to it. Those who take from it suggest that more than faith is needed to be worthy of such a justification and those who add to it seem to believe that once a person has been justified nothing else matters of is necessary for the life of the believer. Neither view is supported by scripture.
King James Only (see Bible, the Inerrancy of Scripture)

- The King James Only movement is advocacy that maintains that the King James Version of the Bible is superior to other English translations.
- It is especially adverse to translations that are based on the Westcott and Hort revision of the text of the Greek Testament.
- The Greek manuscripts that created the KJV are called the Textus Receptus (the “Received Text”) and/or the Majority Text.
- The Greek manuscripts (and the English translations that come from them) are generally known as the “minority or Alexandrian texts” and more specifically, the *Codex Vaticanus*, the *Codex Sinaiticus*, and the *Codex Alexandrinus*, from which was created a textual translation called the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (or critical text).
- To make it simple, this leaves the world with two major texts from which our Bible translations are derived - the Textus Receptus (which gives us the King James) and the Critical Text (which gives us all our other translations like the NIV, NASB, and the NRSV).
- The argument of the King James Only group is that the Alexandrian texts contain an accumulation of running errors which the Textus Receptus avoided due to scribal diligence when making copies.
- Two men (Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton Hort) took the King James version and revised it in places where they believed the Alexandrian texts proved the King James failing.
• Most KJ Onliests (KJO forward) suggest that there were deliberate obfuscations in the Westcott and Hort revision of their version and tend to describe the men as everything from irresponsible to Godless and without any scholarly scruples.

• These descriptions typically boil down to the notion that Westcott and Hort hated the light and truth of the KJV and sought to destroy the Gospel of Jesus Christ rather than as scholars who wanted to create a more reliable text.

• Opponents of the KJO movement claim the newer translations are needed due to the natural evolution of language and cite the outdated readability of the 400-year-old English text contained in the KJV.

• Advocates for the KJV state that there are more than 60,000 changes in these modern renderings (well beyond the simple changes in vocabulary like from "thee" to "you," etc.) that tremendously impacting core doctrines of the faith and therefore the very salvation of unsuspecting souls.

• A few points to consider on these arguments from the start.

1. The position of the KJO automatically implies that it is the Bible that saves, and knowledge of it, rather than faith in Jesus which is made possible with or without the Word.

2. The position of the KJO automatically implies that ONLY those who read the KJV of the Bible could truly be considered Christian (since those who read Bibles from the Westcott and Hort are reading a corrupted text).

3. Therefore from the KJO position, we already see (between the lines) that they have surreptitiously established "rules" on what is Christian and what is not (which only serves to divide people who all seek to know and worship God and His only Human Son Jesus Christ).

As an example of this divisionary prejudice:

• Baptist writer William P. Grady, in a chapter titled the "Synagogue of Satan," wrote, "The average Christian is unaware that the manuscripts from which the modern 'Bibles' have been translated are Egyptian in origin; more specifically, Alexandrian. This lack of understanding is exacerbated by little or no knowledge of Egypt's heretical
climate at that time. When these factors are appreciated, the weakness and hypocrisy of the modern revision movement become more readily apparent.”

- In the end, KJO tends to call the King James Bible, "God-honoring," and those from the Alexandrian of "gnostic" or evil origin and therefore corrupt.

- Ever the divisionary scribe, Christian apologist James White has divided the King James Only movement into five main classifications showing that even among the elitist and separatist KJO there are, of course, factions.

NOTE:

In our twice-weekly verse by verse study of the Bible, I personally read, study and teach from the King James. I find it preferable to my understanding due to my background in the faith. But on innumerable occasions, I find myself "reteaching" what the KJV says due to antiquated word choice and even outright error. I mention this to prove that while I am not prejudiced against the KJV I also know from first-hand experience that the versions we have today have difficulty.

For example, here are some places where the KJV itself disagrees with the Textus Receptus FROM WHICH IT WAS TAKEN!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KJV translates...</th>
<th>Textus Receptus actually says...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;robbers of churches.&quot; Acts 19:37</td>
<td>Every known Greek manuscript has HIEROSULOUS, &quot;robbers of temples&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Lucifer&quot; Is 14:12</td>
<td>&quot;O Day Star&quot; (Lucifer is a human origin nickname for the Devil in the 1600's refers not to the devil but the king of Babylon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Baptism&quot; (entire New Testament) Acts 2:38; 22:16</td>
<td>immersion, because sprinkling was the mode of baptism in 1611AD, they jelly-fished out and transliterated the Greek &quot;baptizo&quot; but refused to translate it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Tithes of all I possess&quot; Lk 18:12</td>
<td>&quot;all I acquire&quot; (Not only variant with the TR, but quite wrong. Tithes were never paid on capital, only increase)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Schoolmaster&quot; Gal 3:24</td>
<td>&quot;attendant&quot; (the law was the one who brought us to Christ, not taught us about Christ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;God save the King&quot;: 1Sam 10:24, 2Sam 16:16, 1Kings 1:25</td>
<td>&quot;May the king live&quot; (&quot;God&quot; not in TR, but reflects the British culture of the 1600's. Proof that the translators used dynamic equivalents.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;God Forbid.&quot; Ro. 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11; 1 Co. 6:15; Ga. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14</td>
<td>&quot;may it not be&quot; or &quot;let it not be.&quot; (KJV adds the word God where it is absent in the TR because it was a common expression in 1600's. Proof that the translators used dynamic equivalents.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;sweet savour&quot; Lev 6:21; 8:28; 17:6; 23:18</td>
<td>&quot;soothing aroma&quot; (KJV appeals to wrong senses- taste instead of smell in the TR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;ashes upon his face&quot; 1 Kings 20:38</td>
<td>&quot;bandage over his eyes&quot; (KJV varies from TR by using ashes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"flagon" 2 Sam 6:19; 1 Chron 16:3; SoS 2:5; Hosea 3:1

These verses contain the word "flagon" which is a fluted cup from which liquid is drunk. However, the Hebrew word is "ashishah" which has always meant raisins or raisin cakes. This is especially true in Hos 3:1 because raisin cakes were often offered to idols. This is an obvious error in translation.

For example, there are inconsistencies in translating identical words and phrases in the King James too. This means that the King James translators did not stick to the manuscript words but implemented their own words to make the phrase say what was accepted in that day and age!

Rom 4:3, 9, 22; Gal 3:6 Quotes Gen 15:6
Rom 12:19, Heb 10:30 quotes Deut 32:35
Heb 3:11; 4:3 quotes Ps 95:11
1 Cor 3:17
Mk 15:33, Lk 23:44
Rev 4:4
Mt 25:46
Rom 4:3,4,5,6,9,10,11,22,24
Rom 7

KJV translates identical Greek phrases differently in each NT verse
KJV translates identical Greek phrases differently in each NT verse
KJV translates identical Greek phrases differently in each NT verse
KJV translates identical Greek words into "defile" & "destroy"
KJV translates identical Greek phrases: "whole land" & "all the earth"
KJV translates identical Greek words into: "seats" & "thrones"
KJV translates identical Greek words into "everlasting" & "eternal"
KJV translates identical Greek verbs: "counted", "reckon", "impute"
KJV translates identical Greek "epithumeo": "lust", "covet", "concupiscence"

Then we have the problem of having to have a working knowledge of Elizabethan English in order to fully understand what the heck the King James is even talking about!

2. Adamant: Ezek. 3:9; Zech. 7:12.
3. Agone: 1 Sam. 30:13.
5. Almug: 1 Kings 10:11-12.
10. Angle: Isa. 19:8; Hab. 1:15.
12. Apothecary: Exo. 30:25, 35; 37:29
15. Artificer: 1 Chron. 29:5.
17. Assupim: 1 Chron. 26:15,16.
18. Asswage: Job 16:5.
20. Attent: 2 Chron. 6:40; 7:15.
25. Beeves: Lev. 22:19; Num. 31:28
63. Chancellor: Ezra 4:8,9,17.  64. Chapter: 1 Kings 7:16-18.
77. Coat of Mail: 1 Sam. 17:5.  78. Cockatrice: Jer. 8:17.
83. Concourse: Acts 19:40.  84. Concupiscence: Rom. 7:8; Col. 3:5.
85. Coney: Lev. 11:5.  86. Confection: Exo. 30:35.
110. Dulcimer: Dan. 3:5, 10, 15.
111. Earnest: 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:14.
112. Emerods: Deut. 28:27.
117. Ensign: Isa. 11:12; Zech. 9:16.
118. Ephah: Lev. 5:11; Ezek. 45:11.
120. Ephphata: Mark 7:34.
128. Fairs: Ezek. 27:12, 14, 16.
129. Fallow Ground: Jer. 4:3; Hos. 10:12.
133. Fast: 1 Sam. 3:13; Esth. 4:16.
134. Fat: Joel 2:24; Lev. 3:16.
135. Fatling: 1 Sam. 15:9; Isa. 11:6.
138. Fillet: Exo. 27:10, 11.
140. Firepan: 2 Kings 25:15.
144. Fleshhook: Exo. 27:3.
145. Fleshpot: Exo. 16:3.
146. Flote (Floats): 2 Chron. 2:16.
147. Footman: 1 Sam. 22:17; Jer. 12:5.
150. Foul Spirit: Mark 9:25; Rev. 18:2.
151. Foursquare: Exo. 27:1; Rev. 21:16.
152. Fowler: Psalm 91:3; Hos. 9:8.
153. Fray: Deut. 28:26; Jer. 7:33.
156. Frontlet: Exo. 13:16; Deut. 6:8.
157. Fuller: 2 Kings 18:17; Mark 9:3.
159. Galbanum: Exo. 30:34.
160. Gall: Job 15:13; 20:25; Matt. 27:34.
163. Gat: 1 Kings 1:1; Eccl. 2:8.
174. Grisled: Gen. 31:10; Zech. 6:3.
176. Haft: Judg. 3:22.
195. Hoary: Job 41:32.
201. Hungerbitten: Job 18:12.
203. Ill Savour: Joel 2:20.
207. Issue: Ezek. 47:12; Rev. 9:17.
211. Jeopard: Judg. 5:18.
217. Kine: 1 Sam. 6:10,12,14; Amos 4:1.
219. Kneadingtrough: Exo. 8:3; 12:34.
221. Lade: Gen. 47:17; 1 Kings 12:11.
229. Leviathan: Psalm 74:14; Isa. 27:1; Job 41:1.
233. Lily Work: 1 Kings 7:19, 22.
237. Lucre: 1 Sam. 8:2; 1 Tim. 3:3,8.
245. Mandrake: Gen. 30:14-16.
247. Maschil: Psalm 32 (Title).
250. Maw: Deut. 18:3.
257. Mingled People: Jer. 25:20, 24; Ezek. 30:5.
261. Mortar: Num. 11:18; Prov. 27:22.
262. Morter: Exo. 1:14; Nahum 3:14;
266. Munition: Isa. 29:7; 33:16.
267. Murrian: Exo. 9:3.
277. Nethinim: 1 Chron. 9:2; Ezra 7:7.
282. Oblation: Lev. 2:4,12; Ezek. 45:1.
284. Offscouring: Lamen. 3:45; I Cor. 4:13.
285. Oil Tree: Isa. 41:19.
286. Omega: Rev. 1:8, 11.
287. Omer: Exo. 16:16, 18, 22.
288. Onycha: Exo. 30:34.
293. Ossifrage: Lev. 11:13; Deut. 14:12.
295. Overcharge: 2 Cor. 2:5; Luke 21:34.
298. Overrun: 2 Sam. 18:23; Nahum 1:8.
305. Pence: Mark 14:5; Matt. 18:28.
310. Pill: Gen. 30:37,38.
317. Pomegranate: Num. 20:5; Deut. 8:8.
318. Pommel: 2 Chron. 4:12.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>319</td>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>1 Chron. 23:5; Neh. 7:73.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pottage</td>
<td>Gen. 25:29,30,34; 2 Kings 4:38.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pourtray</td>
<td>Ezek. 4:1; 8:10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pransing</td>
<td>Judg. 5:22; Nahum 3:2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Profane</td>
<td>Lev. 21:7; Heb. 12:16.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Propitiation</td>
<td>Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pruninghook</td>
<td>Isa. 2:4; Joel 3:10; Micah 4:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purrim</td>
<td>Esth. 9:21-32.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purvis</td>
<td>Deut. 14:5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quit</td>
<td>1 Sam. 4:9; 1 Cor. 16:13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rainment</td>
<td>Gen. 45:22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rampart</td>
<td>Lamen. 2:8; Nahum 3:8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ravine</td>
<td>Gen. 49:27; Nahum 2:12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recorder</td>
<td>2 Sam. 8:16; 2 Chron. 34:8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Redound</td>
<td>2 Cor. 4:15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remphan</td>
<td>Acts 7:43.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ribband</td>
<td>Num. 15:38.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ringstraked</td>
<td>Gen. 30:35,39,40.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruddy</td>
<td>1 Sam. 16:12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sackbut</td>
<td>Dan. 3:5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saffron</td>
<td>Song of Sol. 4:14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Savour</td>
<td>Lev. 26:31; Matt. 16:23.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scall</td>
<td>Lev. 13:30-37; 14:54.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Screech Owl</td>
<td>Isa. 34:14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seethe</td>
<td>2 Kings 4:38; Job 41:20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Servitor</td>
<td>2 Kings 4:43.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheaf</td>
<td>1 Sam. 16:12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheminith</td>
<td>Gen. 37:7; Deut. 24:19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheminith</td>
<td>1 Chron. 15:21; Psa 6 (title).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shewbread</td>
<td>1 Sam. 21:6; 1 Chron. 9:32.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shigionoth</td>
<td>Habbakkuk 3:1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shiloh</td>
<td>Gen. 49:10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shittah Tree</td>
<td>Isa. 41:19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sith</td>
<td>Ezek. 35:6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snuff</td>
<td>Ezek. 23:34.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sod</td>
<td>2 Chron. 35:13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sodden</td>
<td>Exo. 12:9; 1 Sam. 2:15.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The purpose of all of this is to not to ever demean the KJV of the Bible. Again, it is the very Bible from which I read, study and teach. But the point is toward the KJO folk. Enough.

• Get off the high divisionary horse and let people read what Bible translation that makes the most sense to them – the one that they can understand – and stop trying to control not only other people but the very Holy Spirit that leads and calls to all people regardless of the Bible they choose to read.

Summary
The King James translators were no more gifted with perfection in their translational skills than the translators of any other Bible version. The King James is an exceptional Bible but the versions we have today are not without error.

Religious Crooks
Whatever Bible a person will read is a Bible they ought to own. Possessing a better Bible (that is never read because of its difficulty) is a waste of time and life. When people insist
The Kingdom of God

• We could spend a lot or a little time and space covering this subject.

• We will spend a little by way of a summary that all are invited to test.

• In scripture, the "Kingdom of God" is synonymously described as:
  - Kingdom of Christ (Matthew 6:33; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43
  - Kingdom of Christ and of God (Matthew 13:41; 20:21)
  - "kingdom of David" (Ephesians 5:5)
  - "the kingdom" (Mark 11:10)
  - "the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:12; 13:19)

• And they all mean the same thing through perhaps different applications or aspects.

• At times it speaks of Christ's mediatorial authority or his rule on the earth.

• At others, it speaks of the blessings and advantages of all kinds that flow from it.

• Sometimes it speaks of individual subjects of the Kingdom and at other times it refers to the church collectively as the Kingdom.

• In the Old Testament, the Kingdom was materially based. If its members were obedient to the will of God they were materially blessed and if they were disobedient they could be materially cursed.
Almost all of the blessings of the Old Covenant were materially understood and realized and included wealth, health, prosperity, long life, protection from God, etc.

The material blessings continued to be represented in part, by the Kingdoms promised King and Messiah as He came and gave them bread and fish to eat, healings of health and even money when it was required.

But this King told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world, and he told those who followed Him for bread that perishes that they ought to seek for the bread that came down from heaven. He told the woman at the well that if she drank of the material water from the well that she would thirst again but that if she drank of the water He would give her she would never thirst again.

In other words, Jesus was introducing to these people a Kingdom that was spiritual, and one that was not of this world.

The material Kingdom and the focuses thereof were summarily wiped out in 70 AD with the destruction of all things related to it, including:

1. Their brick and mortar temple.
2. The genealogies that were housed therein.
3. Their manly priesthoods and animal sacrifices.
4. A dispersion of the remaining Nation itself.
5. The death of over a million Jews.

All of this occurred at the return of the promised Messiah with judgment and reward upon them - judgment for rejecting Him and reward for receiving Him (see Eschatology).

Prior to this, on the Day of Pentecost some thirty-nine or so years earlier, God sent His Holy Spirit to fall first on the Jews, and then later on all men (the Gentiles).

This was the inauguration of His spiritual Kingdom which was not of this world (at all) but was in and administered from heaven.

The New Heaven and the New Earth, from that time forward, would be entirely spiritual. Entirely.
• The Spirit reigns – not the things of the flesh, the things of this world, or brick and mortar anything.

• God said some key things about this time in the Book of Hebrews, saying:

  - Hebrews 8:10-13 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

  - (READ AND REREAD – ESPECIALLY THE HIGHLIGHTED LINES – OVER AND OVER UNTIL YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IS ACTUALLY BEING SAID HERE!)

  18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,
whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Summary

The Kingdom of God is invisible to people on earth and is not an earthly Kingdom of any type or kind. Jesus said, “the Kingdom of God is within you.”

Religious Crookery

Many religious Crooks attempt to corral the phrase the Kingdom of God and lasso others into their material definitions of it. They try and build an actual material kingdom here on earth, with assets and buildings and systems of holy administrations. This was never the message of Jesus or His apostles.
As Paul says, 
- “By the law is the knowledge of sin.”

What does this mean?
- It means that when there is a law present it is the presence of that law that a person is made a sinner or sinful. Let’s consider an example.

There is a lone long stretch of highway between Las Vegas, Nevada, and Baker, California. It is paved and cared for by the two states but there are no posted laws limiting speed upon its shoulders. It is law free. Motorized vehicles can, therefore, travel as fast or as slow as they would like – there is no law present to convict them of a crime. Mrs. Smith can drive four miles per hour upon this highway and Mr. Jones can drive 220! And there is not a cop on the road who can pull them over. Why? Because there are no laws governing speed upon its surface.

But let’s suppose Nevada decides to limit the speed of the highway on its land and posts a minimum speed of 60 MPH and a maximum speed of 75. If Mrs. Smith and Mr. Jones insist on traveling at their preferred speeds they would be lawbreakers while traveling on the highway in Nevada and could be cited (if caught). But once they get to the California portion of the highway they could return to their preferred rates of travel. The point is that it is the posting of the law that would make Mrs. Smith and Mr. Jones lawbreakers in the state of Nevada and innocent of breaking the law in California.

The posting of the law. This is why Paul wrote:

- For by the (posting of) the Law is a knowledge of sin.
• No posting of laws, then no sin! Isn’t that amazing?!
• When Jesus came and lived and died He, as the only one qualified by His innocent life and blood, took the Laws of God at His crucifixion and nailed them to His cross, putting them to death with Him!
• This means that He put the laws of God (that were once written and posted) to death!
• Hebrews chapters 8 and 10 then remind us that it was God’s intention to write his laws on the hearts of those who were His suggesting that in Christ, all are dead to posted laws written in stone (and even on paper) all believers have God’s laws of love written on their individual hearts!
• This is vitally important for all Christians to understand because no Christian is justified by or through obedience to the written, posted law. Remember, that only serves to make all people sinful!
• We are instead justified by faith on Him who had the Law nailed to His cross and in this, we then have God's laws written on our hearts.
• This clearly and directly tells us that each individual is responsible to God for the way they live their lives as He has written His laws upon the individual conscience of heart.
• This fact implies that there is no need for religious or spiritual policemen any longer; that God, through His Spirit, rules, and reigns over the hearts of individuals, not man, not man's rules and laws.
• But instead of trusting this, and believing on what the scripture has to say on the matter, men and women have continually tried to post laws around the hearts, minds, and lives of believers which will only serve? That’s right, to make them SINNERS! How about an example.

In the Church of Jesus Risen Life, Mesa Arizona, Pastor James has worked very hard at teaching his congregates that they are in fact, dead to the law. It has been a revelatory exercise in their lives and they have grown in the spirit leaps and bounds. But there was one thing that the Pastor James believes is important: sock wearing. In fact, he actually believes that Jesus appeared to him one night and revealed to him the importance that true believers in Him wear socks. I know, sounds strange, right?

So Pastor James posts a sign outside the door of the church entrance and it reads:
“If you are a follower of Jesus you must wear socks.”

The results of Pastor James revelation and posting of this single solitary law? Sin. Now, remember, Pastor James has posted nothing about murder, adultery, homosexuality, masturbation, smoking, drinking or Sabbath day observances. No other law was present in the lives of the members of the Church of Jesus' Risen Life in Mesa, Arizona. Just the wearing of socks.

After the sock law was made known something interesting happened to the members of the church. It began to break up, dividing into unofficial camps. There were those who complied and wore socks day and night – even in the Arizona heat. And there were those who did not comply and at times went (God forbid) sockless. And while some took the sock law very seriously throughout the week it was especially important to obey on Sundays when church services were held.

This is when things began to get ugly (or should we say, sinful). How? Well first of all those who were obedient to the sock law felt PRIDE for their obedience. As a means to show their worthiness and love for God, some of them started wearing only new socks on Sunday (since used were not giving God their best). Other sock law followers also differentiated themselves with the quality of socks that they wore with the most devout wearing only new expensive designer socks. Needless to say, among the proud sock group there were varied divisions of sock piety and pride. And naturally, any who were part of the sock law keepers looked down on those who either did not wear their kind of socks or those who refused to wear socks altogether. And sin abounded.

Then there were the rebels. These not only refused to wear socks as a direct affront to those who did, but they frequently flaunted their sockless sinfulness as a means to illustrate their liberty and freedom in the face of others. This group was also guilty of the sin of pride and failing to love those who believed wearing socks was important in life.

And in the wake of one single solitary simple law – the wearing of Socks – sin was introduced to all involved. Egregious sins of the heart that lead to pride, arrogance, piety, mean-spiritedness, vaunting of the self, materialism, and the like.
Imagine the case when other laws are imposed upon believers who have been set free from laws written in stone. That is what most Christian organizations tend to gravitate toward in some way or another - Law. And the result is always Sin.

Summary

When presented to man the result of all laws is the failure to obey them. Therefore it is by law that we have the knowledge of sin. There are only two laws when a summary of the Bible is made - to believe on Jesus Christ and to love as He gave commandment. All others will produce what Jesus came and destroyed - sin.

Religious Crooks

Perhaps the most egregious crime religious crooks perpetuate on unsuspecting souls is the imposition of religious laws - of any kind. The justifications for them are almost as numerous as the laws themselves but in the end, they ALL work antithetically to the Good News of Jesus Christ and the love that it produces in the lives and hearts of those who are His.

LOVE (see Fruit, above)

• When Jesus was asked what are the greatest commandments He said in reply:
  - Mark 12:30-31 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. "And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
• When we think about it if a human being was capable of loving God with "all of their heart and soul and mind and strength and to love their neighbor as themselves," no other commandments would be necessary. And “no other” really means “no other.”
• In other words, if a person or people had the ability to actually love God and man in these prescribed ways then
Jesus (and belief upon Him and His shed blood) would have been wholly unnecessary.

- So the questions might be:

"Can a person love God and Man without faith in Jesus?"

- We talk a lot about love in the world today. The Beatles sang that “love was all we need.” And millions of non-Christians maintain that they are loving, and good, and kind - without having Jesus in their lives at all! Is this possible?
- Acts of love are entirely possible in the lives of people who are not believers or followers of Jesus. To say otherwise would deny the realities of human existence. There are millions of self-sacrificing Muslims and Buddhists and Atheists who love their children and do magnanimous acts for the benefit of others while completely rejecting Jesus as Lord.
- So to suggest that people cannot love without being Christian is foolish.
- Perhaps loving others is a general expectation God has for all of His creations and to love or not is a personal decision all people to make over the course of their lives.
- And maybe the ability to love our children, and other people, is a gift God gives all human beings - like He sort of weaves it into the fabric of humanity and all are freely given the opportunity to access and choose to love or not. Some do, some don’t. But I think we can certainly suggest that only one has loved perfectly.
- Maybe this is why faith in Jesus is mandatory for salvation because all of us fail to love perfectly and are therefore in need of having His perfect love “imputed to our accounts” thereby making us holy and perfect before God by and through faith in His Son (who loved God and Man without fail).
- So the question is not, “Do or can other people be loving people without Jesus?” (something that many Christians would say is impossible).
- But the question is rather, "Can anyone on earth love perfectly?" And to this, I think all can reasonable reply, "No, not one."
- And therefore there is a need to look at Jesus and His life as a means to be justified through Him before God.
- Secondly, once a person has received Jesus by faith (His life and work and death and resurrection) there is
established a direct correlation between our faith in Him and our love for God and others.

• Let me explain.
• Suppose there is an individual who was naturally prone to loving others – except those who hurt him or his family. To them, there was never any quarter or pass. So while he was naturally kind and gentle with all people those who are unkind to him or his family are never treated well or forgiven by the man.
• In this, we could see a fail in his love – especially when compared to the love Jesus exhibited.
• By looking to Jesus in faith, such a person might read that it was incumbent upon him to forgive all men – especially those who mistreat him or those he loves.
• If the man seeks to live by faith and to show His allegiance and love for Jesus He would try and do what Jesus commanded – which in this case would be to love and forgive our enemies.
• If the man truly had faith in Jesus and His teachings, He would comply with the directive to forgive all people – enemies included.
• If his faith was weak he would continue to hate his enemies, which would be in direct conflict with Jesus words.
• In other words, faith in Jesus would be exemplified by love for others (and a death to self-will).
• Lack of faith in Jesus would (typically when things got really difficult or challenging) evidence itself in a failure to love others the way Jesus commanded.
• And so in this, we see a reciprocity between true faith and love.

Where there is genuine faith in Jesus, there is genuine love expressed through action.
Where there is disingenuous faith in Jesus, there will be a failure to genuinely love through actions.

• And herein may lie the whole purpose of seeking after Jesus, placing our faith in Him, and for God so loving us that He gave us His only begotten Son:

That by and through our faith and trust in Him we are able and equipped to move from failing to love (as God loves) and into a position (by the Spirit) to actually able to love God and others with the love that is Him.
• Think about this. Actual agape love in the scripture is defined as patient, selfless, kind, gentle, longsuffering, not boastful, does not seek after its own benefit, etc.
• So where most people know how to love others to some extent such love begins to wane when it comes down to them or us.
• But not so with Jesus.

Summary

The aim of the Christian faith is Godly love thriving (without fail) in the lives and hearts of human beings. If any person was able to meet this demand they would have no need for a Savior as love is the fulfillment of the Law and it is upon these Two Great Commandments (to Love God and Neighbor) that all the Law and the Prophet's hang. But human beings are sinful. And it is only in and through the indwelling of God's Spirit where His love is able to abide and thrive. This indwelling comes by faith in Him. As a result of God in us through Christ, human beings are equipped with the capacity to love as He loves, and the aim of the faith is met. It is NOT met through any other means.

Religious Crooks

Appealing to other means, religious crooks tend to suggest the idea that it is through laws that love abides. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Law kills but the Spirit (which bears fruits of love) is life. Christians are called to be lovers NOT lawyers, but religious crooks have a tendency to make all people compliant with laws and generally consider love an inferior approach to life and God.
Marriage

Somehow we Christians have gotten ourselves to think that a marriage is the same as a wedding ceremony. Maybe this is the result of ancient Jewish history where wedding ceremonies were certainly part of the culture. Perhaps pastors and reverends assumed that in Christ that they had the power and/or authority to oversee and or perform wedding ceremonies with ultimately became synonymous with marriage. But the two becoming one (in the biblical sense) has NEVER included any pastoral intervention or authority. Never.

This biblical fact is both fascinating and frightening to most Christians. Again, and for whatever reason, people want to vest other people with the power to make them a married couple when in the reality of the Bible that power and authority lie within the choices of the people involved.

Years ago I wrote a stage play that took place primarily in the office of a Christian pastor. In one scene a lesbian couple comes to meet with him. One of the lesbians is a believer (Wilma) and her partner (Molly) is not. Yet they both have questions and some of the questions have to do with them being married. Perhaps a segment of this play will help lay out what I am trying to say on the topic of marriage.
INT. Pastors Office

Pastor
So it’s good to finally meet Molly face to face. What’s it been – six years – that you’ve been attending, Wilma?

Wilma
Hard to believe. So, yes, this is Molly and she . . .

Molly
We . . .

Wilma
“We” wanted to ask some questions if that’s okay?

Pastor
Of course, anything.

Molly and Wilma look at each other.

(beat)

Molly
(demonstratively)
Go ahead!

Wilma
Okay – here’s the deal. When I hear you teach and try and take what you say and share it with Molly something is always . . .

Pastor
Lost in translation?

Molly
Bill Murray.

Wilma
So after last week’s message I told Molly that if she had questions she could just come and ask you herself. Soooooo . . . here we are!

Molly
Alright, ready, steady, go – can a homosexual go to heaven?

Pastor
Of course.

Molly
Why do so many people say, “nay nay?”

Pastor
I don’t know, exactly. They probably misunderstand why people go to heaven and others don’t.

Molly
And why don’t people go to heaven – sin, right? Is homosexuality a sin?

Pastor
Very much so, yes.

Molly
So sinners can go to heaven?

Pastor
Only sinners go to heaven.

Molly
Why is this so confusing to me? I like the Catholics better.

Pastor
Probably because I’m just answering your questions
without any explanation. And that is a really bad policy.

Molly
So would you explain?

Pastor
People enter heaven because they have faith in Jesus whom God sent to save us. People don’t go to heaven when they refuse to believe and receive God’s Son. Homosexuality – the presence or lack thereof – has nothing to do with going to heaven.

Wilma
Told you.

Molly
So homosexuals who have faith in Jesus can go to heaven and homosexuals who don’t, won’t.

Pastor
Just like everybody else.

Molly
But you say homosexuality is a sin.

Pastor
Just like my lust for women is a sin. And Mrs. Tremblay’s impatience with difficult people are sinful, and my wife’s pride is a sin. Sin is sin – no matter what it is. And we are All steeped in it. Because a person believes in Jesus does not mean they are without it. By the way, your sins Molly, are not limited to homosexuality. I’m sure you are also guilty of lying, and gossiping and maybe even being a regular old jerk to people, right?

Molly
On the rare occasion.

Pastor
The question - the better question - is have you (beat) received God’s solution to the sins that abide in your flesh?

Wilma
That would be Jesus.

Molly
Thank you for that.

Pastor
Right. Have you placed your faith in Jesus as the one who came and paid for your sins and mine?

Molly
Well, Wilma seems convinced of Him as “the way for the gay.”

Pastor
I agree with Wilma. And would add that He is the way for all.

Molly
But don’t most churches frown on sin? You seem to be saying sin is acceptable.

Pastor
All I am saying is we all have it to some extent or another.

Molly
(smugly)
You sin, Pastor?

Pastor
We all sin, Molly. That’s the point. He came and saved the world in its sin. And He saves (those who believe in Him) from their sin
as well.

Molly

By faith?

Pastor

That’s right, who receive Him by faith.

Wilma

(whispers)

In Jesus.

Molly

And I thank you yet again!

Wilma

So this is why you accept me as a congregate here though I am still “guilty of the sin of homosexuality?”

Pastor

I hope you will accept me as your pastor even though I am still guilty of sin in my life too. Again, He paid for all sin so sin is not the issue. The issue is faith – you, Wilma, have received Jesus by faith – and all people are justified before God by faith. So this makes you my sister.

Molly

So why do people always tell me I have to repent?

Pastor

Repent means to change your mind, Molly.

Molly

About?
Pastor
How you see yourself in relation
to who God is – how you see Him.
How you see your need for Him.

Molly
And how should I see Him.

Pastor
As necessary. Important. As
Love.

Molly
Funny, I’ve always seen myself as
a hunk of burning love.

Pastor
You might start on changing your
mind about that one there.

Wilma
Told you so.

Molly
Why would I? Why should I start
there?

Pastor
Let me ask you something. Do
you have any nieces or nephews?

Molly
Eleven. My sisters are factories.

Pastor
Pick one of them.

Molly
Okay. Bottles. He’s seven.
Adorable.

Pastor
So, let’s say that you decide to
treat Bottles to a day of fun.  
And you take the day off from work  
and go to a lot of time and  
expense to make sure that Bottles is  
having a good time. Amusement Park,  
hike, McDonald's, ice cream, and a new  
X Box to boot.

Molly  
I’m with ya.

Pastor  
But all day long Bottles ignores you.  
And if he isn’t ignoring you he is  
ridiculing you, mocking you, he even  
denies that you are important. At  
the end of the day he doesn’t even  
thank you.

Molly  
Little brat.

Pastor  
Now, you love Bottles – still. But  
wouldn’t you want – for his own good –  
for him to change his mind and attitude  
about how he views himself – in relation  
to you?

Molly  
To be respectful, thankful, grateful,  
polite?

Pastor  
Because that would make Bottles a  
better human being, wouldn’t it? To  
be that way. It’s not that you need to  
have him be that way. It’s that in being  
that way he would be a better person!

Wilma  
I see.

Pastor  
It’s pretty easy to see the concept  
when it comes to people we love here.
Now imagine that we are talking about the actual creator of all things - heaven, earth, and all that they contain - including us. He governs and controls and is the origin of all life. How do you think He would want us to be toward Him?

Molly
I hear you.

Pastor
And He wants this because it will make you - someone He loves - a nicer, kinder, better, more loving child.

(Long beat)

Molly
Okay, too heavy! Next question. Will you marry us?

Pastor
You mean will I officiate over a religious wedding ceremony for you?

Molly
No, I mean will you marry us.

Pastor
I can’t marry you.

Molly
(To Wilma)
Told you!
(to Pastor)
Because we’re gay, right?

Pastor
No, because it’s an impossibility.

Molly
I beg to differ.
Pastor
Let me try and explain. And I’m sorry for the mini-sermon. But when God created Man (Adam) He formed him from the dust of the ground. Then He formed women (Eve) from his side. From the very get go they were one – from the same person. God did not “marry” them nor did He perform a religious wedding ceremony for them – there was no need. They were one flesh – they came from one flesh – from the beginning. Nothing could ever change this fact. You with me?

Molly
Preach it, brother.

Pastor
Adam could have moved to Egypt and Eve to Cincinnati but they would forever be one – because they came from the same flesh.

Molly
Okay.

Pastor
Looking back on this event Moses then wrote that "for this reason a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves unto his wife and that the two become one flesh." Again, it is the two becoming one flesh that best describes a marriage having taken place. In fact, both you and Wilma are the product of people marrying – when two people – one male and one female – became one flesh. It didn’t matter if your parents had a ceremony or not, right, they were one flesh and that is the biblical definition of marriage.

Beat.
Pastor
Think about it. Nowhere in the Bible when men took on a wife do we read about a pastor coming out and performing a ceremony to make them one. We see celebrations but actual marriage was always the consummation of the two becoming one - like Adam and Eve. See the difference between marriage and a wedding ceremony? All that was needed for a marriage to take place, in God’s eyes, was for . . . Wilma?

Wilma
For the two to become one.

Pastor
And no matter how hard you might try with each other, no matter how inventive you get, it is impossible for two males or two females to become one physically. Spiritually, emotionally - sure. But an impossibility for you to be one physically where the oneness perpetuates life. It’s therefore a biological impossibility for the two of you to ever be married - from a biblical perspective. This is why I can’t possibly “marry you.”

Wilma
But we can have a wedding ceremony?

Pastor
Certainly. There are thousands of ceremonies of every lifestyle to participate in throughout the world. But no ceremony in the world will unite you in marriage in the way God defines and sees it. This is why I try and stay true to the biblical definitions of marriage.

Molly
Understood. Will you then perform our wedding ceremony?
Pastor
Thank you so much for the invitation but no.

Molly
(to Wilma)
You see!
(to Pastor)
Because we’re gay, right?

Pastor
No. Because there is no reason for me a Pastor to perform an earthly ritual when a justice of the peace or good friend can do the same thing.

Molly
But you’ll perform them for hetero couples?

Pastor
Not any more.

Wilma
Why?

Pastor
Because it is a meaningless ritual for me to play a part. I have no authority or priesthood or power. My standing over a couple and having them repeat vows has no other purpose other than window dressing to appease cultural norms.

Wilma
But it does make it legitimate in the eyes of the Law?

Molly
Which grants associated tax benefits.

Pastor
Which again can be obtained before a
County Recorder. My job is not to perform rituals. It’s to teach people about the solution to sin. And to help them in their faith, and their love for God and Man.

Wilma
Are you understanding this, Molly?

Molly
Trying.

END Scene.

When it comes to heterosexual couples the premise in the scene above rings true as well. When Abraham’s wife told him to take her handmaiden to wife, a pastor or preacher didn’t run down from the hills and perform a wedding service. Abraham took Hagar the handmaiden into his tent and made her his wife. And in giving herself to him Hagar made Abraham her husband. Never in the Bible do we read of ceremonies being performed to “do” a marriage. Marriage is when the two become one flesh. Period.

This brings us to another interesting point. In God’s eyes, when two become one they are married – no matter the age or whether a ceremony is performed or not. If we taught our children this and explained the facts about it we might have a better grip on lascivious actions of our youth today. And we would also help them understand sexual relations between people in a much healthier manner. See, God does not hate sex – He created it, for goodness sakes. And even gave us anatomy what allows us to enjoy the pleasures and passions of it immensely. God does not hate the coming together of two people who love each other. The sexual union is not the sin. The sin is when two have come together and then break apart to join with others. See the difference? So if we teach our daughters that they are free to have sex with whomever they desire but that once that decision is made then that single solitary person is who they will have sex with exclusively for their rest of their lives the game and rules of the game will go a long way in keeping our children informed of the realities of sexual relations and God’s views of it.
In the case (which is certain) that a child chooses to have sex with someone and then chooses to break up with them, the focus of our attention and dismay ought to come at the break-up of the couple, not at the union. But this view is so radical that people are terrified of it. So they allow for all sorts of non-biblical rules to take place in our lives - rules that include making a wedding ceremony the marriage, rules that include many sexual partners until the ceremony takes place, and on and on. But the biblical approach provides us with reasonable answers to both premarital sex and to the questions about homosexual marital unions.

Summary of Marriage

In God’s eyes, and biblically speaking, marriage is not a wedding. It is when two become one physically. In that union, the potential to create life is introduced. There is no other definition of marriage. What men and nations and civil authorities say and do is irrelevant. God does NOT hate the two becoming one. He hates when the two that have become one divide then they unite with others.

Religious Crooks

Taking the pure and simple (and clear) definition of marriage in the Bible and ignoring it, religious crooks have usurped the act of marriage and inserted themselves into it by making services and weddings and papers necessary. Such are legal actions relative to this world but the true biblical definition of marriage includes no such thing.

MISSION TRIPS

• In the Bible, it was generally the apostles who were the one sent out into the rest of the land by Jesus to share the Gospel.

• The Great Commission of Matthew 28, again, was to these apostles as a means to bring as many citizens of those lands into the Kingdom before the end of that age when Jerusalem would be wiped out along with most of the Nation.
• When churches take these instructions and assign them to themselves in this day through missions trips it is a total misappropriation of the biblical text and makes little sense in modern times.

• Nevertheless, thousands of religious organizations, wanting to appear to be following the example set in scripture of the Great Commission, send people (often young people) out into the world as missionaries to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with neighboring lands and countries.

• In so doing we often forget that there are people in these various countries and lands who are Christians and who actually speak the language and understand the culture better than any teenage kid sent on a two-week venture which in most cases winds up only being a mini-vacation in Jesus name.

• And while it is obvious that these mission trips are really for the benefit of the person sent, while don’t we state this up front and tell the kids that the church is going to take a youth group to Guatemala to see how other people live who are not as materially fortunate as themselves rather than go under the presence of sharing Jesus.

• Additionally, when it comes to sharing Jesus wouldn't we would do better serving and sharing the Good News in our own backyards with our own people of our own language and culture rather than continuing to perpetuate this fable that our teenagers are actually sharing the Gospel to the world they largely don't understand?

SUMMARY

In a day when most of the world's populations have immediate access to the Gospel, it seems that perhaps playing the religious game of Mission Trips ought to end. That we focus our missional efforts in our own backyards in terms of sharing and serving and put a stop to the costly façade of sending kids to foreign lands under the auspices of doing God's work. Of course, we must admit that impressionable teens can experience wonderful transformational things on such outings but let’s get real and explain that from the start and lose the Great Commission slant that is placed on these adventures.
Religious Crooks

The game of mission trips, fund-raising, getting behind special causes for churches has become a sound resource of supplemental income streams for the institutions where only part of the money collected goes to the cause while the rest goes to the bottom-line. Religious crooks use mission trips and the like as a front for skimming needed cash. In this day and age, there is no need for mission trips abroad as most countries in the world have believing Christians on hand (who are familiar with the culture and language) to meet the missional needs of the local people.
CONCLUSION

For more information consider going to

www.christianarchytoday.com
www.hotm.tv
www.campuschurch.tv

Tune into our weekly live streaming broadcasts at the same addresses above and join the online community of believers without a brick and mortar building!

HEART of the MATTER II Tuesday Nights 8 PM to 9 PM MTN time!

CHRISTIANARCHYTODAY Tuesday Nights 6 PM MTN time!

CAMPUS TEACHINGS Every Sunday 10 AM Milk and 2:30 PM Meat MTN time!

And look forward to Volume II of the Christian Anarchist Crookbook in late 2018! Topics will include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repentance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resurrection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs (miracles and wonders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solas (the Five)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sovereign God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tithes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity, the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| U | Universalism  
    | Unshakeable Kingdom |
| V | Vocation |
| W | A W Heruristic  
    | Works, Good Worship |
| X | An "X" Heuristic |
| Y | A "Y" Heuristic |
| Z | A "Z" Heuristic |

For further information call 385-282-3355 or email us at shawn@alatheamedia.com